

Sunday Sermon: December 8, 2019

Sermon Text: James 5:7-11

Sermon Theme: Wait. Watch. Persevere.

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰ Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

I don't know about you, but I have a lot of trouble waiting for anything. There are many times that I wait that I get frustrated and angry. I hate waiting in the airport for the boarding to be called. I hate waiting in the doctor's office. I hate waiting in traffic and moving 20 feet in an hour. I even hate waiting at stoplights.

I have a lot of trouble waiting and I often get frustrated. Still, there are other times I wait that I feel differently. I remember waiting for Christmas as a child and begin very excited. Every snowflake, every Christmas decoration, every Christmas song reminded me that Christmas was coming.

I remember waiting for my wedding day with nervous anticipation for the day to come. It was exciting that the day was finally here and some nerves that everything would go well.

There are many different emotions that go into waiting. Last week, we talked about being prepared as we wait and watch. This morning we are going to learn about a different kind of waiting. WE will look at the kind of waiting where we need to be patient. This type of waiting is one where we wait through problems and troubles in life. This type of waiting is not so easy, it is one where need to persevere in faith as we wait even through those troubles and trials.

This type of waiting is not the angry, frustrated waiting and it is not the happy anxious waiting. This type of waiting is much like what happens in a family before the birth of a child. There are many troubles and problems that the parents go through as they are waiting. Dads go through the emotions and stress of trying to be a good husband to an uncomfortable wife.

Moms experience emotional and physical problems. Moms have to deal with the hormone swings, the uncomfortableness of pregnancy, the aches and pains that go with that, and the pain of childbirth itself.

This doesn't paint a very good picture of pregnancy and childbirth. So why do so many couples look forward to having not just one, but any number of children?

Parents look forward to children because they realize that at the end of the waiting, after they have gone through so much, They persevere in their waiting because they know that God will bless them with joy through the years they have with their children.

This what perseverance really is. It is waiting that takes place through pain, struggle and work. Persevering is continuing to wait, even though we have to pain and struggle before we get what we are waiting for.

Waiting for the Lord to come can be many different kinds of waiting all rolled into one. We wait with anticipation. We are on the edge of our seat for both of Jesus' comings. Like a child, we can't wait for Christmas to welcome our Savior to be born. We also anticipate his coming again where he will grant to us his greatest gift of heaven. But as we wait, we realize that we will face trouble and trials.

I have been accused of many things in my life, but being patient is not one of them. When we lived in Michigan we had a wonderful older woman who lived next to us. She would often be sitting on her front porch when I would zoom in and out. She would call to me, "You're always on the go. Slow down, not everything needs to be done now."

Patience is what I lack, but patience is one of the types of waiting that James says that we should have. **⁷ Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand**

firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

James gives us an illustration of patience. Have you ever watched a plant grow? Some of you have seen many. I remember I did a bean experiment with my students one year. There were more than one student who had the hypothesis that the bean would grow in a day or a week. They would check every day and were disappointed that the bean was not growing. Soon, they ran out of patience and quit checking. Then, after they had all but forgotten, they went back and checked and... the bean had grown.

This is a good illustration of patience. If you go back a few hundred years, there were no forecasters, or tractors, fertilizers, or sprinklers to help keep the plants growing at a steady rate. In many ways, the farmer was at the mercy of the regular weather patterns that came during that year. They just had to be patient because there wasn't much they could do. Yes, they could plow and fertilize and weed, but the biggest thing that had to do was be patient and wait to see what would happen with the seeds they sowed.

James is really making an application to our faith. It is an application of waiting. Our Savior is coming. We know we will celebrate his first coming on December 24 and 25. We also wait patiently for our Savior to come again.

While we wait patiently wait, there is something to do. Like the farmer tends his fields, we can and should be tending our faith. We should water and fertilize our faith by having a life filled with many opportunities to hear and study the Gospel. We should make every effort to pull the weeds of sin, doubt and worry from our lives and instead, cultivate our lives with God-pleasing words and actions.

While the farmers waited, it was not always easy. Even with all the technology we have today, if you ask a farmer, there is very rarely a perfect growing season. There are often problems. It would rain too much or not enough. The field was too wet or dry. The insects were too much. The ground did not produce well enough. But, what could the farmer do? They had to wait and they had to persevere through these problems and trust that God would give them a harvest.

In the same way, James tells us that when we have about the troubles and trials in our life, we should persevere, waiting for God to bring a harvest. ¹⁰ **Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.** ¹¹ **As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.**

When we think of perseverance in faith, at the top of the list must be the Old Testament prophets. These men were bold to speak the Word of God even though the kings and people didn't want to listen. They persevered through their troubles and trials because they knew they were preaching the important words of God. They were sharing the good news of the Messiah. So they persevered in faith and stayed strong.

We too may face troubles and trials in our life. We may have fierce storms of trouble that roll into our lives and try to destroy our whole crop of faith. We may have to deal with our own illness or the illness of a loved one, we might face an unexpected financial crisis, we might have family problems creep up. The devil wants to use these storms take away the joy and peace that only Jesus gives to us. He wants our waiting to be painful, so painful that we want to give up.

The growing season can be very long. Sometimes the farmer may get tired or distracted from making sure that his fields are tended correctly. Sometimes we might get tired or distracted as we wait. The devil wants our minds wander, to get tired and distracted from having those Gospel opportunities in our life through which the Holy Spirit builds us up in faith and helps us to persevere in that faith.

We need to have patient perseverance because God is waiting to give us something wonderful. He has promised a blessing which he has given to us and which will come. This is the same promise that was given to the prophets that Isaiah prophesied about and that Job knew. A baby in a manger. A Savior on a cross. A King who comes again to bring us into his eternal kingdom.

This hope and comfort of a Savior is what Isaiah prophesied about so many times. It was the same message that Jesus shared with John the Baptist. It was the hope that Job prophesied about as he was persevering through his troubles and trials. **"I know that my redeemer lives and that in the end I will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. I and not another, how my heart yearns within me."** This is also our hope comfort and strength as we continue to persevere here on this earth.

My dear Christian friends, as we continue to wait and watch, let's be patient, but let's also persevere in the faith. When troubles and problems come to our life, may we look to our God and his promises and see that what he has waiting for us is truly something wonderful waiting for us.