



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

3rd Sunday of Advent (A) – James 5:7-10

Focus: *Be Patient!*

word of life

“You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.”

James 5:8 (NRSV)

Read James 5:7-10

Patience. This is the theme of today’s reading from James.

The Greek word for patience is literally “long-suffering.” The verses for today follow harsh words of warning to “rich people” (James 5:1 NRSV) who have relied only on their wealth and oppressed the laborer. The wealthy oppressors will see their wealth rot away and rust (James 5:1-3). In contrast, the author begins vs. 7 with words of exhortation to a different audience—the “beloved.” “Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord.” (James 5:7 NRSV)

1. *Is patience and long-suffering synonymous? How so?*
2. *How does the meaning of the words differ?*
3. *Who do you think “the beloved” were when James was written? Who are the beloved today?*

The phrase “the coming of the Lord” is used several times in today’s reading (See James 5:7-8) and is implied in the imagery of the Judge standing at the doors. (vs. 9) The expectation of Christ’s coming soon to judge and to usher in justice calls for a change in how we live in community. There should be no more grumbling among the beloved, for the coming of the Lord is near. Patience is to be the attitude and expression of how the beloved are to live.

4. *How does knowing that someone is coming, and is near, change what you do? Give an example.*
5. *Do you think the exhortation to patience still needs to be heard in the faith community? Why or why not?*

The author of James offers three examples of patience. The first example is that of a farmer waiting patiently for the crops to mature and be ready for the harvest. (James 5:7) The imagery resonates with anyone who farms or gardens. Waiting for timely rains—not knowing when they will come—and delaying the harvest until the time is right, requires patience. The second example is that of the prophets (James 5:10) who relentlessly spoke the word of the Lord, whether the message was “in season” or “out of season.” The prophets serve as models of suffering and patience (long-suffering). The third example is that of Job (James 5:11) who lost home, family and livelihood to attacks and natural disasters, but who remained faithful in anticipation that God would fulfill God’s promise.

6. *Which of these examples resonates with you? Why?*
7. *What is another example of patience?*

It is tough to be patient when things aren’t going as expected. Clearly, the expectation of the coming of the Lord (the Greek word “parousia”) was not happening—at least not as expected. It seems that many first century Christians expected Christ’s second coming to be sooner than later. To the faithful who began to wonder whether Christ’s coming would come to pass, and to the faithful in our day who wonder whether God is there and active in the world, the admonition from James rings out: “You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.” (James 5:8 NRSV)

8. *What are the challenges of being patient?*
9. *Does patience imply meekness and inaction when there is injustice and oppression? Explain.*

word among us

The scene is a familiar one this time of year. Harried shoppers, overflowing parking lots, clogged street arteries, “Black Friday” sales insidiously creeping into “Grey Thursday” on Thanksgiving Day as retailers, eager for increasing profit, set their store openings earlier and earlier. Dedicated and committed bargain hunters earnestly studying page after page of announcements of gifts to get, skipping a family gathering to stand in line for hours for that special, too-good-to-be-true purchase. Shoppers hurry from one store to another, impatiently pursuing that great deal.

1. *How do you respond to all the holiday shopping?*
2. *What impact does the holiday marketing frenzy have on your Advent and Christmas preparations?*

It’s difficult in such a setting as this, with all the hustle and bustle of the season, to follow the admonition of James in today’s reading: “You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.” (James 5:8 NRSV) There is too much to do to be patient—too many sales to catch, too many presents to wrap, too many meals to prepare, too few shopping days left until **it’s** here.

It, of course, is nothing less than the celebration of the coming of God-with-us—the birth of Jesus. It is the greatest gift ever given. It was anticipated for centuries and announced by prophets and angels. It too leads to a Friday—one called “Good.”

In this Advent season, we are encouraged to be patient as we anticipate the coming of the Lord. It’s worth waiting for. It’s worth our time and our concentrated study of the published announcements of its coming. It calls for strong and resolute hearts as we face the madness of the world and the frantic search for the perfect gift. For we know that the perfect gift has already been found; or better said, the perfect gift has already found us. It’s a gift for which we patiently wait—a gift that keeps on giving again and again.

3. *What makes Christ the perfect gift?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God’s faithful people

“You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.” (James 5:8 NRSV) As we live among God’s faithful people, we realize that the coming of the Lord is near—as near as that morsel of bread and that sip of wine, as near as the person next to you or the one who shows up needing assistance. The Lord comes again and again to us; but sometimes, we are too busy to see it. We are called to trust in the promise of Lord’s coming and patiently await the fulfillment of God’s promises.

4. *What is the relationship between patience and active living which sometimes rushes us?*
5. *How might you become more patient this coming week?*

Prayer

Come, Lord Jesus, and be our guest. As we await the fulfillment of your promised coming, grant us patience. Strengthen our hearts and open our eyes to see the many ways you come to us. Amen

last word

Look for examples
of the coming of the Lord this week in your daily life.

Daily Faith Practices

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