

Sermon James 5 7 11 3rd Sunday in Advent Series A

Sermon: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent

Text: James 5:7-11 (v. 7)

Theme: Be patient till the Lord's coming

Goal: To prepare people to wait for the second coming of Jesus with patience even in the midst of suffering.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Christmas is always an exciting time for the children! I can remember when I was a child, and hearing now from our daughter about our 5-year-old grandson how eagerly he is expecting Christmas I recall my childhood, how long the Advent Season seemed till Christmas came! I became impatient and curious what the Christmas tree would be like and what gift I would receive. Yes, because at that time the Christmas tree was unveiled only on Christmas Eve when we came home late after the Christmas Play and the gifts were then shared as well.

Impatience is a strong characteristic when we are waiting for someone or for something. Especially in the European culture, ruled by the watch, if something doesn't happen at the right time we become nervous...

Our text talks about just the opposite: "Be patient, my brothers and sisters..." and it has a special reason: "until the Lord's coming." Christians began to become impatient because the second coming of Christ was taking too much time. Some were expecting the return of Jesus in their days... Others became tired of waiting for Jesus and were about to give up their faith...

I – Waiting for Jesus' first coming

These feelings were not something new among God's people. The promise of the Messiah in the Old Testament took too much time to be accomplished according to the established church. Some became tired of waiting for the Messiah and followed their own way; and others "dreamed" of a Messiah according to their own wishes, and not according

to God's promises. This is the reason why so few people celebrated the coming of baby Jesus, and why Jesus was not accepted by the church's leaders and by many of the people. They didn't have patience to expect the Promised One and their minds and hopes got confused by the long expectation, being not prepared when the Christ came.

Some had patience and received God's promise and salvation. Most of them were among the ordinary people, and not among the church leaders. Mary and Joseph were simple and poor people from the north of the country, not from the capital. The shepherds were among the most simple people of that time. Zachariah and Elizabeth are exceptions, because they were from the priest's families of the temple and lived in a village not far from Jerusalem. The majority of the disciples were fishermen. – They all waited with patience for the accomplishment of God's promises and they received Jesus, and with Him, they received Salvation!

II – Waiting for Jesus helps now

Jesus came at the first Christmas and still comes to us in His Word and in the Sacraments. We come into fellowship under His blessings, praising His name and offering Him our prayers and intercessions. Jesus always hears our prayers; but this doesn't mean that He always attends our prayers as we ask for things. And some people become impatient because of the delay. He answers our prayers when and how He knows it is the best for us. And we have to have patience. We cannot manipulate God and order what we want and when we want it, as if God was our waiter. Some churches teach this and they say if you don't receive what you are praying for this means that you don't have enough faith ... NO! That's not true!

When James wrote this text he was talking about oppressions Christians were suffering at that time, even economic oppression imposed by some powerful rich people. And he writes: "Be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming." If we don't receive immediately what we are praying for,

don't give up. If it is a matter of health, if a matter of job, if a matter of good relationship with someone, if a matter of family, or whatever more you are praying for, never give up. God knows what the best for us is and why He allows us to pass through that stage. We cannot jump over some stages in our lives. Everything has its reason and we have to endure patience. The new born child needs time till he learns to walk. The teenager needs time to mature and become a responsible adult. The worker needs time till he reaches retirement. Be patient! God is with us means Emmanuel, and He strengthens us in His Word and in the Holy Communion till He replies to our prayers in the best way He knows for us.

### III – Waiting for the Lord's coming

But the main reason why James wrote this word about patience is due to the Lord's second coming. We must not imitate the unfaithful and impatient people of the Old Covenant, who were not ready when baby Jesus came. We must not get tired of waiting, or anxious and afraid about His second coming.

James points to the example of the farmer: He knows that the seed he sows takes time to grow and to be ready to be harvest. He is not able to accelerate the process. *After having work hard to get the crop into the soil, he waits patiently for the harvest, which will come at the right time, neither too early nor too late* (ABC 1515).

Jesus told a parable using the same example: “Here is what God's kingdom is like. A farmer scatters seed on the ground. Night and day the seed comes up and grows. It happens whether the farmer sleeps or gets up. He doesn't know how it happens. All by itself the soil produces grain. First the stalk comes up. Then the head appears. Finally, the full grain appears in the head. Before long the grain ripens. So the farmer cuts it down, because the harvest is ready.”

Lack of patience regarding the Lord's coming is not just an issue of our time. Peter faced the same problem when he wrote his second letter. He says: "Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation..." But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come" (2 Peter 3:3-10). The patience of God has to do with our salvation.

Conclusion: Patience is not a natural behaviour of most of us. It is a fruit of the Spirit, as Paul wrote: "The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy and peace, patience, kindness goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22). We have to pray for patience, faith and endurance as we face illnesses, temptations, tests, obstacles and challenges in our lives. We have to pray for patience as we handle and deal with impatient people not to lose our self-control. We have to pray for patience and hope as we expect the second coming of Jesus amidst all our responsibilities and appointments. God is good and He will accomplish His promises to His faithful people. He sent Jesus once, Jesus is among us, and He will come again to take us to His kingdom. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, 15 December 2013