

Patience

Sermon for the Second Sunday in Advent

Sermon Text from James 5:7-11



⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

The Advent calendar has already been torn into. And the children clearly see that it won't be much longer until Christmas. The same goes for the Advent candles. We can even say that we're approaching the halfway point with the second candle. Both the Advent calendar and the Advent wreath are about waiting. And that's exactly what the letter of James addresses today. He wants to tell us that patient waiting is a fundamental part of faith. "Patience." When we hear this word "patience," we automatically think about children who can no longer wait for Christmas and have no patience. "Dad, Mom, how many more times do I have to go to bed until Christmas is here?" But especially in this time of Corona, patience isn't just a big topic for the children, but also for us: How long do we have to wear masks? When will the vaccine finally come? When can I finally visit my mom in the nursing home? These questions are human. And to be honest: We all are getting more impatient and want to have our old life back. If someone were to get up and say: "Be patient!" Then everyone would want to know: "Why?" And for what reason should we be patient? Or is there information we don't know about?" In fact, you

can't tell others to be patient if you are unable to demonstrate it. That's why you have the Advent calendar where the children are shown in a practical and obvious way how close December 24 is. With many other problems in our world, this can't be demonstrated as easily as with an Advent calendar. And yet, one cannot be patient out of nowhere. Here's an example. I saw the following strange thing on a busy street in a city. An old man stood in the middle of the hustle and bustle and held a lamppost with both hands. People walked here and there to the left and right of him. Sometimes they pushed him and once he was almost carried away by the hurrying crowd. But he remained steadfast and held his lamppost. Just as if his whole life depended on this lamppost. I watched this scene and didn't understand at all what the old man wanted from the lamppost and why he held onto it so tightly. Some of the passersby found this so funny and laughed at him. And then this happened. An old lady came back from shopping. In both hands, she had shopping bags and a stick. She gave the stick back to the old man and as he heard the voice of his wife, he immediately let go of the lamppost, took his stick in one hand and his wife's arm in the other hand, and the two of them contentedly went on their way. Only then did I understand what was going on. The man was blind. And his wife said to him: Hold this lamppost tightly in your hand until I come back. The blind man knew something that we all didn't know. He knew that he could completely trust his wife. And he knew that she would return. And that's why he held so tightly to the lamppost. The patience that James speaks about is very similar to the previous example. The patience that we Christians have isn't just a command: "be patient." No, our patience has everything to do with Jesus. Because we believe in Jesus and because we know that He doesn't lie and will come again, we have patience. Even when everything speaks against it. And even when people laugh at us because we do foolish things. This patience that we receive from Jesus is more than an endurance of time. The New Testament uses a word for patience that has a very different meaning than the modern word patience. The Greek word for patience "makrothymia" was often used in court when a judge had confirmed a person's guilt but still showed him mercy. For Christians, this patience isn't an expression of weakness, on the contrary, it's an expression of strength! Because only a strong person can be patient. This patience is modeled most clearly by our Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus knew exactly that His way to us here on earth would mean nothing good for Him. And yet He gave up His kingdom in heaven and came to us, so that we might be enriched. Likewise, Jesus also knew that the people would kill Him in Jerusalem. He knew exactly what a bitter death He would die. And yet He continued on this path. His resolute attitude was not to repay evil with evil! He Himself forgave His enemies. And He didn't let anything or anyone distract Him. He did all of this because He always had God's will in mind. He knew exactly what He came to do. It was because God wanted it to be. And God wanted this so that we humans would be saved from sin, death, and the devil. This attitude that Jesus had, best explains the word "patience." When James encourages us to be patient, he means nothing else than that we should act like Jesus. So, we shouldn't just endure everything with bent backs because we have no other choice. No, on the contrary he wants to show us that we are saved through Jesus. This gives us everything that is necessary for life. Faith in Jesus makes us free! This means that we have a fixed goal before us. Jesus will come again, and He will collect us. Just as the old blind man on the street was certain that his wife would return, so we are also certain that Jesus will return to us. And as we go our way here on earth, we try to have this attitude that Jesus also had. If someone does evil to us, it is so human to simply retaliate. We want to hurt the other person exactly as they hurt us. Our Lord Jesus shows us that God alone is the judge. We don't need to and shouldn't try to be judge ourselves. We can leave everything to God. Being patient when you are attacked is certainly not easy. That's why James also uses the examples of the prophets from the Old Testament and Job. These people were abandoned and persecuted by all people.

And yet they remained steadfast. They remained steadfast because they believed in God. Patience is very closely related to faith. James gives us an agricultural example to explain this: Farmers in Biblical times knew that sowing and harvesting depended on rain. They knew that there was no point to sow seed before the first rain came. And because they knew that the rain always came at a certain time of the year, they waited. In this way, we also wait for God. Just as certain as the 24th door of the Advent calendar, it is also certain that God has an appointment calendar. The time will come when He will gather us. And trusting in this God, we live here and now and have patience.

Neither faith nor patience are human traits, rather they are given to us by God. And our whole lives we must continually learn them. Our life is like a construction zone where you keep seeing signs on the side of the road: "Construction Zone: please be patient!" Only at the end of the construction zone does it say: "End of Construction. Thank you for your patience!" This last sentence should actually be on all of our gravestones. "End of Construction. Thank you for your patience!" Because then you don't need to be patient anymore. Because then we will see God face to face. And then everything that is so painful and sorrowful is at once transformed into happiness and joy. God has placed this date in His Advent calendar. Amen.