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Advent III  
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Grace and Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita  
James 5.7-11

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

It's easy to get frustrated and impatient in today's world.  
Christmas is all over the place—in the news, shopping malls, sitcoms—  
and yet it rarely has anything to do with God becoming man in Jesus.  
The commercialization of this holy day is disgusting.  
What should be a day marked by prayer and receiving the Lord's gift of salvation,  
is now a day where very few even enter the church doors.

“Christmas is about family,” they say, “and charity, and kindness, and presents.”  
You'll even here: “It's about giving and generosity and doing good.”

While these things are good, they've missed the point.  
It's not about family or presents or even charity—  
it's about God *for you* in Christ.

Without *that*,  
families disintegrate,  
charity only matters for tax breaks,  
and presents simply feed our materialistic addiction.

It's easy to become frustrated and impatient with this pagan world.

A bit closer to home, it's also easy to become impatient with our families.  
It's easy to lose our temper with a child who just won't listen.  
When we've been hurt by a brother or sister, it's easy to lose patience and give up.  
And as children, how impatient we are with are our parents!  
How often do say something inappropriate or feel a sense of hatred because it's just not fair.  
Husbands and wives quickly become impatient with each other,  
each expecting the other to be someone they're not.

And then there are pastors—to whom James originally addressed this little epistle.  
Pastors become increasing impatient whenever the word of God is despised.  
No matter how many visits and conversations and phone calls and e-mails—  
Church is still seen by many as an optional add-on.  
Pastors get impatient at the slowness of learning,  
at the time it takes to catechize and teach the faith,  
the way making changes—even good, Scriptural and Confessional changes—  
is sometimes like pulling teeth!

But St. James says in today's Epistle:  
“*Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.*” (Jam 5:7)

Impatience comes from a need for control.  
And that's typically how someone who has lost his patience acts: by force.

But St. James urges patience for two reasons:

first, because Jesus is still bringing lost and condemned sinners into His grace,  
through the preaching of the Gospel and the giving out of His sacraments;  
and secondly, because patience will be rewarded at Christ's return.<sup>1</sup>

So in the first place, we're called to be patient for the sake of others.

To set aside our control and our anger so that others would be included in His kingdom.

This sort of patience is a sharing in God's patience.

The Lord, who is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,  
has been patient toward you.

Each of your sins—

every breath of hate toward your family,  
every lustful thought,  
every scheme and plot to cover your sin,  
every lie,  
every time you've despised the Lord's word or failed to pray—  
every one of your sins, has been suffered by God on the cross.

That's patience.

It's also called, "*long-suffering*;" in the Greek: *makrothumeia*.

It's bearing in yourself the pain and the reproach of others.

This is most clearly seen in Christ crucified.

And here, James calls us to participate in that *long-suffering*.

Why?

For the sake of others.

So that the Gospel would also be preached to them!

That through this Word of Christ more would be added to our number daily.

But our patience, our *long-suffering*, is much like John the Baptizer's.

He knew the Christ.

He was there at the Jordan;

He saw the heavens ripped apart,

the Spirit descend like a dove,

and he heard the Father say, "*This is My beloved Son, with Him I am well pleased.*"

John is the one who stretched out his finger proclaiming,

"*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*"

(words we sing each week in the *Agnus Dei*).

And yet John is in prison.

*Long-suffering* for the sake of preaching the truth.

No longer eating locusts and wild-honey, but whatever slop they gave in the dungeon.

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<sup>1</sup> David P. Scaer, *James: The Apostle of Faith*, 124.

And yet even in his suffering, he still pointed his disciples and us to Christ.

*“Are you the one who is to come? Or should we look for another?”*

Jesus’ response is for John, and his disciples, and for us.

It’s for all those who become impatient.

Who want their suffering to end, *now!*

Who just can’t take it anymore, who need control, who want an answer.

Jesus says that yes, He is the coming One.

*“The blind receive their sight, the lame walk,  
lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear,  
the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.”* (Mt 11:5)

And yet, John remains in prison.

And your family still fights.

And your job is unrewarding.

And Catechesis takes time.

Jesus says, I am the Coming One—*wait.*

Don’t groan and sigh over the sins of others—as if you yourself were free from them.

But forgive them, encourage them, and bear one another’s burdens.

For so the prophets did so before you—

John the Baptizer being the last and greatest of the prophets is a good example.

*“Yet,”* Jesus says, *“the one who’s least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”* (Mt 11:11)

And you are in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Through the Lord’s patience,

through His *long-suffering* on the cross for your redemption,

He sent His Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel to you.

He washed you with this word of forgiveness

and made you fellow citizens and heirs of His kingdom.

So, therefore, *be patient...until the coming of the Lord.*

Just as *“the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, You also, be patient.”*

*Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

*For behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast.*

There is a great reward for your patience.

Just as John and all the prophets and apostles have been promised life eternal through the Son,

so also have you!

In Christ you are the blessed.

*Long-suffering* the sins of others, you wait in patient hope, that all be saved by the Coming One.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*