

Squeezing Patience from a Bamboo Shoot

James 5:7-12

The Book of James #11

For it is because of the Lord's great love for us that we are not consumed. For his mercies never fail. They are new every morning; for great is thy faithfulness. Therefore, I will say, 'the Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait patiently for him.'" For the Lord is good to those who wait patiently for him, to the one who seeks him.

If you want to see natural beauty on this very day, the only decision you need to make is which street you want to drive down in most of Vero Beach, FL. You don't have to drive down many main streets too far to find Lavender somewhere. You know that plant, don't you? It's that exquisite one that's violet purple that some ole slick figured out how to put in a bottle and sell as an essential oil. . You would also be hard pressed to travel down any street in Vero Beach without spotting an Ox-Eyed Sunflower somewhere. You know that one too, I'm sure. It's the yellow beauty that blooms best in the sun that butterflies flock to. But, friend, you'll have to look with more intentionality if you truly wish to find one of the true, natural wonders of God's Creation in Vero Beach. It's rare to see. But it's capable of residing in all of our yards. However, only the most patient of planters have the privilege of sitting under its shade. It's not Lavender, nor is it an Ox-Eyed Sunflower. It's Chinese Bamboo. It has a seed so hard that when planted, it will do nothing for almost five years. Nothing happens in the first year or the second, not the third or fourth. In those years, the most patient of planters will see exactly no results from the sweat of his/her brow and the toil of his/her labor. But everything changes in the fifth year. The seed begins to pierce the soil and starts to grow into a tree. And grow it certainly does! Some seeds have the capacity to grow ninety feet in the time frame of just a month!

But if we're honest in this room this morning – and we should be because, once again, we're in church – we must admit that we barely have enough planter's patience to wait on our Lavender and Ox-Eyed Sunflowers to bloom, much less Chinese Bamboo. We'd just assume to keep that section of our yard fallow and barren. But, church, I want to tell you this morning that Chinese Bamboo is exactly what we need to plant right now. And to do that, we have to squeeze something out of it that we don't have a lot of. That is this: patience. Patience means having the capacity to accept or tolerate delays, troubles, problems and sufferings without getting angry or upset. But here's the problem: patience doesn't come natural. If it did, the Bible wouldn't tell us to practice it 70 times. Instead, impatience comes natural. That means that in order to squeeze patience out of Chinese Bamboo we have to overcome his first cousin: impatience. He's the one who uninvited at the Christian virtue family reunion, most especially when you are waiting on God to act according to what you've asked of him. James tells us precisely how to do that. Please turn with me to James 5:7-12.

7 Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting 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 one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! 10 Brothers and sisters, 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 count as 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. 12 Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned.

Overcoming Impatience Requires:

1. Remembering something ----- God's judgment is coming

- **The Most Sung Hymn During Times of War:** (1) mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; he is trampling out the winepress where his grapes of wrath are stored. He has the fateful lightning of his terrible, swift sword. His truth is marching on. (2) First penned in 1861 by Julia Ward Howe during the Civil War about the wrongs she saw in her world. (3) The reason why? It encourages patience in the present in light of the certainty of God's judgment
- **The Main Idea of the Point:** We can overcome our impatience at what is wrong in the world by remembering God's judgment is coming in the future.
- **The Main Textual Emphases:** (1) Twice in these verses, James has a time frame associated with patience – until the Lord's coming; (a) In the first coming, Jesus comes as a suffering servant. (b) But in the second coming, he's a conquering King; one coming to judge. (c) James' audience were Jewish Christians being persecuted by Jewish non-Christians. (d) The only way to get them to practice patience was to remind them of the 2nd coming.

- **App:** You are never more impatient in your life than when you have a right to be upset. When you feel like you deserve to a wrong committed against you corrected, you will feel like you are “justified” in your impatience.
- **Psalm 37:1-2:** *“Do not fret at those who are evil; or be envious of those who do wrong; for like grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.”*

2. Doing something ----- Not grumbling

- **Waiting on an Elevator:** (1) If you want to be entertained, watch someone get frustrated that an elevator is taking too long; (2) First thing they do: push the button that has already been pushed by everyone else. (3) Second thing they do: push other buttons of other elevators; (4) Third thing they do: turn around and grumble with clever metaphors: (a) this is like waiting on paint to dry; (b) or like a cat at a mouse hole; (c) or like watching a pot that never boils; (5) But none of the aforementioned will help the elevator get to the floor any faster.
- **The Main Idea of the Point:** Grumbling never solves problems. It makes the problems bigger in your mind and heart. Overcoming impatience implies not grumbling in the midst of the trial.
- **The Main Textual Emphases:** (1) James uses the metaphor of a farmer planting his crops to teach his audience about why God makes you wait on him. (2) In order to yield a “valuable crop,” the seed has to have autumn rains to make it grow and spring rains to nourish it after it grows. (3) You can’t have a valuable crop otherwise. (4) During this process we like to grumble because we want the harvest. When we do this, we are rushing the process.
- **App:** When you ask something of God and he informs you to wait on Him, you get that answer from Him because you are in a season of autumn or spring rain. Don’t grumble about it. Have joy in the journey instead.
- **Phil 2:14** — *“Do everything without grumbling or complaining, so that you can become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”*

3. Looking to something -----The Prophets

- **The Most Satisfying Phrase a Parent Can Hear:** (1) Mom/Dad it appears you were right after all. (2) Why? When your kids are young, they know everything and you know nothing. (3) But when they start to learn after you cut the cord, you usually get this “mom/dad you are right.” (4) That makes it then possible for parents to utter the phrase they’ve waited many years to utter: “I know.”
- **The Main Idea of the Point:** The prophets of the Bible are our examples of what patience is all about. Here’s why: they spoke what would happen in the future, but had to wait to be proved right.
- **Main Textual Emphases:** (1) Jeremiah said judgment was coming; people said no way; but when it came eventually the people of God included Jeremiah in the Bible; (2) Ezekiel said exile was coming; people said no way; but when they went, the people of God put Ezekiel in the Bible; (3) Isaiah said a messiah was coming; people said no way, but when he came he was pierced for our transgressions. (4) James concludes with the example of Job. He suffered much and lost much. But in the end, he was blessed with more than he lost.
- **App:** The desire for immediate validation has caused many to fall away from the faith never to return. Why? They desire a harvest without autumn or spring rains. But not the prophets. Or Job. They are our examples.

4. Refraining from something -----I promise

- **Hotel California and Timeshares:** (1) “You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave.” (2) I’m convinced that line from the famous song was penned after buying a time-share because that sounds exactly like the experience. (3) You often buy a time-share when you get in a rush. Perhaps even when you are in a rush to get away from the salesperson. (4) But, friend, if you’ve ever bought one, good luck trying to get rid of it. (5) Because you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave.
- **The Main Idea of the Point:** No matter what you promise to God, you cannot rush him. The more promises you make; the more impatient you are. Do not make promises to God you can’t keep.
- **The Main Textual Emphases:** (1) James now draws attention to our prayers; (2) He says to refrain saying “God I promise” because this is bartering; a sign of impatience and not waiting on God. (2) Instead, he says to simply let your yes be yes and no be no. That means “yes, Lord, I will do what you’ve asked me to. Or “no, Lord, I will not.”
- **App:** *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God — which surpasses all understanding — will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4:6-7)*