

Oregon City United Methodist Church
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Series: Some Sermons Mike wants to Preach before he leaves!
Sermon: Lord, give me Patience!

Colossians 3:12-15

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

(Wait 30 seconds before going to pulpit.)

In case you're wondering, this is a sermon on patience. Patience is fourth on the list of character qualities we call the fruit of the Spirit. It's what some of you were starting to run short of while waiting for me to get up here. Thirty seconds of unscripted silence was all it took. Patience. This past week I heard about a first-grade teacher who was having a difficult day. It had rained that entire day and the children couldn't go out for recess, so they got more and more restless and hyperactive as the day wore on. The teacher couldn't wait for the bell to ring at 3 o'clock.. About 2:45 she saw it was still raining, and so she decided to start getting the kids ready for dismissal. She sorted out their boots and raincoats and started helping get them on. Finally, they were ready to go, all except for one little boy whose boots were just too small for his feet. There were no zippers or straps, and it took every last ounce of strength she had to get them on. When at last she did get them on, she straightened up with a sigh of relief. That's when the little boy looked down at his feet and said, "Teacher, you know what? These boots aren't mine!" She didn't know whether to laugh or cry, but being the good teacher she was, she smiled bravely and started taking them off. And they were harder to get off than they were to put on. She yanked and tugged until finally the boots were off. That's when the little boy smiled at her and said, "They're not my boots, but they're my sister's, and I had to wear them today!" "As God's chosen ones," Paul says, "clothe yourselves with patience." I want Patience. Right now!

When we're clothed with patience, we can absorb life's irritations and annoyances. We can absorb them the way a good thick towel absorbs splatters and spills. Patience is what gets us through the day without going insane. Sometimes it's annoying strangers we have to absorb. Like the guy down the block whose dog barks all night. Or the driver poking along at 45 miles per hour in the left lane of the freeway. Or the person ahead of us in the 15-item express line at the grocery store, and you count the items and there is 19. You want to call the Fred Meyer check-out gestapo to take them out. I need patience. Right now!

Sometimes it's people in our own family. It's our nearest and dearest who really try our patience. C. S. Lewis says it well: "When two humans have lived together for many years, it usually happens that each has tones of voice and expressions of face which are almost unendurably irritating to the other." You know what he means, don't you? It's not that your spouse does anything all that wrong. It's just that you've been together too long, and it's how he raises an eyebrow in a certain way that drives you crazy. It's the way she takes forever to tell a simple story. "As God's chosen ones," Paul says, "bear with one another. Clothe yourselves with patience."

The Greek word for patience is makrothumia, which is a combination of two words. Makro means "long" and thumia means "temper." Long-tempered. We all know people who are short-tempered: people who lose patience

quickly and blow up in anger. Patience has to do with having a fairly long fuse, being able to absorb life's annoyances without exploding in anger. It's interesting to note that when Paul talks about what life is like outside of Christ, he describes it as an angry life. In today's scripture, Paul says that outside of Christ what you find is "anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language" (Col.3:7-8). You find gossip and quarrels, strife and dissensions. You find split churches and broken marriages and fractured friendships.

That's life outside of Christ, Paul says. It's angry life. It's confrontational politics and caustic talk shows. It's aggressive Little League parents and out-of-control sports fans. It's violent music and abusive media. It's accusatory e-mails that appear to have been sent from a flamethrower. "Get rid of such things," Paul says (Col. 3:8). Take off all those angry old clothes, and put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with patience."

Suppose you race across town for a doctor's appointment only to cool your heels for an hour in the waiting room. Instead of ranting and raving, you put it into the crankcase. Patient people have this makrothumia — this capacity to absorb irritants without seizing up. Oh sure, patient people get annoyed like anybody else. They know there's a time to speak up, a time to deal directly. But until the time is right for that, until they are right for that, they have a place to put their annoyances without exploding, without losing control.

Me, I keep praying for a bigger crankcase. To be honest, I shouldn't be the one delivering this sermon. I'm not a very patient person. I'm patient with people, that's not the problem. I'm impatient with situations. I need a sign on my door that says something like "Loseth Not Thy Cooleth." Well, I lost my cooleth at least half a dozen times this week. Which is bad enough, but then I had to come up with a sermon on patience. Who says God doesn't have a sense of humor?

One word of warning. I don't mean that patient people are passive or stoic. Patient people get indignant at injustice and abuse. As well they should. There's a place for anger in the Christian life, or so I believe. Seeing sick and hungry children in the world makes me a little angry. Seeing bailout after bailout get's me a little angry. Sometimes anger is fitting. If your child is abused, if your spouse is slandered, you ought to get angry. You can't be patient with a bully.

Maybe we need to confront the offender. Maybe we need to seek legal justice. But if we're going to confront, we need to be in a calm, controlled place ourselves. We'll only make matters worse if we act in fury and go on the attack. Confrontation needs to be patient confrontation. What I'm trying to say is that patient people are not doormats. They know what it is to be angry. But they also know something about anger control. They're not afraid to confront or to seek justice. But they do so with a long fuse. Patient people are some of the strongest people I know, because patience takes a spiritual muscle.

Where do we get it? Well, patience is a fruit of the Spirit, and that means it's partly something God does in us. But developing patience requires some effort on our part, some cooperation with what God is trying to do. Like what? Well, as one who's struggled with impatience all my life, I can offer these four suggestions.

First, it helps to see annoying people, even hurtful people, **through the lens of love**. If you're stuck behind that pokey driver in the left lane, instead of aggressively tailgating, try to imagine the driver as somebody's grandparent. A really good grandparent. You don't tailgate your grandparents; you protect them. The lens of love. To put it another way, try to see difficult people the way Jesus sees them. We wonder why they're acting in such an obnoxious way. It could be because of tremendous pain in their lives. Why do they seem so distant and arrogant? It could be they've been hurt, and they're trying to protect themselves from rejection. Why are they so hardened toward the things of God? It could be because they've had a terrible loss and they're blaming God. You want to develop patience? Try to see that irritating, hurtful person through the eyes of Jesus, through the lens of love. As God's Chosen people, "Clothe yourself with patience"

Second, it helps to hang around **the patient people we do know**. Apprentice ourselves to people who have pretty big crankcases. Watch them, listen to them, learn from them. All of you can think of patient people in your life. How can you get that calmness in Spirit that they have? It helps to have some good teachers. We're working on that with our kids. We want to be good teachers of patience. I've learned this: Impatient parents have impatient kids. And then your daily routine has a lot of anger and is filled with nethanderal sounds. GRRRR... MPPPH. Ahhh! As God's Chosen people, "Clothe yourself with patience"

Third, it helps to keep in mind **how incredibly patient God has been with me**. How many times have I gotten on God's nerves? How many times have I come before him and confessed the same ugly sin, the same loveless behavior, the same stupid mistakes? How many times have I disregarded him, disobeyed him, disappointed him? And yet, he's always been there for me. Never given up on me. Never lost patience with me. When I remember God's patience, I find it a little easier to be patient with those around me. As God's Chosen people, "Clothe yourself with patience"

Finally, it helps to **keep our eyes on Jesus Christ**. We're not talking about a self-improvement technique: "Forty Days to a More Patient You." We're talking about the fruit of the Spirit, Christ-like character, which we develop not by focusing on ourselves but by focusing on the Lord Jesus. When we look at Jesus with patience in mind, what do we see? We see him there on the cross, absorbing not just a few minor annoyances, but absorbing the accumulated evil of the whole world. Absorbing all that sin and suffering without passing it on, without inflicting it on others — and thereby breaking the cycle of retaliation and vengeance in which this angry world is trapped. When the Passion of the Christ came out several years ago, a pastor friend of mine took his administrative Council with him. Afterwards, at the next meeting, the question of "Should kids have cool-aid in the sanctuary", which had a been a big source of conflict in the church, didn't seem to matter as much. As God's Chosen people, "Clothe yourself with patience" Oregon City UMC: Be a people who clothe themselves with patience. Right now.

Opening: At Silverfalls, speaking about how waterfalls can only come about with patience. Geological patience!

Prayer: Lord, may we be slow to anger and filled with love we know we're going to need Your help here Because if we try to do this alone we'll fail for sure. Please fill our hearts with patience. May we be ready to forgive - ourselves and others. Not just this once But as many times as it takes. Thank you that you are forever giving when it comes to forgiveness. Please fill our hearts with understanding. May we always seek to contemplate what somebody may be suffering Before we jump to any conclusions. Because we know that you never cease to pardon, Lord. May we be slow to anger and filled with love because we follow you, and you are slow to anger and filled with love. In all our prayers, we lift them up to you through your Son's prayer...

Offertory:

Welcome to the Offering, our chance to give back. As United Methodists, we support many ministries, within the church, outside the church, at home and abroad. Last week was World Malaria Day. Yeah, its not on my regular calendar either, but we United Methodists do a lot of work to eradicate Malaria. Each year, over 1 million people die of Malaria. Most of them. 90% of them, are children under the age of 5. More people will die of Malaria, than have died of Covid in the US this year. It is still pandemic level. You may remember several years ago we had a "Nothing But Nets" campaign, where we collected money and made or purchased nets used at night to keep mosquitoes at bay. Hundreds of thousands of nets were distributed. You may remember the "Imagine No Malaria" push as well. Our Annual Conference raised over a million dollars as a part of the UMC's 75 million. What are we doing today? The United Methodist Church has been working in Africa for more than 160 years. We have more than 300 clinics and hospitals in Africa to treat many patients. We provide training for local community health workers to educate people on the symptoms and defenses. against malaria, as well as educating them about how to use their bed nets. The program provides education on

malaria and information - we also deliver solar powered and hand-crank radios to reach unreachable places. Because of our giving, and our loving, and our efforts, thousands upon tens of thousands and more are alive today as we continue to end Malaria throughout the world. Thank you, OCUMC, for your gifts that truly matter.

Children's Time:

Filmed on location at Silverfalls State Park, speaking about how waterfalls take patience!

Closing:

At the Falls.