



Don't Give Up James 5:7-11

In our Communion last week, we considered that the coming of Jesus isn't just about a past event, but also involves the expectation of a second advent and the Lord's Supper reminds us of the temporary nature of what the Church of Jesus Christ does on earth – it is "until He comes". At that point the fulfilment of the prophetic word will be complete.

In this interim period, there is still that opportunity in successive generations of people to accept God's offer of forgiveness and the gift of eternal life. But let's put another angle on to this tonight, which we find in this passage James wrote. *Be patient, then, my brothers and sisters, until the Lord comes.* Be patient. But it goes further than that. This passage isn't about being like an impatient, excited child waiting for Christmas morning – although it could be. Rather it's about hanging in there when life gets tough. *10 My brothers and sisters, remember the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Take them as examples of patient endurance under suffering.* It's about persevering in the trials of life. As it's nearly Christmas, here's some ropey poetry.

*Two frogs fell into a deep cream bowl, one was an optimistic soul;
But the other took the gloomy view,
"We shall drown," he cried, "without more ado".
So with a last despairing cry, He flung up his legs and he said "Goodbye."*

*Said the other frog with merry grin,
"I can't get out, but I won't give in.
I'll just swim round till my strength is spent,
Then will I die the more content."*

*Bravely he swam till it would seem
His struggles began to churn the cream.
On the top of the butter at last he stopped,
And out of the bowl he gaily hopped.*

The Lord is going to come back and we know the challenges the Church has until He returns. James reminds us that with those challenges come pressures, sometimes massive pressures. We all know of those who have given up and shipwrecked their faith. But he encourages His readers and therefore us to hang in there – to persevere.

What does he encourage us to do and be?

■ Don't give up

Feel that life's pressures are going to crush you? Yet we see that the message here is: don't give up! Be patient because God is working His purposes out. *Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's*

coming. We have the hope of an amazing future that's typified by the return of Jesus Christ. But until then be patient. Being patient makes sense and James gives us that sense: *See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.* In the cycle of life, the farmer plants the seeds, but he gets not return for all the digging and planting, fertilizers, pesticides or even irrigation until he harvests it. There was a window of opportunity twice in the year and they made good use of the fact by having a barley and a wheat harvest. Blessing was cyclical – the sowed, they reaped. They knew that the harvest always comes after the waiting. Actually harvests had first fruits as much as the main harvest. The people of Israel celebrated the first fruits at Pentecost as much as they celebrated the full and final harvest at Tabernacles.

For James, God's work in Christ has an ultimate end, and that is the harvest when the Lord returns. To James, as to other NT writers, that seemed an imminent thing. I guess that's even more so after 2000 years. If you think that life is tough for you and that throughout your Christian experience that things have been tough then be patient, because the suffering we currently suffer in this life is nothing compared to the glory that is to come. Paul writes in *2 Cor 4: 17 And this small and temporary trouble we suffer will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble. 18 For we fix our attention, not on things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts for ever*

So we fix our eyes on Jesus and wait for Him with expectation. Even though He's not come back, His Spirit is with us, enlightening us, encouraging us, reminding us, empowering us. And this table is here not just to remind us that the harvest is coming, but that the Lord of the Harvest is with us, building His kingdom in us and through us as His people. He's here by His Spirit as much as He's in heaven glorified and He's entered into each of lives. So not only is He coming again, but He's always with us and He wants us to see His glory and the outworking of His power not just in end times but to look at the first fruits that His Spirit brings us now. This is not a depressing sermon about how we have to suffer until we go to glory, but to expect to see first fruits in our lives and church before that. So lets pray and act expectantly as His people that we will see God's Spirit poured out in our lives and in our Church. Remembering the patience that we need to exercise before that happens.

■ **Don't complain about one another**

Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! When the going gets tough as a church, it's easy to find fault in others in the church – to take our frustrations out on others. Maybe it's their problem something isn't working out. Maybe they're not pulling their weight. Maybe there are people who don't seem to do much. But maybe it's me! Don't grumble. The Lord, the Judge is coming. Leave judgement to Him.

"If you as a Christian have been badly wronged, be patient! The Lord will return soon, and when He comes, He will righteously judge every person. He will vindicate you. But, be careful, because He will judge you, too!" Steven Cole

■ **Follow the example of Job**

So, we don't see it right now, but it's coming. Let's see what else James says: *10 My brothers and sisters, remember the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Take them as examples of patient endurance under suffering. 11 We call them happy because they endured. You have heard of Job's patience, and you know how the Lord provided for him in the end. For the Lord is full of mercy and compassion.*

There are plenty of examples of OT prophets that had to wait to see what God was promising.

Sometimes it was months, sometimes it was years and sometimes it was after their lifetime. Look how long it was Ezra waited to see Jerusalem's walls rebuilt. But they were faithful to God, they did His will and they hung on to Him faithfully. And we are called like them to be faithful. Take Job. Everything was stripped away from him. Yet he clung to His God and got double-fold of what he had previously. He suffered for a short while, but despite the comments of his three dodgy friends, his faith was in that which was unseen and God blessed him because of it.

So when we think that God has let us down or doesn't seem to be working remember as James says The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. He is working His purposes out. Are you ready for what God is going to do here? Then be patient. That said, you don't have to be patient until Jesus comes because God blesses in the interim. But oh what a day it will be for us when the Lord returns and we shall see Him in bodily glory and we shall be forever with Him. Now that's going to be truly amazing!

*Preached by Mark Reid
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James 5:7 Be patient, then, my brothers and sisters, until the Lord comes. See how patient a farmer is as he waits for his land to produce precious crops. He waits patiently for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You also must be patient. Keep your hopes high, for the day of the Lord's coming is near. 9 Do not complain against one another, my brothers and sisters, so that God will not judge you. The Judge is near, ready to appear. 10 My brothers and sisters, remember the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Take them as examples of patient endurance under suffering. 11 We call them happy because they endured. You have heard of Job's patience, and you know how the Lord provided for him in the end. For the Lord is full of mercy and compassion.