

Patience

Matt 11:2-11, Jas 5:7-10

A long wait. How frustrating a long wait becomes. Why are we waiting?

Jesus is coming again – but we have been waiting. 2000 years.

John was expecting the Messiah. He didn't have too long a wait as he got to baptise Jesus and God revealed who Jesus was to him. Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They may have been relatives as well, but John in prison is impatient. He revealed the Messiah to people but he's not seen everything come to pass. Was he mistaken in what he heard from God?

So he send the message to Jesus and we read it this evening. What was the reply to the disciples of John? "Go back and tell John what you are hearing and seeing: 5 the blind can see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from dreaded skin diseases are made clean,^[a] the deaf hear, the dead are brought back to life, and the Good News is preached to the poor. 6 How happy are those who have no doubts about me!"

In other words – don't ask stupid questions. That said Jesus isn't disparaging about John's doubts in prison. Quite the reverse, Jesus says just how special a prophet John actually was. 'God said, I will send my messenger ahead of you to open the way for you.'

John was a truly special person – we read that in Luke 1 – he was born with the Holy Spirit already present in him. He was the greatest of the prophets because he was entrusted with the most special news, the imminent advent of the Messiah.

But then Jesus says this: 'God said, I will send my messenger ahead of you to open the way for you.' 11 I assure you that John the Baptist is greater than anyone who has ever lived. But the one who is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than John.

However you feel about your faith this evening, know this: even the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John. Yes, that's you and me.

But I haven't done anything I hear you say. Too right. Jesus has done it all and the bread and wine stand testimony to that. He's done it all and we are members of the family of God. Heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ. Special, exalted. Oh how great the mercy, grace and love of God!

But there are days we feel just a bit like John don't we? All the more so when someone then says as I did two weeks ago – Jesus is coming again – and it may be soon. Well He's taken 2000 years so far.

That's how the people James wrote to felt: James 5:7 Be patient, then, my friends, until the Lord comes. See how patient farmers are as they wait for their land to produce precious crops. They wait 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 friends, so that God will not judge you. The Judge is near, ready to appear. 10 My friends, remember the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Take them as examples of patient endurance under suffering.

So many of the prophets never got to see their prophecies fulfilled; but they were part of the purposes of God and one day God is going to be vindicated. The One who was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is going to be the One who returns and the world is going to be placed under the justice of God. At least they can't say they never had any warning!

So as we come around the table again this evening just be for we celebrate the first advent, we recognise this same Jesus will return and take us to Himself and so that we shall forever be with the Lord. Until then we celebrate this simple meal until He comes both as a reminder of what He has done, a reminder that He is with us still by His Spirit and a reminder that He is returning. We have witnessed in our lives what He has done, we know what He is doing. We look forward in faith to what He shall do – and we speak out that testimony at this time of advent and bear witness to the One who died and has risen again.

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