

## **Promise and Patience**

Promise of Lent: Part 5 “Promise and Patience”

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – March 21, 2021

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

**Readings:** Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

**Reflection:** Psalm 51:1-12

**Greeting:** Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. (*Isaiah 2:5,3c*)

**Prayer:** Everlasting God, because of your tender mercy toward all people, you sent your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon himself our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all should follow the example of his great humility. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of his patience through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 51:1-12

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment. Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me. You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:1-12 NRSV\*)*

We read the words of Psalm 51 and we hear of God’s saving grace. It is the Lord that washes us clean of our sin. That we should seek God to put a new heart within us. How do you seek out God’s love? What does it mean to you to have sins blotted out and to have a right spirit? What can we do to share God’s love with others and to share his redeeming grace?

**Prayer:** Almighty God, your blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan. Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations. And, as you know the weakness of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save. May you hear our prayer and guide us in these 40 days on our way to the cross; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

**Sermon:**

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading is from Jeremiah chapter 31, verses 31 through 34.

*The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-34 NRSV\*)*

Our next reading is from Hebrews chapter 5, verses 5 through 10.

*So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”; as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:5-10 NRSV\*)*

Our last reading is from John chapter 12, verses 20 through 33.

*Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. (John 12:20-33 NRSV\*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

So, we come to the last of our series about the Promise of Lent, though we still have one Sunday left in Lent. Today we look at the connection between promises and patience. Patience can be a difficult thing to have when we are waiting for something important. I think a lot of us have learned a lot about patience in this last year. There's been a lot of waiting. And it's definitely caused some frustration. It's caused anxiety. It's caused doubt. And all of those things are normal when patience is tested. Jeremiah, in a way, gives us the epitome of having to wait and we get that from the opening. "The days are surely coming." But not yet. Not now. Not today. However, the call for patience is because something good is coming, a new covenant. One that's going to be better than the one that the people failed. This one will be internal. This internal covenant isn't going to be something that has to be put on tablets and read aloud, but something that will be put within us, will be in our hearts. I think one of the fascinating parts about Jeremiah is this idea that "No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord." And it's this idea of a personal relationship, not the distance that we sometimes think of with some of the Old Testament worship. Don't get too close. Don't touch. You're not allowed here. That there will be a direct access to God, which we find in Christ.

In John, we get an interesting discourse, the final public discourse in John. Some Greeks are seeking to see Jesus. When Jesus is told, the response isn't exactly about Greeks coming to see him. Instead, it is a discourse about how the time is near. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. However, it still requires patience because it isn't quite here. But we get things laid out that the hour is coming, and it's time to know. The time is coming when the sacrifice is going to be made out of love. A time to glorify God. And a voice comes from heaven. That when Jesus calls out "Father, glorify your name," a voice from heaven replies "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd is stunned. Jesus tells us the voice was here for the sake of the crowd, not his own. Because he is not the one that needed to hear this, they are. Jesus then alludes to the crucifixion, that when he's lifted up from the earth, he'll draw all people to him. But that time is not quite at hand. And there's going to be a great need for patience. The reason being that to see this through people will have to understand, start to finish, what's going on. And they'll have to wait to understand it.

This idea of having to wait, is one that can be really difficult, because we don't like having to wait on anything. In today's society, waiting has become even harder. Things are on demand. You want to see the movie you want to see, push a button and there it is. Hungry? There's plenty of places that are open all night that you can find to go eat whenever you want. Drive wherever you want to go whenever want something. Go online, order at that moment it will be here shortly. The problem is that we are a people who get impatient with anything. If you aren't sure about that, all you have to do is look around to see it's hard to be patient, even harder when we're waiting on something big. Look at the small things. People complain if they're waiting for a table. We get impatient waiting for a traffic light to change color. How much more difficult is it to wait for salvation? How much more difficult is it to wait to know that

you are saved? To wait to know the promise has been fulfilled? But we do wait on these promises. And we wait because we have faith, and faith is what strengthens us to have patience. Because we know that God is with us. Christ is trying to prepare the people around him for what's about to happen and I don't know that it's really fully possible that they could ever be 100% prepared. And I can't fault them for that because I can't say that I'm 100% prepared. Because there's so many things I don't know, and so many things that I may not see "proof" of in this lifetime.

For me there's two ways of having patience when it comes to God's promises. We could simply look ahead and focus on what's ahead and only look to what's ahead and sit around patiently waiting to see. Or we take another route. By faith, we accept that God's promise is there, and we actively work to uphold our promises to God while we patiently wait. Now the difference is that we could spend our whole life looking ahead to life eternal and keeping our eyes only there. Simply waiting on God's promises and not lifting a finger. The problem there is that we ignore our promises. That Christ is there patiently waiting for us to get up and do. It does no good to all patiently be waiting around for someone to make a move. Because even if we can't see it, we know God is acting. By faith we accept that God is there, and God is doing. We accept that Christ is the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation. That we near the end of our journey to the cross, to see love born out in sacrifice.

What Christ is telling us in our reading today is that we must also actively seek Christ out. We could wait for Christ, but we're told that whoever serves must follow. That where Christ is the servant will be also. That we will know God in our hearts. We will be his people. He will be our God, and we'll know it because it's within us. But if we are to be where Christ is to be then we must be there at the cross to bear witness to love, to bear witness to mercy. And we must patiently wait for the resurrection, to bear witness to the promise of eternal life. Just as we patiently wait for Christ to come again in glory. And it can get hard. Personally, I don't know that I am "waiting" these days. Not in the sense of sitting around and thinking about it and wondering what it will be like and thinking about it as some far-off thing. I say not waiting because it's more of acting. Because part of my patience has become to live the promise by making sure that all know the promise is there. To patiently live the promise by being merciful, by caring for others, by speaking up for the truth, and by standing up to injustice. Instead of waiting for God's kingdom to come to me, I've decided to work on building God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. That if I trust that God will give me my daily bread, I trust that I can keep working and keep doing. That all things will happen in God's time. One might say that instead of patiently "waiting" that I'm patiently "doing." I invite anyone to think about that. Because one of the difficulties that we face is not having the physical proof that we might want. No receipt, no confirmation emails, no reminder calls. But faith. Faith is enough for me. Because it is written on my heart. I know that God is my God. Christ is my Savior. And sometimes that's all I have to cling to. But it's enough to get me through.

So, in this time of reflection, as we walk closer to the cross during this Lenten reflection, I encourage you to look and ask, are you sitting and waiting? Or are you patiently doing? Acting on the promise that is there for you, making sure that others know the promise is there for them. Are we waiting to see what happens or are we bearing fruit? Are we waiting to see where Christ is going? Or are we following in faith, knowing that, since our patience will be rewarded, we might as well keep acting and keep doing until that day comes, because we don't know when the day will be that we will "know." But we do know this: we are loved. Our Savior gave his life that we would know. That it would give us the strength we need to have patience, knowing the promise is there. So, live it. Go and patiently do all that you can, that you may be a light in the darkness, that you may be love conquering hate, that you may be mercy in a world that so needs mercy. And let Christ help you to be the patient calm in the storm in this turbulent journey that we call life. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** God of grace and glory, we thank you that you judge us not by the perfection of our actions, but by our readiness to live boldly by faith. Help us, as individuals and as a congregation, to trust you and follow where you lead, that in Christ your name may be glorified in all the earth. In these forty days, may God's grace be shown to us all, cleansing us from our sins, and restoring us in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Our Current Series – Promise of Lent**

Our series is *Promise of Lent* and looks at the ways that we view God's promises during the season of Lent. Each week we look at the promises in a different light.

February 21st – *Promise of New Beginnings* - Genesis 9:8-17; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

February 28th – *Promise Everlasting* – Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38

March 7th – *Promise of Justice* – Exodus 20:1-17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

March 14th – *Promise of Salvation* – Numbers 21:4-9; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

March 21st – *Promise and Patience* – Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

## **Prayer List**

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Eric Veach	Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison
Cindy Cisney	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins
Ronnie & Elaine Carlen	Don Stewart	Bill Gilbert	Michael & Makenzie Reynolds
Ronnie Winstead	Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons	Trinity Powers
Lauren Stewart	Charlie Henderson	Family of Tom Shamhart	Family of John Millsap
Rosalee Chancellor	Phyllis Gable	Family of John Robey	Family of Wendell Kemper
Sage Martin	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family
Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Mary White	Leo Smith
Bonnie Hite	Donna Graham	Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer
Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	Kim Hennes
Family of Irma Cressap			

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