

Sermon Draft for December 14, 2025

Text: James 5:7–10

Sermon: “Waiting Patiently”

During Advent we reflect on the “coming” of Christ; we prepare to celebrate the first coming of Christ as an infant who was laid in a manger, but we also look ahead to the second coming of Jesus. We prepare during Advent not just to celebrate Christ’s birth, but also for his return at the end of time. The Advent season is a time for repentance. Our text from the Book of James reminds us of Christ’s return and gives us insight for what we are to do as we wait for him to come back.

Believers were suffering at the hands of the wicked rich. Especially in times of suffering, we look forward to Christ’s return, when the suffering of this present world will end and we will be taken to be with Christ in the glory of God’s heaven. During times of suffering James exhorts us to be patient and to stand firm.

We used to plant a garden every year. We worked up the soil and then planted seeds, corn, tomatoes, carrots and Squash. Every day we went out to the garden to see if they had sprouted. But soon enough, after four or five days, I'd forget all about the garden. It was just taking too long! Of course, God on His timetable caused those seeds to sprout. But by then I'd lost interest and rarely went back out to the garden. The seeds grew, but so did the weeds.

The same sort of thing can happen to us spiritually. Christ has promised to return, but he is taking so long. Why hasn't he come back already? We are tempted to grow impatient. But God says to us in our text, ***“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains”*** (James 5:7).

When God tells us to do something in his Word, he also gives us the spiritual power to do it by the grace that comes through Jesus Christ.

That's certainly true as we wait for Christ's return at the end of the world. Until Christ's return God will help us stay strong in our faith and share that faith with all we can.

Many grow impatient of waiting (v 7a). So many people get distracted by the busyness of their lives and the pleasures of the world. Christ loses his appeal. Jesus seems so far away that it's easy to lose him as we live our hectic lives. In the parable of the sower Jesus warns us that this would happen: ***"The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures"*** (Luke 8:14). Just before our sermon text, James utters this stern warning to the rich: ***"You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence"*** (5:5); the things of this world, of now, of immediate gratification, not eternal things, things worth waiting for, are consuming them. And even within James's congregation, there are growing signs of impatience: members grumbling against one another (v 9a), impatient with each other's faults, placing blame, groaning as if their fellow believers were simply intolerable to be around.

Though we live by the Spirit, we are still sinners and get on each other's nerves.

Some even abandon the faith altogether. "Oh, well, I can always repent later" is the attitude of many. "I've got plenty of time," they think, having long ago lost any awareness that they're waiting for a returning Lord. Many leave Christ behind in their pursuit of earthly and immoral pleasures. Those who do face God's judgment: an eternity of punishment in hell.

The farmer waits patiently (v 7b). James exhorts us to be patient. As the farmer must be patient waiting for the harvest, so we must be patient. The farmer plants his seed and waits. He knows that God will bring a harvest in due time. ***"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing***

for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10–11). And the rains do come the autumn rains, the spring rains. They do come.

At least for the farmer they usually come. As we wait for Christ, we have watering and feeding that are even more certain. We have God’s grace, given in the means of grace. By God’s grace, strengthened by his Word and Sacraments, we patiently continue on with our faith. We believe and trust in Jesus as the one and only Savior from sin and eternal death. Jesus is the only one who can save us and give us eternal life. He suffered and died on his cross so that we could have forgiveness of our sins and be restored with God. No one else can do for us what he has. No one else can save! We cling to his cross, for he alone is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one will come to the Father except by him. Like a seed, Christ was planted in the ground by burial after his atoning death on the cross. Then, like a dead seed that is watered, he sprang to life in his resurrection on the third day. He is the firstfruits of those who die in the faith and await the final harvest: resurrection of the dead.

The harvest is near (vv 8–10). Our text points us to the second coming of Christ: ***“Be patient . . . until the coming of the Lord”*** (v 7). ***“The coming of the Lord is at hand”*** (v 8). ***“The Judge is standing at the door”*** (v 9).

When Christ returns to judge the living and the dead, he will gather us into his eternal Kingdom like a good farmer harvesting his wheat. In the new heaven and the new earth, there will no more sin or crying or pain. In view of this great day that is soon to come, the Lord strengthens us by his Word, that we may be obedient to his exhortations.

That means living together as brothers and sisters who await the very same glorious day. Not living selfishly, immorally, for earthly riches and pleasures. Not grumbling against one another. Christ lives in us by faith, and he works powerfully in us, influencing our thoughts and actions. He moves us to see others in a good light and not complain about them.

In this way we love God so that we love our neighbor, **“defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way”** (Explanation of the Eighth Commandment). In this way, we use the blessings we’ve received to bless others, sharing, sacrificing, as we await eternal riches.

And in this way, we sow the seeds of those eternal riches as well. James urges us to take as an example of patience the Old Testament prophets. They **“spoke in the name of the Lord”** (v 10), even as they were enduring suffering. Truth be told, there’s only one reason Christ still delays his return. There’s only one thing we’re really waiting for, for all those Christ will call to eternal life to have heard that call. There’s only one task truly incumbent upon us as we wait: to speak, live, witness the name of the Lord. To prepare others for the harvest that’s coming.

During World War II, when General Douglas MacArthur was forced to leave the Philippines, he made a promise: “I shall return.” General MacArthur kept that promise and did indeed return.

Jesus has made a promise to all of us: “I shall return.” He will keep that promise. He will return. We don’t know exactly when, but our text assures us that his coming is near. “Until then . . . ,” until Jesus Christ returns, you and I have important things to do. And with the help of God we will do them. Until then we will keep building ourselves up in the faith through God’s Word and Sacraments. Until then we, by grace, will endeavor to stop grumbling about others. And until then we, by grace, will continue to proclaim the Gospel so that many more people will be found in the faith on the day when He returns. Until then we, by grace, wait patiently for our Lord’s return. In Christ’s saving name. Amen