

Introduction

- Good morning Saylorville Church...I am honored to be bringing the Word of God to you this Super Bowl Sunday as we continue in our sermon series “Keeping it Real” a study of the Book of James, and so, if you have a copy of Scripture I would invite you to find James, chapter 5, verse 7.
- Today we are covering a topic that comes pretty naturally to most 21st century Americans...PATIENCE.
 - In fact, in a 2015 poll 80% of respondents (Americans) described themselves as being “very patient” and I mean that was in 2015...so it's probably gotten even better right?!
- No...in fact, that same poll, also reported a few other statistics, check these out...
 - More than half of those polled reported that they hang up the phone after being on hold one minute or less
 - 71 percent reported that they frequently exceed the speed limit to get to their destination faster
 - And here's my favorite...according to the poll...96 percent of Americans will knowingly consume extremely hot food or drink that burns their mouth and 63 percent do so frequently
- If, as is always said, “patience is a virtue” then it seems to be a virtue that is lacking in our age of instant gratification:
- And yet, as famous pastor, Charles Spurgeon, once said “The Lord's people have always been a waiting people.” **SWITCH SLIDE**
 - And so my question for you this morning is simple...“what are you waiting for?”
- I've entitled this message “Patient at His Coming” and James has a strong exhortation for us “waiting people” this morning...and so, let's hear what the Lord has to say to our impatient hearts...James, chapter 5, verse 7. **SWITCH SLIDE**

READ ALL OF JAMES 5:7-11

- And so as we near the end of James' letter we find in these final verses of chapter 5 a grand exhortation, an encouragement, to James' beleaguered audience.
 - If you've been with us throughout the series you would know that James is, most likely, writing to extremely poor and persecuted Christians in Jerusalem...
- In fact, James' exhortation here, in context, is directly related to the persecution faced by his audience. Notice that our passage starts with the word “**therefore.**” Whenever we see that word in the Bible, we always ask “what is it there for?” It shows that our passage today is directly related to the passage above it.
- If you were with us last week you heard Pastor's strong word from the first 6 verses of chapter 5 towards those who trust in their material wealth, check out this verse from that passage: **SWITCH SLIDE**

(verse 4) “Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts.”

- So if last week was about the condemnation of those who fleece the poor for their own gain, what is this week's passage about? Not condemnation, but exhortation from God, through James, to the people actually getting fleeced...the laborers, those who did the harvesting.

- Yet, as we will see this morning, though that is the immediate context, I think that James' exhortation is meant to be taken in light of all that he has spoken on in the last four chapters.

SWITCH SLIDE

- And what does James say to his suffering audience? How does he, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, encourage them first?...“BE PATIENT!”
- And this is not just a flippant call to grin and bear it...no instead it is a call to an intentional effort to NOT avenge oneself, to NOT seek revenge for the evils done to you, to patiently endure the hard things, and the hard people in one's life.
 - It is a call to have a long fuse...some bibles translate this word in other places as “long suffering.”
 - Its like what Rachel and I feel when we put the pacifier in my daughter Winry's mouth for the 30th time at 1:30 am at night.
 - And since it is Superbowl Sunday, it is what every Detroit Lions fan feels all the time.
 - But it is also what you feel when you graciously share the Gospel with someone who could care less, or when you just sit and listen to someone even though you are busy, or when you are kind to someone who has personally attacked you. **SWITCH SLIDE**
- James, and so the Lord, is not calling us to patience without pain! No, He is calling us to be “long-suffering” saints within the pain.
 - Jesus once said:“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” (Matt. 5:6)
 - And Paul wrote to the Romans “we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves” (Rom. 8:23)
- That's the idea here, the Christian, is called to a groaning patience, a hungry patience, a sorrowful patience even, but patience nonetheless, and what does James say is the only relief for such patience...“the coming of the Lord.”
 - That is, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, the Savior,
- Friends listen...just in case you didn't know...Jesus Christ is coming again!
 - Do you believe that this morning? James did, and it was the central hope through which he encouraged his suffering, persecuted audience...and it is the same central hope through which God hopes to encourage you today...2000 years later. You see, technologically, culturally, we are worlds apart...and yet I have the same impatient, anxious, fearful heart that James' audience had...what does God say to us today?

be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.

Point 1 - Christ's Return is the ONLY certain future!

- But what does that actually look like right? To wait for the Lord? Fortunately for me, God gives us a built in illustration right in the text, check out the bottom of verse 7. **SWITCH SLIDE**
 - James paints this picture of waiting on the Lord as being similar to the work of the Ancient Mediterranean farmer. They simply plant their seeds and then wait for the rains to come, being patient (that is, long-suffering) in the process.
- Yet it is no accident that James uses an agricultural illustration here...why?

- Because, last time I checked, no farmer can make it rain on command! Ancient farming was a slow, arduous, long-suffering process, waiting from one seasonal rain to the next.
- In fact, the farmer’s entire life was utterly dependent on the rains, that is, on God showing up! He has no safety net, no insulation, apart from faith in God. SWITCH SLIDE
- And what does James exhort us to do? Verse 8 “**You too, be-patient**” Basically, be like the farmer...and then he continues...”**strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near!**”
- Now that word that is translated “strengthen,” it can mean a variety of different things, some of your bibles might say “take courage” (NLT) or “establish” (ESV), I think “establish” is a better translation as the word really denotes the idea of setting something up into a position, or fixing something to a point.
- So what is going on here? What is James exhorting his audience to do, in order to mimic the long-suffering farmer? He wants them to “**strengthen, or fix**” their heart, that is focus it, place it on something...on what...on the grand, incredible reality, that **the coming of the Lord is near.** SWITCH SLIDE
- In 1952, young Florence Chadwick, a successful long-distance swimmer at the time, stepped into the waters of the Pacific Ocean right off the coast of Catalina Island. It was her mission to swim, from Catalina, to the shore of mainland California. Chadwick had already been the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways, and so this seemed like an obvious next step for her career.
 - However, the morning of her swim she faced much more difficult conditions than she had faced in the past. The weather was both extremely foggy and chilly; in fact, she could hardly even see the boats that were accompanying her swim.
 - Still, Chadwick swam for 15 hours towards the Golden Coast. Eventually, due to the onslaught of the elements she begged to be taken out of the water. Her mother, in a boat alongside her, told her that she was close and that she could finish.
 - But after just a few more strokes, Chadwick, physically and emotionally exhausted, stopped swimming and was lifted into a nearby boat. It wasn’t until she was on the boat that, to her dismay, she discovered that the shore was less than half a mile away. SWITCH SLIDE
- I wonder, can you see the Golden Coast? That is...eternity with Christ in Heaven forever...free of pain, free of guilt, free of anxiety, free of sin and full of worship? Or is there fog in the way?
 - Why does James want us to be like an ancient farmer? Because an ancient farmer had no safety net, no insulation.
- Friends, this was an exceedingly difficult sermon for me to write...you know why? Because I don’t live like this!
 - I wish I woke up and meditated on Christ’s return, I wish I could live completely sold out for the Gospel, in urgency and long-suffering patience...my how it would change my family, and my school, my church
 - But often, if I’m honest, I get lost in the fog of American comfort...my own false perception that I have security and control over my life...my cozy safety net.
- IF WE ARE TO BE PATIENT AT HIS COMING, THEN FIRST AND FOREMOST WE MUST ADMIT AND BELIEVE THAT CHRIST’S RETURN IS THE ONLY CERTAIN FUTURE! SWITCH SLIDE
 - Can I ask ya something? What are your plans for the Superbowl? Are you going to a friend's house? Are you having family over? Maybe you are doing something else? I just watch for the commercials honestly...

- Friends listen, are your plans written down in Holy Scripture? Inspired by the very Spirit of God? Derived from the Divine Mind that created all Space, Matter, and Time?
- James' call to patience is in response to everything else he has said so far, chapters 1 through 5, and what did he say in chapter four: **SWITCH SLIDE**

“You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” (4:14-15)

- Friends listen...no one plans to get in a car accident, or to have a heart attack, or hear terrible medical news, or lose a child, or lose their savings...but it happens nonetheless. **SWITCH SLIDE**
- The title of our series is “Keeping it Real!” Why must the Christian saint “fix their hearts” on the fact that “the coming of the Lord is near?”
 - Because the Second Coming of King Jesus is more real than any future plan that you currently have.
 - Just look at that.....Saylorville Church, if we let that capture us, if we let that sink deep into our hearts, if we rehearse that to ourselves daily...we would be mighty for His Kingdom.

Point 2 - Suffering Detaches us from the World, Attaches us to Christ

- In fact, the Second Coming of Christ is the heart fuel that drove the first century Church. You do not have to read the New Testament for long to see it as a common thread spun throughout the whole narrative. Check out all these verses: **SWITCH SLIDE**
- It is literally everywhere, knowing that the coming of the Lord was near is what got the Early Christians up in the morning, it's what pushed them to preach the Gospel no matter the cost, it's what comforted them when they faced hunger, homelessness, persecution, and yes, even martyrdom.
- And perhaps that's the problem...**SWITCH SLIDE**
 - Why do I struggle to not appreciate the coming of the Lord? If I'm honest, its probably because I don't actually want it...
 - Friends, when King Jesus comes again, that means the World, at least as we know it, will end!
 - You see, I can't see the Golden Coast of Heaven when this world still seems really inviting, really comfortable, really safe
 - But you know what dissipates the fog in the morning? The scorching heat of the rising sun!
- Why were the first century saints so focused on the second coming of the Lord? Because they were constantly tried and tested in the refining fire of suffering...just like James' audience here!
 - And what did James already say to them in chapter 1? Here it is: **SWITCH SLIDE**
 - **“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.” (James 1:2)**
- Just a few days ago, this week actually, my wife had the pleasure of chatting with a member of our church who was recently diagnosed with cancer and, over the past few year she's gone through chemotherapy radiation treatments, it was really bad...Praise the Lord she is clear, but I want you to read what she said the experience taught her, I share this with her permission: **SWITCH SLIDE**

- “In my immense suffering, God stripped me of worry and control. Before my suffering I was insensitive and lacked compassion, my life was all about my schedule now I’m better at seeing people and I genuinely love them and want them to know Jesus.
- Friends, mark it down, I am convinced that our worldly suffering is inseparably linked with a growing desire for Christ’s return and our service to that end! Frankly, I don’t know if I can actually will myself to hope in Christ more...my heart is just too earthbound...too comfortable...but my Savior is not content to allow me to settle for anything less than His eternal presence.
 - As Jesus once said “every branch that bears fruit, He prunes...why... so that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:3) SWITCH SLIDE
 - As the commentator David Nystrom puts it, “Our destiny is to be with Christ, but it is often in the crucible of difficulty that God prepares us for that day.” SWITCH SLIDE
- IF WE ARE TO BE PATIENT AT HIS COMING, WE MUST ACCEPT THAT SUFFERING DETACHES US FROM THE WORLD AND ATTACHES US TO CHRIST!
 - In fact, it might be the only thing that can... SWITCH SLIDE

Point 3 - Those who wait for Christ, love His people.

- But going back to the text, James suddenly goes on, what appears to be, a tangent in verse 9, he calls his audience to “not, complain, brethren, against one another”
 - Why this sudden change of direction? Once again, I think James is trying to get his audience to examine where their heart truly lies...are fogged over by the cares of the world or fixed on Christ?
 - But what does complaining about fellow Christian’s have to do with hoping in Christ’s coming? SWITCH SLIDE
- Mark this down...the level to which you complain about your fellow Christians and your Church is the litmus test as to how in love with the world you are. How do I know that? Well check out the rest of the verse...what does James say is meant to be our major deterrent to complaining against the brethren?
 - The Judge is standing at the door. SWITCH SLIDE
- As many of you know, during the week I teach Social Studies at a local Middle School and I think I might be able to illustrate what James is picturing here.
 - You see, before the start of each of my class periods I almost always stand outside in the hallway and greet students as they come in...however...occasionally I might have to step away for a moment...maybe go make copies for a student in the teacher workroom or something.
 - That being said...occasionally, when I reenter my classroom, my students are not always being little angels, if you know what I mean. They may be shouting, they may be playing music on their Chromebook, the middle school boys might be doing some light wrestling...you know, middle school stuff...
 - Strangely enough, as soon as I enter the room, most of those shenanigans cease...why?
- Because the Judge is standing at the door...
 - Why do the shenanigans start, because my students don’t think I will see...why does the Christian complain and grumble about their fellow co-laborers...because they don’t appreciate the urgency of Christ’s return...they are still earthbound in their thinking, caring more about their own personal preferences rather than the collective mission of the Church to make Christ’s name known prior to His return.
- You want some more proof...check out James chapter 3, verse 14-16 SWITCH SLIDE

- James writes: “If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is EARTHLY, natural, demonic.

SWITCH SLIDE

- Why does James bring up complaining about our fellow Christians or the Church in reference to the Second Coming of Christ? BECAUSE IF WE ARE TO BE PATIENT AT HIS COMING...WE MUST DO SO TOGETHER!
 - Christian, listen, you are a soldier in Christ’s army, if, indeed, you are a Christian! You are on mission with your Christian brothers and sisters for the proclamation of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.
 - And we are in a war, a war “against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”
 - We need each other! The author of Hebrews puts it best when he gives us this warning:**SWITCH SLIDE**
 - Do “not forsake our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” (Heb. 10:25)
 - What kind of soldier fires on their own troops? One that either forgot the mission, or one that is actually fighting for the enemy...**SWITCH SLIDE**
- The Lord Jesus once said of His disciples, “By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)
 - I already asked what you are waiting for, but what are you known for? Are you known as someone who loves their Church and loves their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ?**SWITCH SLIDE**
 - Or are you known as a complainer, a pot stirrer, as someone who always sees something wrong with the Church or the people in it?
- Listen, those who truly await the return of Christ, wait in loving community with those doing the same...
 - Do you have something against a brother or sister in Christ? Confess to the Lord, be reconciled to your brother or sister, then return to your patient service as you wait for the Lord’s coming.

Point 4 - Focus on Promises of God, not the Product of Ministry

- And so, if verse 9 is an example of what not to do when waiting on the Lord, the remainder of the passage shows us what long-suffering patience actually looks like...mainly through the immensely challenging lives of the Old Testaments prophets and Job.
- Immediately, at the very start of verse 10, we notice the previously mentioned connection between patience and suffering...why were the OT prophets such a great example of long-suffering patience for the coming of the Lord?
 - Mainly because most of them suffered horrendously and yet never actually lived to see what they prophesied...and, indeed, few prophets suffered more than Jeremiah, the one we call the Weeping Prophet...very briefly check out this table highlighting a few key moments of Jeremiah’s life.
SWITCH SLIDE
- As recorded in the very beginning of the book, God comes to Jeremiah, in wonder...calling him as a prophet whose mission is to call the nation of Judah to repentance, even saying: “Do not be afraid of them (that is the people he’s going to), I will deliver You!”

- Yet, as the book goes on, we notice something...Jeremiah is, for the most part, utterly unsuccessful in calling the Jews to repentance. In fact, in chapter 7, God all but tells Jeremiah that they won't listen to him...how's that for a pep-talk.
 - Fast forward, we get a picture of Jeremiah's frustration with it all, he calls the Lord Himself to account saying: **"O Lord, You have deceived me and I was deceived; You have overcome me and prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me."**
 - Fast forward even more, in chapter 38, the Jews are so fed up with Jeremiah's call to repentance that they decide to literally throw him in a hole!
- You see, by American standards, Jeremiah's ministry is a colossal failure:
 - He didn't start a great revival.
 - He wasn't an extremely popular preacher, with tons of book deals.
 - **SWITCH SLIDE**
 - Why are the prophets such a grand example of long-suffering patience? Because they focused on the promises and character of God as the drive for their ministry, not the product of the ministry itself.
 - **FRIENDS, IF WE ARE TO BE PATIENT AT HIS COMING...WE MUST FOCUS ON THE PROMISES OF GOD, NOT THE PRODUCT OF OUR WORK FOR HIM.**
 - It is very easy, in our consumer-based, product-driven culture to believe that the Lord's blessing is only found in successful ministry, yet check out what the author of Hebrews concludes of the prophets:**SWITCH SLIDE**
 - **These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. (Heb. 11:39-40) SWITCH SLIDE**
 - Did Jeremiah's prophecy come true? Did the "Branch of David" in chapter 23 rise up, you bet He did, His name is Jesus Christ...yet Jeremiah himself never got to see it in his lifetime. Jeremiah was not a successful follower because of the success of his ministry, he was a successful follower because He saw the person and promises of God and He believed in them! Despite everything in his life saying the opposite, Jeremiah still said of God..."Great is your faithfulness!" **SWITCH SLIDE**
 - And what of Job? Job, the epitome of human suffering. Did he not do the exact same thing? Though the prophets willingly laid down their lives in service of the Lord, in the case of Job, his entire life was taken from him without his consent, and, indeed, without him having any stated purpose for the taking...
 - This guy lost his family, his house, all his possessions - and yet what is his response: **SWITCH SLIDE**
 - **"Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21**
 - Does Job suffer? Of course he does. Does he doubt and wrestle with God? Of course he does. But in the end, after all his sufferings, he gets a front row seat as to who God is...that He is both utterly in control yet also merciful and compassionate in our suffering...giving back to Job everything he lost and then some. **SWITCH SLIDE**

Gospel Bridge

- Yet, one glaring issue must be addressed as we close today...James penned these words.....almost 2000 years ago...

- I know that many of you are sitting here this morning and you are eagerly awaiting the coming of the Lord. You're waiting for that moment for King Jesus to return.
 - You're waiting because you are hurting, you've had enough of your sin, of the curse of this world, of the brokenness of it...and perhaps you are asking the same question that James' audience was probably asking...**SWITCH SLIDE**
- **WHERE IS HE?**
 - Indeed, that is one of the fundamental questions of the Church throughout the ages...yet the Lord of Hosts...just like with Job, can handle our doubts.
 - Check out this verse written by the Apostle Peter: **SWITCH SLIDE**
- **“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is PATIENT toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)**
 - That word “patient” is the exact same word as used in James.
 - Are you suffering? Are you weighed down by the effects of your sin? The brokenness of this world? By the persecution and hatred rising against Christ and His Church?
- The Lord is not aloof to your suffering...in fact, He actually suffers with you, He is enraged by the effects of sin on His good world. He weeps, as He did for Lazarus, when he sees the brokenness. He yearns to save and justify His saints in their persecution, to bring them home to perfection...yet he holds back...why? So that more people might know and experience His incredible love...His enduring mercy...His long-suffering patience.
 - **SWITCH SLIDE**
- Indeed, nowhere was the Lord more patient, more long-suffering, than at the Cross, as the writer of Hebrews puts it...”**for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**”
 - In patience the Lord Jesus came to earth as a humble baby to save sinners.
 - In patience He lived and taught among men to bring them to repentance.
 - In patience He was mocked and beaten by those who He came to save.
 - In patience He took the nails in His hand. **SWITCH SLIDE**
- Why? Why did the Lord suffer so? **FOR THE JOY THAT WAS SET BEFORE HIM...AND WHAT WAS THAT JOY! YOU! HIS BRIDE! IF INDEED, YOU BELIEVE ON HIM!**
- Yet for some of you this morning, you can't see the Golden Coast of Heaven because you don't know the way: Jesus once said, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father (that is heaven) but through Me.” (John 14:6)**
 - Are you still lost in the fog of your sin? Are you still trusting on anything else besides Jesus as your way to Heaven?
 - Friends, Jesus is coming again, **“the judge is standing at the door.”** Are you prepared when He opens it?
- There is a greater SuperBowl than the one tonight! The Superbowl of Souls is coming! Are you on the winning team? Are you a child of the Victorious King?
- Believe on the Lord Jesus TODAY! Believe that He died on that Cross for you, paying the full penalty of your sins through His blood! Believe that He rose from the dead, conquering death, and that He will, indeed, raise you from the dead as well if you believe on Him. **SWITCH SLIDE**

- **Jesus once said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.**

Lets Pray