

“Advent as Warfare: The Wartime Virtue of Patience”
1 Timothy 1:15-17, 2 Peter 3:8-10a, James 5:7-11, Ephesians 4:1-3, Luke 8:4-15
December 13, 2020 (Third Sunday of Advent)
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

We have five texts of Scripture we will consider this morning. I’ll read them all at the beginning, though we’ll start the last text at verse eleven instead of at verse four (as it is in the bulletin).

It is the third Sunday of Advent and our theme is patience.

And each of our texts mentions patience, but each mentions it within a different relationship.

As we hear each one, I would encourage you to ask, for each text: Whose patience is being discussed, and whom does the text speak of them being patient towards?

With that said, we turn now to our texts.

Please do listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this morning.

First, 1 Timothy 1:15-17:

¹⁵The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Second, 2 Peter 3:8-10a:

⁸But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief

Third, James 5:7-11:

⁷Be 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. ⁸You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

Fourth, Ephesians 4:1-3:

^{4:1}I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

And finally, Luke 8:11-15:

Jesus said:

¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. ¹⁴ And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵ As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let's pray ...

Lord, as the psalmist says, we know that those who walk in the ways of your word are blessed – those who keep your testimonies and seek you with their whole heart.

Lord, make our ways steadfast in keeping your statutes.

Keep us from dishonoring your name, by fixing our eyes now on your word.

Teach us the way of righteousness, so that we might praise you with upright hearts, Grant this for Jesus's sake. Amen.

[Based on Psalm 119:1-2, 5-7]

INTRODUCTION: PATIENCE, WARFARE, AND ADVENT

I seem to keep running into George Washington lately.

I mentioned a couple weeks ago that I have been reading a biography of him off and on.

And then he showed up again in another book that I was reading this week.

In the book, David Hein, talks about how some virtues come more naturally to some people, while others are more difficult – they are what we might call “unnatural virtues” to them. [Hein, 189-190]

Hein then turns to George Washington, and writes “Among Washington's leading unnatural virtues, patience was probably foremost.” [Hein, 195]

Earlier on in life, Washington was known for having a fiery temper. His reckless actions early on in his military career could lead to disaster. [Hein, 196]

And yet, later on in his life, patience would be one of his key military virtues for winning the American Revolution.

By 1777 it was clear to Washington that not only over-caution could lead to defeat for the Continental Army, but so could an imprudent attack. Patience would be key in the war. [Hein, 200]

Hein writes: “A military historian has summarized the positive effects of patience on the course of the American Revolution: ‘With [British General Henry] Clinton bottled up in New York, it was patience that brought the war to a successful conclusion: patience with dilatory French assistance; patience with an army that mutinied twice; patience with a Congress that demanded but did not provide; patience while [American General Nathanael] Greene lost the battles but won the war in the South,’ and, finally, to help bring about the war’s rather surprising conclusion, ‘patience that was at last rewarded when the French navy briefly won control of the sea around Yorktown, enabling Washington to deliver the coup de grâce.’” [Hein, 198]

This account of the military patience needed to win the American Revolution intersects with our theme this year of Advent as warfare.

We have said that Christ’s incarnate coming marked an invasion into enemy territory, and the battle to establish the reign of God on earth continues today.

The story of Washington reminds us that patience is crucial in warfare. Of course, cowardice – hanging back in inordinate self-protection – is a vice in battle. But so is rashness – so is impatiently striking out as if you are in a better position than you really are. It can lead to failure, to defeat, and to death.

And patience is a virtue not only for physical war, but also for spiritual war.

We said last week that we live in the “already-but-not-yet.”

Christ has come already, and we await his final coming, which is not yet. The Kingdom of God has come in Christ, but the kingdom is not yet here in its fullness.

We live between the comings of Christ. We have been given much in Christ’s first coming, but we are not yet fully in the age to come – the age when Christ will put an end to sin, and death, and the devil.

Our hope, we said last week, in this in-between time is not in ourselves, but in Christ, and his final coming.

But once we know that, *how* are we to live in this in-between time? *How* are we to live according to the kingdom of God while still living in this present evil age?

One key to answering that question is that we need the Christian virtue of patience.

If living between the advents of Christ – between the comings of Christ – is to live in the midst of a spiritual battlefield, then patience is a wartime virtue that we will need.

And so that will be our focus this morning.

This week I have been reading a book by David Baily Harned, which is titled *Patience: How We Wait Upon the World*. It is a very good book. As with almost any book, we may not agree with everything in it, but it is a very helpful resource on a much-neglected topic.

And the fact that it is a much-neglected topic is something that Harned points out on the first page.

Though patience was an important topic to the pre-modern church and to pre-modern theologians, in the last 100 years there have been “scarcely a handful of books on Christian theology and ethics written in English [that] have been devoted to the importance of patience.” [Harned, 1]

We struggle so much with this virtue that we no longer even see our need to cultivate it.

I know it is a virtue that I struggle with. I suspect it may be a virtue that you struggle with as well. But it is a virtue that is essential to our faith and our discipleship. And this morning we will consider four aspects of it.

First, we will consider the patience of God.

Second, we will consider the impatience of humanity.

Third, we will consider four areas where we are called to patience.

And fourth and finally, we will return to the topic of God’s patience with us.

PATIENCE DEFINED

But before we even get started, we need to ask: what exactly do we mean by “patience”?

Harned gives four aspects of patience, which, taken as a whole, give us a Biblical understanding of patience.

The first aspect of patience is calm endurance in the midst of suffering. This would be the ability to face suffering without sinful discontentedness. This first aspect is oriented toward suffering either because of the sinfulness or the brokenness of this world. [Harned, 111,113]

The second aspect of patience is oriented more towards other people. The second aspect is forbearance or long-suffering under provocation. It is self-control, restraint, and tolerance in bearing with the faults and shortcomings of others. This would include bearing with sins of others, though not condoning them. It might mean, for example, choosing to “ignore [someone’s] unkind words spoken in a moment of anger.” [Harned, 111-112]

The third aspect of patience is oriented to time. It is the ability to wait for something expectantly without rage or discontentedness. [Harned, 112]

And the fourth aspect of patience is related to our own efforts. It is “constancy in labor, exertion, or effort” – also known as perseverance. [Harned, 112]

And so, Biblical patience has four aspects:

- the ability to endure suffering faithfully,
- the ability to bear with the shortcomings of others in love,
- the ability to wait expectantly for something without resentment,
- and the ability to persevere without giving up. [Harned, 113]

And these are not four different kinds of patience, but four inseparable aspects of the one Christian virtue. [Harned, 113]

And it is this four-fold patience that we see when we look at God as he is revealed to us in the Christian Scriptures.

I. THE PATIENCE OF GOD

Though the word “patience” is rarely used in the English translation of the Old Testament to describe God, the concept of the patience of God is on display again and again. [Harned, 25]

In fact, the patience of God begins to be displayed right in the very first chapter of Genesis.

God creates the world, and he creates humanity – male and female. And we learn in Genesis 1:28 that God’s desire, his goal for creation, is to have it filled with human beings, and to have creation subdued under humanity.

But in Genesis 1:28 the earth is not yet filled with human beings, and the creation is not yet subdued by humanity. God could have done that in an instant – he could have started with the final product he had in mind, making billions of humans all at once, and organizing creation in full subjection to humanity.

But he didn’t. Instead, he made just two human beings and then he called them to multiply and fill the earth, and to subdue it and exercise dominion over it as they did. And then he stepped back and waited for them to fulfill that commission. [Harned, 26]

Already, in chapter one of Genesis we see God waiting, with contentment and expectation – the third aspect of patience.

Patience, in other words, was an attribute of God that was already on display even before sin entered the world.

But then, of course, sin did enter the world. And when it did, God’s patience was seen even more deeply. Because when Adam and Eve rebelled, God had no obligation to bear with them. He could have started over. He could have obliterated the creation and started from scratch. But again, he didn’t. Instead, he bore with their shortcomings. He exercised forbearance when they deserved condemnation – the second aspect of patience.

And because God's patient forbearance did not mean that he condoned their sin, he also began to enact his plan for redemption. One significant step in that plan was his calling Israel to himself. And Israel becomes a case study in the patience of God. Over and over again, Israel sins and rebels. And over and over again, while God never treats their sin lightly, he continues to bear with them, in patience.

As Harned puts it, throughout the Bible, "whether God comes to comfort or to judge, renew or punish, the essential message is always the same: I have not finished with you yet." [Harned, 29]

Despite their resistance, God persists. He continues to move forward with his plan, displaying the fourth aspect of patience: perseverance – continuing his labors without giving up.

And then, in the fullness of time, God the Son comes to earth in Jesus Christ – the first advent of Christ.

And why did he come? Look again at our reading from First Timothy. The Apostle Paul, speaking of the first advent of Christ, tells us: "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" – even the foremost of sinners, Paul adds. And why did Jesus come in his first advent to save even the foremost of sinners? Paul tells us: "so that Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience."

Jesus came in his incarnation to display his perfect patience. That patience was displayed as Jesus bore with the sin of his people – the second aspect of patience. That patience was displayed as Jesus waited on the repentance of his people – the third aspect of patience. That patience was displayed as Jesus persevered toward his goal – the fourth aspect of patience.

But that patience was seen most of all as Jesus, the Lamb of God, came to endure suffering – the first definition of patience. For it was in the cross, above all else, that Christ's perfect patience was displayed. [Harned, 33, 38-40]

In his first coming, through his perfect patience, Christ purchased our salvation.

But he has not yet brought it to completion. Why is that?

Take a look at verse nine from our reading from Second Peter. The Apostle Peter writes: "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

The Lord is not slow. He is patient. He does not wish that anyone should perish, and so he waits, that more might repent. He continues to bear with the sin and rebellion of humanity with patience, so that more might repent and come into his kingdom. He continues to wait patiently for the day when he will dwell with his people forever. And he continues to work in the world with patient persistence, towards the goal of bringing all his elect into his kingdom.

In both his first coming, and even now in the delay of his second coming, Christ displays his perfect patience.

Which is why Harned comments that the first three words found in First Corinthians 13:4 could serve as a summary of the whole narrative of Scripture. There Paul writes: “Love is patient.”

If we are to consider patience, the first thing we must consider is the patience of God.

II. THE IMPATIENCE OF HUMANITY

But then the second thing we must consider is the impatience of humanity.

If God is patient – he who is all-powerful and so never needs to be patient, then how could we, who are finite limited creatures, not imitate his patience? [Harned, 14, 39]

And yet, we do not.

And our impatience stems all the way back to our first parents. For impatience can be seen in their very act of rebellion against God. [Harned, 48-49, 51, 114]

God called Adam and Eve to reflect his image by keeping his commandments. He called them to a process of faith, growth, and maturity, by which they would become more and more like their Heavenly Father. The Devil urged them instead to seize the fruit of the tree in order to grasp at being like God immediately. In impatience – in an unwillingness to wait, and to persevere in the calling of God, Adam and Eve rebelled against their God and Maker.

And we continue to follow in their footsteps to this day.

What exactly does that look like for us?

Sometimes it looks like pursuing counterfeit forms of patience. True patience, we said earlier, is faithful endurance of suffering, forbearance with the shortcomings of others, perseverance in doing what is right, and “expectant waiting, filled with anticipation of what is to come” from the Lord. [Harned, 45]

As such, true patience is rooted in faith, founded on the promises of God, and aimed at the goals of the kingdom of God.

But sometimes we substitute selfish forms of delayed gratification for actual patience. Sometimes we pursue the outward appearance of patience, and ignore the state of our heart. [Harned, 19-20, 64] Other times we think we are patient because we delay seizing what we want. But rather than acting in faith, we are merely employing a technique to gain more control of the outcome. And rather than pursuing the things of the Kingdom of God, we are pursuing our own selfish desires. Pastors and theologians throughout church history have separated these kinds of pursuits from true Biblical patience. [Harned, 36, 49, 53-54, 83-84, 134]

So, with those counterfeits set to the side, if our goal is patience that is rooted in faith in Christ, and aimed at his kingdom, what are the sins set against that virtue?

Thomas Aquinas helpfully identifies two: two ways that we can fail to be patient. We might think of patience like a road of virtue we are called to travel on. And on either side is a ditch. On one side is the ditch of impatience. On the other side is the ditch of indifference. [Harned, 67, 115, 134-135]

Impatience is a grasping at what we have not been given, or sinful anger because we have not been given what we want. Indifference is a failure to engage, and to care about something that we should want. Both responses are a rejection of Biblical patience.

And both responses can take a number of forms.

Let's consider a few forms that impatience might take.

Sometimes impatience takes the form of grasping at control that is not ours to take. In response to suffering, in response to the shortcomings of others, in response to having to wait, or in response to being asked to persevere in something difficult, we look for a way to control the situation when it is either not possible or not right for us to do so.

Another form of impatience we can be temptation towards is internal anger.

We may keep our outward composure, but internally we are sinfully angry. We foster sinful anger in our hearts. We may think sinful things. We may say sinful things about someone behind their back. We avoid confrontation, but in our hearts we are sinfully angry with another person, with our situation, or with God.

And then, in other cases, that anger might be given a voice. We might sinfully lash out at someone for their shortcomings, for making us wait, or for requiring perseverance or long suffering from us.

Those are just a few forms that impatience can take.

At the other end of things, there is indifference. Indifference is a form of self-protection where we fail to engage or care about something that we should care about. And it too can take a number of forms.

One form is simply trying to not care. We pursue a form of detachment – we reject our feelings and emotions. Bearing the cross as full human beings, the way God has made us, is hard. So we try to leave part of ourselves behind. We try to detach from our emotions.

This kind of stoicism is something the Church has battled throughout its history, arguing that it was not an act of faith, but a denial of how God has made us, and a resistance to follow in the true footsteps of our Lord. [Harned, 42-45, 84]

Other times indifference takes the form of urging others to disengage in struggles that both they and we should be engaged in.

It was not out of patience, but out of this kind of indifference, that so many white Christians urged the civil-rights leaders to just keep waiting. It is also this kind of indifference that has urged victims to overlook abuse far too many times. [Hein, 203; Harned, 136]

So we may urge others to disengage from something important, or we may disengage ourselves emotionally.

But when detachment by sheer force of will doesn't work, we often try to use other things to help us be indifferent to the trials we face that would require patience from us.

Harned points out that one form of detachment we often pursue in our culture is busyness.

What Harned has in mind is not primarily someone who has a lot of responsibilities, but our tendency to fill our lives with endless activities that seem important, but have no real purpose in view: pointless activity that we use to avoid facing reality. [Harned, 5]

Such busyness is like a drug for many, he argues – used to reinforce and excuse our indifference to the real pressing spiritual concerns in life. [Harned, 146]

But busyness is not the only drug in town. Another is excessive distraction: various forms of entertainment that we use to distract ourselves and make ourselves indifferent to the challenges that God is calling us to in life.

Now, of course, recreation, hobbies, or delighting in God's creation have a place in our lives. They can be not only activities we enjoy, but forms of rest that help us re-engage with the challenges the Lord has called us to. But that's not what we're talking about here. What we're talking about are activities that are not intended to refresh us so we can re-engage, but which we use to avoid re-engaging with the challenges of life.

We could, of course, go on listing other ways we can pursue indifference in light of spiritual needs.

God calls us to patience: to faithfully endure suffering, to bear with the shortcomings of others, to wait with contentment, to persevere in doing difficult things.

But we are tempted towards forms of impatience or indifference instead.

The question is, how often do we give into those temptations?

Francis of Assisi wrote: "A servant of God cannot know how much patience and humility he has within himself as long as he is content. When the time comes, however, when those who should make him content do the opposite, he has as much patience and humility as he has at that time and no more." [Francis, *Admonitions XIII*, p.133]

Francis is saying that so long as our circumstances make us content – so long as we get what we want – we don't really know how patient we are. We can't really know how patient we are.

But when our circumstances take away what we want, then we get a glimpse into our hearts, and into just how patient we actually are.

And if Francis is right, then 2020 has been a great year for us to each find out just how patient we really are.

Because on top of all the normal frustrations of life, we have all had things we want – things we expect – things that make us content and happy, taken away from us this year. And that is true whatever your perspective is on the cause of our struggles. It doesn't really matter what or who you blame for all this. You had aspects of your regular life taken from you this year, and you lacked the power to make your circumstances what you wanted them to be.

So here's the question: When that happened, how did you respond?

Did you respond with patience? Did you endure suffering faithfully? Did you bear the shortcomings of others in love? Did you wait expectantly and without resentment, until the situation would change, by the providence of God? Did you persevere in doing the right thing despite discouraging circumstances?

Or did you instead fall into patterns of impatience? Did you try to grasp at control, even though it was impossible? Did you get angry in your heart, thinking or speaking sinfully about others, even as you kept your composure externally? Did you lash out in anger at others – speaking words that led to sinful conflict?

Or did you tend towards more of a pattern of indifference? Did you try to respond to the losses in your own life, or the brokenness and suffering in the world around you, by simply detaching? Was your goal to feel nothing – a stoic, uncaring response? Did you grasp at a purposeless busyness, making yourself busy with tasks that had no real point but helped you avoid the real situation? Or, did you just pursue excessive distraction to numb yourself? Excessive television, or food, or alcohol, or video games?

2020 can give us a glimpse into our hearts, and into just how patient we really are.

But from an eternal perspective, for many of us the challenges of 2020 are shorter, easier, and of less consequence than the spiritual challenges we face every day in the Christian life.

III. FOUR AREAS WE ARE CALLED TO PATIENCE

Because the life of faith calls us to patience in a number of important ways.

1. PATIENCE WITH GOD

First, we are called to patience with God.

Now, of course, God has no faults that we need to bear with. But in our relationship with him, he does call us to wait. And he does call us to persevere. And both of those require aspects of patience.

Take a look at verse seven of our passage from James. James writes: “Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.” We want – we should want – the Lord to come. We should want to be with him now. But he is making us wait. And we are called to wait patiently – to wait with eager expectation and firm faith that he will do what he promised.

We are called also to persevere in our relationship with God. In fact, we are often called to persevere in our relationship with him when we do not feel particularly close to him. And that takes patience too – the patience of persevering in a difficult task. Even the great saints of old went through times of spiritual dryness. We, like them, must be patient in such seasons. These are forms of faithful patience that the Lord calls us to with himself. [Harned, 78]

2. PATIENCE WITH OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

Second, we are called on to be patient in our circumstances in this life.

Suffering, in this life, is unavoidable – either now or in the future. We can try to flee from it, but it always follows us. We can try to use worldly goods to insulate ourselves from it, but it always breaks through. [Harned, 71-72]

Circumstances that require patience are inevitable. What are we to do when they come to us?

God gives us a number of resources for patience.

One is the confidence that God is loving, and God is sovereign, and he is working for our good through whatever trials he sends us. [Harned, 82-83]

Another is that God is always with us in the midst of difficult circumstances, and we can turn to him for aid.

But a third is that God reminds us of what is coming. The Scriptures remind us that our present circumstances must be viewed in light of the future that is to come, when Christ will come again, and make all things new, and we will live with him forever. If we believe that – if we trust the promises of God – then our present circumstances become easier for us to bear as we look to that great hope. [Harned, 62, 72, 119]

Then we can be patient with the circumstances of this life.

3. PATIENCE WITH PEOPLE AROUND US

Third, we are called to patience with those around us.

We see this in our passage from Ephesians. Paul writes: “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Paul urges us to patience with one another.

That means that we are called to faithfully endure suffering because of the shortcomings of others. We are called on to bear with their shortcomings in love. We are called to wait sometimes, for the good of others. We are called to persevere in our care for others.

And God, once again, gives us a number of graces to help us grow in patience with those around us.

The first is self-knowledge. Thomas à Kempis writes that the more we know our own shortcomings, the more we should see the necessity that we be patient with the shortcomings of others. “Strive to be patient in bearing the defects of others.” he writes. “You yourself have many also, and they have to put up with them. If you are not yourself such as you would wish to be, how can you expect to find another according to your liking?” [Harned, 77]

Another grace the Lord gives us to help us be patient with one another is the grace of restoration. God heals and restores relationships. And when he does, he often strengthens them. And so even when we a relationship has been broken, we can pursue its repair patiently, with the hope and the knowledge that God can restore it and even deepen it. [Harned, 152]

Another grace the Lord gives us as we interact with fellow Christians is the knowledge that he is at work in them, and so we can play our role in their lives patiently, while he works in their hearts. So when they are in sin, on the one hand, we do not give in to indifference and permissiveness. But on the other hand, we also do not panic if they don’t repent right away. We know that repentance may be a process, and God is sovereign over that process. And so, we patiently bear with them. For that is love. And as the Apostle Paul says: “Love is patient.”

Finally, God’s promise to bring justice and vindication upon his return helps us to be patient when that justice or vindication is not available to us in our relationships now. That doesn’t mean we are not to pursue that justice now. But it does mean that when justice is denied to us in this unjust world, we need not panic or despair. We can be patient and wait for the Lord, who will judge on the last day.

4. PATIENCE WITH OURSELVES

Fourth and finally, we are called to patience with ourselves. And we see that in verse fifteen of our text from Luke.

Jesus says that those who produce spiritual fruit for his kingdom are those who “bear fruit with patience.”

Real spiritual growth takes patience. That’s why some church fathers argued that patience is the “guardian of all the virtues.” [Harned, 62 (see also 21, 57)]

First of all, spiritual growth takes patience in the form of perseverance. True knowledge of the Scriptures takes reading the Scriptures over and over again for years. True intimacy with the Lord takes intentional times of prayer, day after day, for years. Growth in the habits of love and virtue takes intentional attempt after intentional attempt, day after day, year after year, decade after decade. Spiritual growth takes patience and persistence.

But spiritual growth also takes patience in the form of forbearance. It takes a willingness to be patient with our own shortcomings, and not to give up on ourselves. Harned writes about how Thomas à Kempis stressed “that we must show forbearance toward ourselves as well as others; we

must be patient and not have impossible expectations of ourselves. [...] If we are too harsh when we look at ourselves in the mirror, the end will be paralysis and despair.” [Harned, 77]

IV. THE PATIENCE OF GOD, AGAIN

We are to be patient – towards God, towards our circumstances, towards others, towards ourselves. Such patience is needed for the spiritual battles that we face in this time between the advents of Christ.

But such patience does not come from us. Such patience is a gift that grows out of God’s patience. For in his loving patience towards us, he not only bears with us, but gives us the patience we need.

Augustine reminds us that patience has but a single source: the unmerited grace of God. [Harned, 53]

Thomas Aquinas writes: “It is clearly impossible to have patience without the help of grace.” [Harned, 69]

Thomas à Kempis writes that while our relationship to Christ requires patience, Jesus also gives us the very patience that is required. [Harned, 73]

What we lack, God is not only able to provide, but his loving patience also makes him willing to provide it.

And so, as we seek to face the spiritual battles ahead – as we seek to live faithfully in this time between the advents of our Lord – let us seek the Lord earnestly, praying to him and striving after his calling. Let us thank him for his patience with us. And let us ask him to make us patient, as he is patient.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

Francis of Assisi: The Saint. Francis of Assisi: Early Documents. Vol 1. Edited by Regis Armstrong, et al. New York, NY: New City Press, 1999.

Harned, David Baily. *Patience: How We Wait Upon the World.* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997.

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