

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Patience

Old Testament Lesson

Psalms 40:1-5 (NRSVUE)

I waited patiently for the Lord;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
² He drew me up from the desolate pit,^[a]
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
³ He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear
and put their trust in the Lord.

⁴ Happy are those who make
the Lord their trust,
who do not turn to the proud,
to those who go astray after false gods.
⁵ You have multiplied, O Lord my God,
your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;
none can compare with you.
Were I to proclaim and tell of them,
they would be more than can be counted.

Bible/Sermon Focus

There's good reason for the Bible to address the topic of "patience" as often as it does. Patience can be elusive and it seems to be especially hard to come by when we need it most.

And so the Psalms encourage us to wait patiently for the Lord. Romans 12 says to be patient in affliction. First Corinthians 13 tells us that love is patient. In Galatians 5 we hear that patience is a fruit of the Spirit. James 5 instructs us to be patient until the coming of the Lord. And on and on.

Patience seems to be a pretty important topic!

Consider the number of idioms in our English language that encourage patience. "A watched pot never boils." "Good things come to the one who waits." "Rome wasn't built in a day." These phrases, and others like them, underscore the importance of having patience, of waiting for things to unfold, of persevering when things do not happen quickly.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER the EPIPHANY Week of Jan. 15, 2023

Our sermon Sunday connected the idea of “patience” with our mission as the church. “We are not going to complete the Reign of God next week,” Pastor Andy said. And yet, gradually, the Reign of God emerges. Little by little, one step at a time, and yet with a steady persistence that will not be denied.

Manchester UMC has been making a difference for Christ for almost 200 years now. The mission takes the long-view, and always had. Over those years, there have been seasons of momentum and growth, seasons of struggle and decline, and everything in between.

The present season in the life of this congregation is just one among the dozens of seasons that have come before. The present generation of membership is one among the generations that came before, and the generations that will follow.

And so we look into the future to ask what the world will be like and what we can do now so that we will still be making a difference then. We seek the direction of the Holy Spirit who is always in motion within us, among us, and around us. And then we do our work, offering love, building community, sharing the good news, and we do so with patience.

Discussion Questions

1. Are you patient? Are there times in your life when you have been more patient than other times?
2. What do you think the world is going to be like thirty years from now?
3. In Mark 4, Jesus loses his patience with his disciples. What does it mean to you to hear a story about Jesus losing his patience?
4. What are you most excited about in this season in the life of Manchester UMC?
5. What are some things that we can do right now to ensure we will still be making a difference for Christ in the year 2050?

Prayer

Reveal to us your mission, O God, so that we may center our work on your desires. Give us patience and perseverance to continue the work handed to us by previous generations. Teach us what can do right now so that the church will still be making a difference for you far into the future. In Your Spirit, **Amen.**

“Only a far-sighted vision of the emerging reign of God on earth as it is in heaven will enable us to stay focused on our mission moving forward as the Church...”

Bishop Ruben Saenz, Central Texas Conference