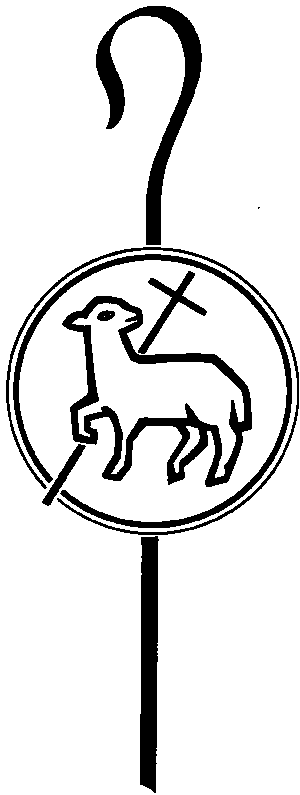


feeding . . . gathering . . . carrying . . . leading . (Isaiah 40:11)

March 30, 2011

Dear Family,



“...hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.” (Romans 7:24-25). This past Sunday, Stuart continued his series on hope, and more specifically, his smaller series-within-a-series on *patience*. He did a bit of review, and then led us into a meditation in three parts: (1) patience/impatience as it is expressed in the nature of God/man; (2) the “parents” of patience, or what produces patience in us; and (3) the “children” of patience, or what patience then goes on to produce in our lives. He also reminded us that “Christian hope is both the parent and the child of patience.”

Any way we cut it, patience necessarily has to do with the passage of time, and as we face this passage of time (the *time* that is frequently presented in scripture as a principality and power that stands against us), there are only two potential outcomes: either our circumstances change, or we do. When we face the delays of the world around us, we are asked to choose a godly delay of our own worldly reactions. In essence we are in a staring contest with our circumstances, waiting to see which can hold out longer before breaking. In our nature, we don’t have the strength to stand firm or stay cool, but thanks be to God, He does!

Our nature is impatience. The causes of impatience in our lives are numerous: loss of self-control, anger, dissatisfaction, selfishness, drivenness, and entitlement, just to name a few (for the full list, give the sermon a listen). The consequences of impatience are equally numerous: subversion of motivation, early withdrawal from commitments, loss of calling, loss of godly goals, loss of time and energy, losing the ability to encourage others, loss of credibility, loss of trust, etc.

God’s nature, however, is patience (and therein lies our hope!). He identifies Himself as patient in passages throughout scripture, of which the most noteworthy might be Exodus 34:6. In revealing His very glory to Moses, His description of Himself is striking: *And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love...”* Each member of the Trinity expresses patience in their own turn: we have the image of the patient **Father** waiting for His prodigal son to return home; we read about **Jesus’** patient endurance as He walked the long road from Gethsemane to Calvary; and we experience the patience of the **Holy Spirit**, as He is the means by which the fruit of patience is produced in our own lives.

In one of Stuart’s pastoral encouragements to us he asked, “Is there any area of your life that God is having to be patient about right now? ...Is there an obedience that has not been enacted? ...A response of devotion or intimacy that is long overdue?” Our response to God’s patience should be both an expression of deep gratitude (like that of Paul in 1 Timothy 1:15-16) and a resolve to settle matters quickly with Him, not to leave any sin unconfessed, or any promise unfulfilled.

So what then produces the fruit of patience in our lives, and what other fruit does patience then go on to produce once it has taken root? I’ll leave you with the lists for your own meditation (one that Stuart said could have been a whole sermon series in and of itself!).

What Produces Patience:

- Intimacy with Jesus (John 15)
- Wisdom (Proverbs)
- God's Word (Romans 15, Psalm 119)
- Needs and necessities, ours and others' (This is the context and school in which we learn patience.)
- Comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-7)
- Suffering (James 1:2-3, Rom 5:3)
- Obedience (James 5:7-8, Col 3:12)
- Hope (Job 6:11)
- Submission and surrender
- Love (1 Corinthians 13:4,7)

What Patience Produces:

- Understanding (Proverbs 14:29)
- Peacemaking, reconciliation (Proverbs 15:8)
- Self-control (Proverbs 16:32)
- Persuasion (Proverbs 25:15)
- Humility (Ecclesiastes 7:8-9)
- Fulfilled promises (Hebrews 10:36)
- Character/Maturity (Romans 5:3-4, James 1:4)
- Hope (one would *hope* you've learned this by now!)
- Security and assurance (James 5:8)
- Spiritual authority (give a listen to the message from Larry Winnes' ordination; patience is fundamental to how one leads and nurtures a family or a congregation)
- A harvest (James 5:7, Galatians 6:9, Luke 8:15)
- Eternal life and salvation! (Romans 2:7, 1 Timothy 4:16, James 1:12)

As a final encouragement, think of the words of the Apostle Paul: *And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. (Colossians 1:10-12)*

Many blessings to you this week,
Ben

<http://www.christourshepherd.org/pastlet.htm> (and follow links to download MP3 audio of sermon)