



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

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"I Don't Want To Wait For Patience"

How to Have Healthy Relationships Series

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Continuing in our series on "How to Have Healthy Relationships", we will look today at a precious commodity that we all want, one that we may discover is difficult to give to others, and one that we do not want to wait for....and one, if you have been around long enough, are warned to never ask for....I am speaking of course about patience.

In the context of healthy relationships we will look at Patience in 2 ways, first in our relationship with God and next in our relationships with others.

What we'll discover is how patience is directly related to our trust in God. As our trust in God deepens, we'll begin to see that our patience with others improves.

Psalm 40:1-3 says - **1** I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me and heard my cry. **2** He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. **3** He put a new

song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the Lord.

A couple of points for us to note are that this is a reflective Psalm and the psalmist is looking back on God's past help and deliverance as he is overwhelmed by current troubles.

Ps 40:12 - *For evils beyond number have surrounded me;*

My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see;

They are more numerous than the hairs of my head, And my heart has failed me

You can hear it can't you? You can sense the psalmist is struggling with external struggles as well as internal turmoil.

What is patience? Patience is defined as: "The capacity to accept or tolerate- delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset.

Impatience defined as:
1. Lack of patience.

2. Eager desire for relief or change; restlessness.

3. Intolerance of anything that thwarts, delays, or hinders.

John Piper defines patience in our relationship with God as: "Willingness to wait for God in the unplanned place and walk with God at the unplanned pace."

It is here, in God's places and at God's paces that a deepening, ripening, peaceful willingness to trust in and rest in God takes root.

Let's think back over our week. Were there times when our capacity to tolerate delays, difficult situations or even deep suffering was tested?

Were there times when that tinge of impatience sprang up in your heart? Maybe it was at home or work, or while standing in that really long checkout line? Maybe your plans, your hopes or even your dreams were knocked out of place.

Or maybe like the psalmist there was an internal struggle, with sin, or how we see ourselves, or maybe even an internal struggle with our faith and trust in God? Does that describe some of us this morning?

If it does, please hear me when I say that it's okay. I have been there many times myself. Bummed out because I have made a bad choice or because I have once again stumbled, said the wrong thing at the wrong time. Or, like the psalmist I've found that circumstances have overwhelmed me that I can't see straight and my heart has sunk so low and is so heavy that you couldn't dig it out or pick it up with backhoe!

As we think about those circumstances that tested our patience this past week or this weekend, let's ask ourselves, what was our reaction in that situation, and why.

I often picture that my capacity is limited at a set amount. Like this cup, and as situations and struggles pour into it, it reaches capacity and there is no more room to take on or deal with any more and the messiness of life spills out onto those who unfortunately happen to be around me at the time.

What the Lord has been teaching me is that my capacity is NOT limited or set, it is more like this balloon. Flexible, it can expand, inflate or deflate. And

instead of me relying on my own ability limited capacity for patience, God is teaching me to rely on Him, the one with an eternal patience and an unlimited capacity for my impatience. I am learning that my ability to endure and exhibit patience is directly related to my willingness to trust in God.

Let's take a closer look at Psalm 40. What do we picture when we read the first verse?

1 *I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me and heard my cry.*

Do we picture a serene scene with David calmly sitting somewhere alone waiting for God to respond, not really doing anything?

A closer look reveals that David is actively seeking God through prayer, he is crying out and submitting himself to God, not simply sitting and waiting for things to get better.

There is a hope and trust rooted in God as David finds himself in an unplanned place and going at an unplanned pace. A hope that God will hear and respond, trusting that He will. Knowing deep in his heart that God will hear his cry.

Did we catch this? God did hear David. God inclined and heard his cry. The picture is not just that God heard his cry, but responded to his cry. God bent down and met David and pulled

him up out of the pit, and put him on firm ground!

2 *He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.*

Patience...our ability to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering, despite our situation or circumstances, is directly related to where we place our trust—not if we have the will power to keep it all together on our own.

Where do we turn to first when life happens, and our patience is tested? Often I find myself looking to my own resources...and not turning first to God: This trusting ourselves first is wonderfully illustrated in a book of the Bible called the Gospel of Mark. It is the second book found in the New Testament portion of scripture.

If we look at chapter 4 verse 35-41, **35** *On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side."* **36** *Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him.* **37** *And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.* **38** *Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"*

And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. **40** And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" **41** They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

What we see hear is that Jesus said to His disciples, the twelve guys He invited to follow and learn from Him, to get in the boat and go across to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. We must also note that four of these guys are experienced fisherman, know how to operate a boat, and are used to sailing the waters of the Sea of Galilee.

Now what I picture is that as the wind picks up, they know, as experience fisherman, what to do. Perhaps point the front of the boat into the wind to steady it, but that doesn't work, and the boat is now filling up with water and ready to sink or capsize! With fear rising up in their hearts they begin to bail out the water and try to bring some resolve to this situation...but to no avail!

Then at their wits end they turn to Jesus and cry out, "Teacher do you not care we are perishing?" Instead of first turning to Jesus, they turned to their own resources.

My point is that they didn't trust that when Jesus says to them, "Let's go over to the other

side", that He will be sure that they make it to where He has called them to go! We are often like that as well, aren't we? Jesus didn't promise a storm-free journey, but He did promise they would be together as they sailed across and when the storm hit, He heard their cry, inclined, and calmed the storm. Jesus is trustworthy and in the darkest moments of our lives He is with us!

My family and I found ourselves in an unplanned place going at an unplanned pace in May of 2011. This was not a good month for the Larson ohana.

Israel, our youngest son knocks out his two front teeth. Okay, I was flustered, stressed a bit and very concerned but it all worked out. Next, the great 2011 Uku (head lice) Plague hit our kids' school and we were one of the many families "blessed" with ukus. I had never experienced this before. I had only read about in magazines, or heard of it from missionaries off in far away lands. Well, I totally lost it! I mean I freaked out!

Meanwhile, Koreen, my amazing wife, calmly got the kids ready and she spent hours sitting and combing through their hair while I raced around the house with a gerry-rigged hazmat suit on frantically cleaning scrubbing spraying, continuing to question God's goodness and sovereignty.

After the Uku Plague, Koreen's yearly test revealed that a small lump in her breast was stage 3C cancer. Here we began a journey of doctor visits, tests, biopsies, surgery, radiation, and chemo that we never imagined we would be on.

The amazing thing is this, I didn't freak out. Our doctor gave us the news and a moment to process alone. I had no words all I could do was hold my wife. I wasn't a doctor I couldn't heal her, but I could pray for her healing, I couldn't explain why this was happening, but I could encourage her, show her that I love her and that God was on this journey with our family.

I discovered what it was to have my patience, like a balloon, expanded.

"Don't you care we are perishing?" YES, that is why before I could do anything God took that step and invited us to find shelter in Him.

He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.

Like the psalmist, we again find ourselves as a family surrounded on all sides as Koreen's latest MRI scan just this past Thursday, revealed two new abnormal masses on her left breast that we will need to get biopsied to see if the cancer has returned.

We find ourselves looking back to God's faithfulness, knowing that He is hearing our cries to Him, and we know that God will incline and pick us up out of this new pit of destruction.

And through these experiences we have had the privilege to walk with firm footsteps with others who are finding themselves in an unplanned place going at an unplanned pace. Encouraging, praying, laughing and crying as we journey together.

Our ability and desire to grace others with patience comes from understanding that we are all works in process, and we must choose to be patient. As it says in Paul's letter to the church a

Colossians 3:12 - *So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;*

Patience with others is not limited like the cup, it is active and flexible patience like the balloon. Patience is journeying with others through their unplanned place at the unplanned pace.

Our ability, and desire, to extend grace to others, and to put on patience in difficult circumstances comes from a right understanding of our relationship with God. It's good to remind ourselves that we are works in process, and because God is a

God of love, of grace and unlimited patience, He sent His Son Jesus to show us these very characteristics so that we by the power of His Holy Spirit are equipped to be more like Him.

What does this look like?

1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 says, **14** *We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.* **15** *See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.*

Remember our question earlier? What and who tested our patience this past week?

Think back to how could we have put on patience? Where could we have admonished others, which means to warn or correct in order to point back to a place of order and peace? Where could we have encouraged the fainthearted with a kind word, a listening ear, or perhaps just a hug? How could we have helped someone who is weak, who may be struggling with some hurt, habit or hang up they can't overcome on their own?

Good news is, we will have many opportunities today, and in the coming days, and we can count it a privilege to be a part of being patient with everyone so that we may lead some to Christ.

We are all in different seasons going through different struggles. I don't know where you are at this morning. I don't know if you are in a miry circumstance, if you feel as if you are in the pit of destruction or depression, or if you are crying out and feel as if you are alone.

But know this, you are not alone. Even if you feel like you may have lost faith in God, or can't see hope in the midst of whatever storm is blinding you, please know that God is here with you, He is listening to you, and maybe even at this very moment, He is responding to you.

This is the God who has loved us from before we were born. The God who knows our struggles and is the source of our hope. This is the God that sent His Son to the cross so that we may be saved.

You cannot exhaust His patience for you, and we want to have the privilege of walking with you through your unplanned place.

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Note: Aaron Larson a Lay Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu and the Director of the Singles Ministry. Sunday sermon texts are also available at fpchawaii.org. The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. You may also request the audio version by visiting: fpchkoolau@gmail.com