

June 26 2016

Scripture Lesson

Psalm 16

Luke 9:51-62

Sermon "Wait!"

Paul's letter to the Galatians deals with the question whether Gentiles must become Jews before they can become Christians. Certain teachers were declaring that in addition to having faith in Jesus Christ a Christian was obligated to keep the Mosaic Law. Paul insists, on the contrary, that a person becomes right with God only by faith in Christ and not by the performance of good works, ritual observances, and the like. Incorporated within this letter which expounds "*the doctrine of*" *justification by faith alone*" is a section which deals with the fruits of the spirit. "This morning I intend to talk about one of these fruits-**patience**."

Galatians 5: 1- 13-26

"For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another."

Those of you who have spent time in the military know what I mean when I say, "Hurry up and wait!" To rush someplace at full speed and then sit around

waiting is par for the course in the uniformed services. Such waiting however does teach a measure of patience.

The basketball game was over, and his team had narrowly lost. No chance, now, for the playoffs, and the coach was analyzing the defeat. “We faced a good team,” he said, “but basically, we beat ourselves. We weren’t patient enough. We rushed our shots, and they didn’t fall. We lost this game by our impatience.”

The young politician sits dejected after the returns come in. He has lost the election. During his first two terms as a legislator, he had a spectacular record, and had tried for the Senate, but was now defeated. “I just wasn’t patient enough,” he says. “If I had just waited another term or two! I lost this election to impatience.”

A father drives to work thinking about that ugly episode with his son last night. He had known the conversation would not be pleasant, but he had started it with real self-control, and they had almost come to blows. One statement had led to another, and both were shouting and saying things they regretted. And now he thinks, “Why can’t I be more patient, especially with people I love the most?”

It’s a disease of the spirit, impatience is. Admittedly, impatience is not listed among the seven deadly sins. And yet, it tends to infect all that we do. I think I first recognized how impatient I could be when I one day discovered myself sitting in front of a computer thinking “Hurry up! Hurry up!” It gets to be the American disease—computers!

Patience seems so easy for other people. Alexander Pope said, “I never knew any man in my life that could not bear someone else’s misfortunes perfectly like a Christian.” But what others should accept with patience often drives us up the wall. We have all heard the classic difference between major and minor surgery, minor surgery being anything you have, while anything I have is major surgery. Patience which should be easy for others is hard for us.

Patience is mentioned several times in the Bible. Paul’s list of the fruits of the Spirit in today’s Scripture include: love, joy, peace, patience and kindness.” To Timothy, just starting out as a minister, Paul said in his second letter to him, “Preach the word, . . . and be unfailing in patience.” (II Timothy 4:2) To the Corinthians, he wrote: Love is patient and kind.” (I Cor. 13:4) To the Romans, “Rejoice in your hope; be patient in tribulation.” (Rom. 12:12)

Clearly the scripture say, patience is needed.

When in the evening we wrap the day up with a quick remembering of its events, we usually find our worst moments to have been caused by our impatience of others. “Why did I say that to her? I didn’t mean that at all. Why did I do that?” When our memory hooks a conversation like this, and we pull in the line, it is usually impatience that we find on the end of it. And how do we explain impatience?

Much of our impatience with others comes because we don't know and cannot appreciate their situation. We stand at the checkout line at the grocery store, and after we have counted to make sure that the man in front of us does not have eleven items while standing in the "maximum ten item line," we notice that he chats with the clerk as she rings up his groceries. Spending his time talking to her. Only after all the groceries have been rung up does he finally reach for his checkbook, and while we wait, he writes his check and completes the transaction, probably costing us at least 30 seconds! Why couldn't he have been ready?

We drive down the street, and the speed limit is 30 miles per hour, so we naturally are going 40, but we come up behind the little lady going 25. She slows at every corner. She dawdles, and we seethe.

We cannot know that the gentleman at the grocery store lives alone and his trip to the grocery store offers him one of his few opportunities to talk to someone else. We cannot know that the lady driving so slowly was widowed a while back, and the fellow who drove her around for 50 years is now gone, and she's on her own, and afraid. Most of our impatience with others is due to our ignorance of their problems!

A number of years ago, a 1st grader came home from school with a book in his hand. The book dealt with such things as "Run, Jane, run," and "See Spot go." It was an extra reading assignment given him by his teacher. The 1st grader plopped down in the chair beside his father, opened his book and said with a sigh, "Whew! If I can just get this book read, there sure will be a lot pressure off of me." This young boy could not imagine greater pressure. The father smiled.

But intuitively knew his son was serious. Each of us places a higher importance on our own needs and we are impatient with the needs of others. A widow is anxious. A divorced person is lonely. A woman is insecure. A boy is afraid. A businessman is worried. The more we are willing to remember this, that everyone we meet is fighting some kind of battle, the more patient we can be with them. One reason, then, for our impatience with others, it is a lack of knowledge.

But the more important reason we cannot be patient with other is our impatience with ourselves. Here is where impatience ought to be listed among the 7 deadly sins, for in a very literal sense, our impatience with ourselves can kill us.

Over a decade ago, Dr. Meyer Friedman came out with a book called; Type a behavior and your Heart. Dr. Friedman and his associates identified a particular pattern of behavior in some people that make them prime candidates for heart attacks. And I quote: "It is a particular complex of personality traits, including excessive competitive drive, aggressiveness, and impatience. Individuals displaying this pattern seem to be engaged in a chronic ceaseless and often fruitless struggle---with themselves, with circumstances, sometimes with life itself. They

also frequently exhibit a free floating but well rationalized form of hostility, and almost always a deep seated insecurity.” So said Dr. Friedman.

Some symptoms of this type of behavior are seen if you often feel impatience with the rate at which most events take place, if you often finish the sentences of person speaking to you before they can. If you become unduly irritated when the car ahead of you moves too slowly, if you find it aggravating to wait in line or wait your turn to be seated at a restaurant. If you find it intolerable to watch others do a task you could do faster, if you often try to do 2 or 3 things at once, if you almost always feel vaguely guilty when you relax and do nothing for several hours or days, if you frequently clench your fist or your jaw, or grind your teeth.

This kind of seething impatience with the self makes the person a prime candidate for heart trouble. It is, says the author, is based on two main points; a dissatisfaction with oneself, and a sense of the urgency of time. This pattern of behavior can be changed.

Much of our impatience with others comes when we “like ourselves least.” When we are down on ourselves, we simply cannot be patient with others. Then one step toward patience is to be more forgiving and gentle with ourselves. Many a devout Christian who knows the message of god’s forgiving love simply cannot forgive his or her own self. We are God’s children, created as unique human beings, but because we do not fit some particular mold, or measure up to some external standard, we disappoint ourselves, and we cannot accept who and what we are. Unhappy with ourselves, we are brittle and negative with those very people who most need our love and gentleness. Then if you want to be patient in life, learn to like yourself, to accept yourself as a child of God and worth and value all of your own.

Then just aside, I remember one of those people in Seminary Bernard Clairvaux wrote the “Stages of Faith”. The new Christian, the baby Christian is at stage one-1. Love self for self’s sake. As the Christian matures-2. Love God for self’s sake. As we mature-3 Love God for God’s sake. Love God for all that God has done for us; the creations, life. 4th stage is to Love our self for God’s sake God loved us we need to love ourselves.

Another cause of our impatience is a sense of time urgency that often fills and colors all we do. We fly though life as though on an interstate highway, and we don’t accept detours very gladly. Life becomes little more than a series of McDonalds and Waffle House and Conoco stations, all just alike, because we don’t have time for all the people along the way. God send me patience, we pray, right now. The sense of urgency of time---it robs us of the joy of each day as it comes.

When reading the 23rd Psalm, have you ever wondered why the psalmist wrote, “God Makes me to lie down in green pastures...?” The picture is that of the shepherd caring for his sheep; who dearly love the green pastures. Then why

should the shepherd have to make the sheep lie down in the green pastures? Why should God have to make me lie down in the green pastures of life?...Is it because we are in such a rush that we seldom even see the pastures? Are we always on our way somewhere else, always waiting the coming of this day, or that event, always planning, hoping for, anticipating, looking toward, always living on the next page of the calendar....so that we gallop through the green pastures and never slowdown, never see the little ones growing up, never see the little ones growing up, never see the older ones going on, never stop to drink from the still waters, and taste life, and rejoice in it....Like a thief in the night impatience robs us of some of the best life has to offer. AMEN.