

Rejoice! He Will Come and Save You

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[0:00] Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.! In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

! Amen. So who can tell me what today is?

Yes, Rose Sunday, otherwise known as God Ata Sunday. So, you can tell by the pink candle that things are a little different.

It's the third Sunday in Advent, which is meant to be a particular time of rejoicing about the fact that our Savior is coming in the midst of the kind of somber mood of Advent.

So you've noticed we have the pink candle lit. In some congregations, the priest will be wearing vestments that are the color that is sometimes called Pepto-Bismol Pink.

[1:06] Teens, I told you I would tell you what I called it. So, this Sunday, this God Ata Sunday, we rejoice. And why is that?

Because we know that our Savior is coming. Because we know that salvation is coming. Because we know that He is coming back for us to claim us as His own forever.

But then that whole patience thing starts to come into play, doesn't it? We're waiting. And we're waiting in confidence. And James is telling us in our epistle reading for this morning to wait patiently.

Now, patience is a virtue, is it not? A virtue that probably all the kids in the congregation are learning something about this time of year as they stare longingly at the Christmas presents under the tree.

Now, already in our house, a certain blonde little girl, and for that matter, a certain bearded priest, are asking if we can open our presents. But Elaine is committed to teaching us patience.

[2:15] Now, this Rose Sunday, this God Ata Sunday, we are all being called to patience. I'm reminded of what we read in Hebrews 11.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. We're called to patience, to hope, to faith, because salvation is near. It's nearer than when we first believed, is it not?

Jesus is coming, and that is our hope. So with that in mind, let's look at the instruction that James has for us this morning. James 5, starting in verse 7. Be 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 late rains. Now, patience is not always the easiest thing in the world, is it?

If I'm having trouble with patience, even while staring at the gifts under the Christmas tree, it's hard to imagine how incomparably greater the patience is for something that is far greater, something that we need so desperately.

[3:27] Because let's be real, is there any doubt that this world is in serious need of Jesus? Hard to be patient when things are overwhelming, when life is hard, when the state of the world seems like an utter mess, and when you find yourself wondering if it will always be like that.

But we're called to be patient. Now, patience, of course, isn't the same thing as complacency. We're not called to lazily sit around, vaguely hoping that the Lord's going to show up eventually.

That's not what James is getting at here. It seems pretty clear that the Lord has left us with a mission. But, we also need the encouraging reminder that Jesus is Lord.

Now, He has done everything that He said He would, right? God keeps His promises, right? So, we can wait in trust and confidence, in hope and patience, just as the farmer expects that with the rains, his crop is going to come.

So, in verse 8 we read, You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Now, I get the sense that James is determined to tell us to be patient.

[4:49] What do you think? Here's the argument that we've read so far. Be patient. The farmer is patient. Be like the farmer. That's where we are.

So, we're reminded, again, to be patient. For good reason, because let's be honest, we're a bunch of impatient people, aren't we? So, how do we go about being patient when our hearts are anxious, when we're worried about so many things?

Well, James tells us to establish our hearts. And how do we do that? Well, is there any other way than to find rest for our hearts on firm and stable ground?

Is there any place like that you know of? How about God's precious promises to us and His Son, Jesus Christ?

There would be any place to find better rest than that. The promise that through faith in Christ, we are God's beloved adopted children.

[6:01] The promise that through the perfect, obedient life of Jesus and through His substitutionary atoning death, our sins have been forgiven. The promise that we don't have to fear death because our Savior has conquered it.

The promise that no matter what happens, Jesus is Lord. The promise that we have access to the throne of grace through the perfect intercession of Jesus, our mediator.

And the promise that we remember this Sunday, that Jesus is coming again to save those who are waiting for Him. That coming is at hand.

The Lord is coming soon. So don't worry. Be hopeful. It's certain. Now, as we know, looking back, James is reminding his hearers almost 2,000 years ago that the Lord's coming is near.

What do we do with that? 2,000 years later, we're still waiting. That shouldn't be discouraging to us. In 2 Peter 3, we see the assurance that the Lord is coming soon, even if the Lord's definition of soon differs from our own a little bit.

[7:11] And clearly it does. Where we read, 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.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient towards you. Not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

So, as we wait patiently, and it seems like it's taking a while, let's remember a couple of things.

One, we are on the timetable of an eternal God, not our own timetable.

That said, I am absolutely certain He's got that figured out. What about you? And here is the other thing. There are still people out there who are going to come to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

The Lord is patient with them, and isn't that worth waiting for? That should give us hope when we realize that the work of the gospel isn't finished yet.

[8:16] That the harvest isn't finished. There are more people who will find salvation in Jesus Christ. So that should give us patience along with boldness.

As we bear witness and as we await the coming of the Lord and we seek to follow His will. So James points us to the coming of Christ to encourage, and now he turns his attention to the coming of Christ to exhort us.

We see that in verse 9. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged. Behold the judge is standing at the door.

Now here's a question. Have you ever noticed how much time the Bible tells us how much time the Bible spends telling us not to be grumpy? Why do you think that is?

Well, here is a working theory. The Lord knows that we are a bunch of grumps. Right? What causes us to grumble against one another?

[9:30] Well, certainly impatience comes into the picture, which is what we have in view this morning. So does one in our own way. So does bearing grudges against one another. But let's stop and think about this for a second.

If the Lord is impatient with us, then we are in trouble. If the Lord were to give us what we deserve for our faults, for our sins, for our shortcomings, we would be in bad shape.

But he does not do that. The Lord Jesus was beaten and bloodied and nailed to a cross because he chose not to hold our faults against us, but chose to bear our faults for us, to bear that burden.

Now, if the Lord could be so patient, so loving to us, to die for our sins, and even to wait until we come to repentance before he comes again and judges, why in the world would we not be patient with each other?

So we're reminded that that patience is something that we're meant to extend to each other while we wait. I'm reminded of a quote from C.S. Lewis, where he said, Everyone feels benevolent if

nothing seems to be annoying him at the moment.

[10:48] I am so kind and so compassionate and so loving until someone gets under my skin in the right way.

Aren't we all? Yeah. Now, how we interact with each other is kind of where the rubber meets the road with patience.

Sort of a barometer, isn't it? So, we're exhorted to be patient.

We're given a kind of application for what that looks like in our treatment of one another. And after giving us that instruction, after giving us that application, James then goes on to remind us of the examples of those who have gone before us, those who were examples of patience, which we read in verse 10.

As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Think about one of those prophets we remember particularly during Advent, John the Baptist.

[12:00] What happened to him? He was beheaded, yeah. He was, of course, in the long line of the prophets, many of whom suffered persecution for speaking the truth.

Being a prophet is not a safe vocation. Now, on one level, James telling us to stop and look at their example for encouragement might seem a little weird.

On a natural level, we might not want to follow in their footsteps. By nature, we would, of course, rather have a peaceful and stress-free life.

But do any of us actually have a peaceful and stress-free life? At least perfectly so. Not in this world.

No matter what, we're all going to suffer disappointments, we're going to suffer setbacks, we're going to suffer pain, and sometimes it's going to seem overwhelming. But, we have a great cloud of witnesses, don't we?

[13:06] Who endured through great struggles, and who endured because God is always faithful. No matter how thick the darkness seems, and no matter how difficult the circumstances are, God is always faithful.

Haven't you seen it? Amen. So the struggles, those who have gone before, and who were still faithful and patient, to the end, that reminds us to keep going.

And it actually speaks to the world that we live in because it speaks to lives that are often difficult. I was recently watching a video on YouTube from Lutheran Satire.

Do we have any Lutheran Satire fans out there? Mark, I see you. I knew I'd have at least one. Now, the video that I'm talking about from Lutheran Satire is called Martyrs Read Joel Osteen Tweets. If you haven't seen it, I really recommend it. Martyrs Read Joel Osteen Tweets. Now, I think the content of the video is probably pretty clear from the title.

[14:18] It features martyrs, like Stephen and John the Baptist, quoting Joel Osteen to highlight precisely how ridiculous the health and wealth gospel is. Now, in the video, one martyr is quoted as saying, you're too blessed to be stressed.

Let it go and enjoy this day. Now, if you were going through a really tough time, if you're being honest and someone said that to you, wouldn't you want to punch them?

Seriously. James doesn't say that. He doesn't say, be patient, guys. You're too blessed to be stressed.

No. We live in a world where pain hurts, where loss is real. Instead, he says, look at the example of those who endured patiently, even through persecution, through resistance, who endured, not because of their own power of positive thinking, but who endured because God is faithful, God is good, God is sovereign, and God always keeps his promises.

We see that at work in the last example that James gives. in verse 11, Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast.

[15:38] You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. Now, is there anyone here this morning who is thrilled at the idea of imitating Job?

Anyone? Not so much. Not on anyone's bucket list? No. Now, it's difficult to want to imitate Job. He lost almost everything.

But one, did the Lord allow Job to be utterly destroyed? No. And how does the story end? Do you remember? The Lord restored the fortunes of Job.

The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. The Lord's compassion and mercy had the last word in Job's life.

And that's true for every believer. If we are believers, brothers and sisters, no matter what we have to face, no matter how daunting it is, no matter how much it might hurt, we can be assured that the Lord will restore our fortunes.

[16:51] Now, it may not happen in this life. Even if it does happen in this life, it will happen imperfectly. But, we wait patiently for the Lord's return, trusting, knowing that healing, restoration, and salvation are on the way, and when he comes, we will be like him and see him as he is.

How's that for restored fortunes? We do that in a world that is full of trouble. As I was getting ready for church this morning, saw the breaking news headline that there are at least 25 people dead in the bombing of a Christian cathedral in Egypt today.

We've also been talking with a teen Sunday school class about the persecution of Christians in places like Nigeria. Now, in the West, we aren't facing the same struggles, but many, of course, are concerned about the uncertain times ahead.

So what do we do? We wait patiently for the one who can and will make it right. We bear witness to the hope that is ours, and we pray to him, come Lord Jesus.

Because at the end of the day, our hope is not in anything of this world. Our hope isn't in good luck. Our hope isn't in a lot of stuff.

[18:17] Our hope is in the name of the Lord, and that never fails. So we remember the words of the prophet Isaiah this morning, which we read.

Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, be strong, fear not, behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you. Rejoicing that Jesus is coming. We remember, we might not know all the details yet, we might not know the trials and tribulations that we will have to walk through, but we remember that the future is not uncertain because we know how the story ends.

So rejoice, be patient, he is coming. He will come and save us. In the name of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.