

**“Patience”**  
**May 22, 2011**  
**Grove Presbyterian Church**

**New Testament Lesson**

**Luke 8: 4-15**

**When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: 5.“A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. 6Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. 7.Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. 8.Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.”**

Come on now, what a waste -- losing all those valuable seeds...

Well, wouldn't have wasted them if the farmer were familiar with the field but this is a new field to be farmed. Hint: the Hebrews ploughed after they broadcasted their seeds. This field never has been farmed before. A new, untried experience.

**As he said this, he called out, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!” 9.Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant. 10.He said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but to others I speak in parables, so that ‘looking they may not perceive, and listening they may not understand.’**

And yes, a lovely parable meant elicit individual responses – how you respond over there will be different from you over there – but with the next verses it becomes an allegory with a specific moral, attached later by the church. You can see the clerical finger wagging.

**11.“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12.The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13.The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. 14.As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. 15.But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.**

You can see the church patriarchs wagging their fingers, grandma words of warning!

- ◆ Watch out, lest you be those who are so reckless and foolish the devil plucks away!
- ◆ Watch out, lest you be those with thin root system, fail to deepen your faith, burn off when life gets hard!

- ♦ Watch out, lest you be those who try to grow but, because of those with whom you associate, are tempted away and soon choked out by the weeds and brambles!

Who wins? **the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.**

Good message.

Even if it does miss the punch of the parable which Jesus teases us with before we get the morality lesson. For how much is harvested? What is the yield from this new field, even with the losses? A hundredfold!

This is bounty beyond all reason, beyond all expectation, beyond all hope!

For first of all, this is a parable of abundance.

But maybe both points – Jesus’ message and the church’s -- make the point that real success, real abundance, will always take time. Whether the hundredfold or bearing fruit with patient endurance.

Little that is good happens overnight.

Harvests never happen overnight.

Forget instantaneous success.

Forget instant anything!

Except those birds and the losses we suffer. Loss happens quick.

Are we there yet?

Bulbs planted in autumn incubate till spring.

How long does it take for a vineyard to mature? God bless those optimistic Pennsylvania vintners. Mayhaps in a 100 years Spyglass wine will mature into a fine vintage.

Or ponder gestation for mammals (on the average):

- ♦ Shortest is opossum (but then she cheats by being a marsupial): 12-13 days
- ♦ Hamster? 15-18 days
- ♦ Cat? 2 months
- ♦ Kangaroo? 42 days
- ♦ Chimpanzee? 8 months
- ♦ Human child? 9 months +
- ♦ Mare? 11 months
- ♦ Giraffe? 15 months
- ♦ Sperm Whale? 19 months
- ♦ And the winner is? Momma elephant with 22 months

Are we there yet?

No, we are not.

Patience, grasshopper. Patience. It takes courage of heart, to wait. To know how to wait.

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Impatience can, at times, be charming. Picture the child eager for Christmas, quivering from the joy of anticipation. That pure excitement and ecstasy of anticipation – sometimes richer than when you really get there. God bless that imagination of ours.

But impatience hardly is cute with adults caught up in reckless, grabby, desperate haste.

Abraham Lincoln cautioned: “We shall sooner have the fowl by hatching the egg than by smashing it”

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The difference between acting on impulse and delayed gratification

We recall the Stanford marsh-mellow Experiment.

- ◆ The subjects? Children aged 4-6
- ◆ The experiment: give them a marshmallow and tell that that if they wait 15 minutes they'll get a second one.

1/3 could wait. 2/3rds gobbled.

Even more fascinating was the follow up study – tracking these kids into adolescence -- which indicated that those 1/3 who could wait 15 minutes earned better grades and were generally more competent by the time they hit High School

The ability to delay gratification seems linked, indexed, with emotional intelligence, self-motivation, success.

Or in other words, kids cursed with the ‘gimmes’ fail. Doomed to disappointment.

- ◆ I just graduated from High school – mom, dad, where’s my new BMW?
- ◆ I just graduated from College – where’s my corner office, personal assistant, bonus and vacation time at my new job? What do you mean I have to sort and hand out the mail?
- ◆ I starred as quarterback in High School, where’s my NFL contract?
- ◆ I just started my diet, how come I didn’t lose 20 pounds overnight?
- ◆ Hey, vascular surgery was last week, what do you mean I can’t go back work Monday (that ones for my dad)?

O bother.

Are we there yet?

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*Macrothumia* is the Greek word for ‘patience’ in Galatians list of the Fruit of the Spirit.

*Macro* – meaning, long in distance or duration

*Thumia* – meaning, passionate outburst, heavy breathing, rage

Meaning then that the best definition for this Greek word for ‘patience’ is ‘long-tempered.’ ‘Long-tempered’ as opposed to ‘short-tempered.’

I may not be an expert in patience but I guarantee you I am an expert when it comes to impatience. Can’t stand it when I am bothered by things out of my control: like the Gremlins hiding my keys, when the computer starts getting fussy, when traffic backs up at the light; basically whenever I don’t get what I think I should get. Which just might be the problem. Outcome focused. Destination focused. Focused on controlling what we deserve.

Short-tempered is me, naturally.

Long-tempered comes as a gift from the unnaturally divine.

For there really are things beyond our control.

We live lives boxed in by limitations.

And last, we are children of time, captives of creation, with our own beginnings, middles, and endings. Past, present, future. Tick Tock. We lack the capacity to change the past. The future remains hidden. All we really have is this new, unfarmed field of this uncertain present.

Are we there yet?

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Once upon a time there was man who hated his shadow and footprints and so tried to get rid of them by running as fast as he could, but the faster he ran the more his shadow and footprints increased until he ran so fast that his heart burst and he died.

If he had wanted to get rid of his shadow and footprints all he needed to do was stand still in the shade....

“Don’t just do something, stand there,” advised Oliver Wendell Holmes on his deathbed to his physician.

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Patience requires the wisdom of realizing when there's nothing you can do about it but wait.

Patience requires the art of doing what you can while you wait. Basically, friends, we are God's people of the 'meanwhile.'

- ◆ The wheat crop will take months to grow tall. Meanwhile we can weed.
- ◆ This baby inside will take six more months. Meanwhile we can paint the nursery.
- ◆ The flood will crest in five days. Meanwhile we can sandbag.
- ◆ Death will happen sometime. Meanwhile, we have some dancing to do today.

God plants. God reaps. God will triumph abundantly in the future. Meanwhile – in this in-between, this sacred meanwhile -- we worship, we love, we carry on faithfully.

Patience, then, is how we prove hope.