

Grace, mercy and peace are yours in abundance. Amen

Come now, you who are rich, weep and cry aloud over the miseries that are going to come upon you. ²Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up treasure in these last days. ⁴Listen, the wages that you failed to pay the workers who reaped your fields are crying out! And the cries of the harvesters have entered the ears of the Lord of Armies. ⁵You have lived for pleasure on the earth and led a life of luxury. You have fattened your hearts on the day of slaughter. ⁶You condemned and murdered the Righteous One. Does he not oppose you?

⁷Therefore, brothers, be patient until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the valuable harvest from the ground, patiently waiting for it, until it receives the early and late rain. ⁸You be patient too. Strengthen your hearts because the coming of the Lord is near.

⁹Do not complain about one another, brothers, so that you will not be judged. Look! The Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰Brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering with patient endurance. ¹¹See, we consider those who endured to be blessed. You have heard of the patient endurance of Job and have seen what the Lord did in the end, because the Lord is especially compassionate and merciful. **This is God's Word.**

Dear Friends,

Is all wealth bad? Sometimes people get that impression as they listen to God's Word. But is money really evil? Not really. Paul in his letter to Timothy rightly points out that it is the love of money that is at the root of the problem. So how does wealth fit into your life? If the pursuit of wealth is your number one priority, maybe it's time to rethink your priorities. In the portion of scripture before us this morning James talks about patience and trust. He notes that patience and trust usually can't come from earthly wealth. It is something that can only come from God.

I. "Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. ²Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days." You might be relieved to find out that James is talking to the ungodly – to unbelievers. They have made wealth their god but gold and silver corrode and clothes wear out. They are chasing something that can't last. That doesn't mean we should ignore this section or think we haven't fallen into this trap of accumulating or chasing after wealth too.

When Dawn and I moved from the parsonage into a home we had purchased in Winona years ago, I made a number of trips to the resale shops to donate all the extra stuff we had that we didn't want to move. This was stuff we had accumulated over the years; stuff we had to have at the time but after a while we had forgotten we had it. We did the same thing when we moved to Austin 3 years ago. As we think about this section of scripture and all the things we chase after, maybe we all should move every two or three years because then we would have to ask ourselves, "Do I really need that?" or "Why do I keep holding onto this thing?"

There are TV shows about people who are hoarders – they can't get rid of anything. Their homes are literally packed to the ceiling with stuff and what does it get them? In our Old Testament lesson, Solomon pointed out that a person spends their life building up wealth only to leave it to someone who has not worked for it. You chase after these things but when you die, you can't take it with you.

Or consider the gospel lesson where Jesus was talking about the rich man. He built extra barns to store all his wealth because he was planning on living a life of luxury but he died that very night and all his plans were fruitless.

Earthly wealth can buy us a lot of things but it can't buy us salvation. It can bring pleasure for a short period of time, but it often leaves one lacking contentment. It is easily lost and the person with an abundance of wealth often worries about losing what they have, rather than having the peace and security they were hoping for.

Don't get me wrong, earthly wealth can be a blessing from God as long as we recognize where it comes from and use it in a God pleasing way. As long as we don't let it become the number priority in our lives, so much so, that it starts to replace our trust in God. As long as we use it in a God pleasing way to help us serve God and to serve others. Then we can find the true contentment and be patient and trusting in the way that James describes in the second portion of this lesson.

II. “Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. ⁹ Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!” One commentator described this section as **“Judgment Day Therapy.”** To be patient as you wait for the Lord. James gives us some practical illustrations of what this looks like.

Consider the farmer. He prays for rain to saturate the ground in the fall and the spring. He plants his crops; he cultivates them and patiently waits for the harvest hoping that he will have a good yield. When he plants in the spring he doesn't know what the fall will bring but he trusts in God. Some years are better than others and some are disastrous. What a fitting picture of the life of a Christian.

Just as a farmer places his trust in God, so the Christian does the same. Some years are full of blessings and some years are disastrous but it's all about our trust in the Lord. The farmer doesn't stop farming because he has a bad year and I would hope that you don't stop trusting the Lord and coming to church if you have had a challenging year either.

Matter of fact, those challenging years can be a blessing in disguise if they draw us closer to Jesus and his Word. If they help us focus on how God has brought us into his family by giving us faith and how he has redeemed us by paying for our sins and how he will walk with us and carry us through the most difficult parts of life. Bringing us that realization and helping us focus on what's most important is a real gift from our gracious God we don't always appreciate.

In this portion of scripture, James also gives us the example of Job. Job was rich one day and lost everything the next. But he understood the source of his blessings and so his response was, **“The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”** Even though his wife urged him to curse God for the trouble that came his way, he trusted in God and God rewarded him for his faith.

At times we might pray for God to give us the patience of Job. Then don't complain when God gives you a situation where we have to be patient – isn't that what we prayed for? Isn't God teaching us patience through practical application? At times we might pray for the strength of the prophets who endured so much persecution. The same with strength and endurance – God gives us a situation that draws us closer to him and teaches us to draw our strength from him. As God answers our prayers and gives us blessings we sometimes miss his grace and love because we spend so much time concentrating on our misery.

Trust in the Lord and be patient. He is in control of this world and he is in control of our lives. And don't forget that He is coming again. So be ready when he comes – don't look to worldly things like wealth and the accumulation of toys to save you. Rather look to your real treasure found only in God's Word – Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. He is the one who brings you true peace and contentment for only God can bring you forgiveness, life and salvation. Hold onto him through his Word and trust him and you will have everything you need for this life and the one to come. Amen.