

Isaiah 55:1-9
Psalm 63:1-8
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Luke 13:1-9

Sermon March 20th, 2022

God Is Patient with Us

Picture it. You've had a long day at the office. You can't wait to get home to order a pizza and veg out on the couch. Unfortunately, traffic is backed up due to an accident on the Deerfoot. You are inching along at about 3 meters an hour. You heard me correctly. 3 meters. Not 3 kilometers. Is that even possible? Maybe you have made it a quarter of the way home in an hour. If you're lucky. Once you finally make it past the accident scene traffic starts to pick up. You exit onto the road that will eventually take you home.

Now you run into another lineup of cars. What is going on today? This time it is a train. Not a C-train. But, one of those trains that seem like there is an infinity of carts attached to the back of it. You finally get home after a two-hour commute. You might have made it home faster if you would have walked.

Sometimes our patience is tested.

Or remember the pre-pandemic days when we used to gather in a restaurant without a care in the world. Remember those Friday evenings where you were just too tired to cook, and so, decided to take the family out to eat. Remember how busy the waiting area was when you arrived at the restaurant (**Image**). You checked in with the host so that they could put your name down on that list of theirs. They would tell you it would be about a forty-five-minute wait to get a table. You grumbled a bit before accepting your lot. After about forty-five-minutes you checked with the host, and they told you it was about a thirty-five-minute wait still. You wondered how 45 minutes could turn into 10 minutes.

Seinfeld actually did a whole show on Jerry and his friends waiting for a table. Every time they checked in with the host, he would say ten more minutes. When they finally gave up and left, the host called out their name.

Sometimes our patience is tested.

Or your children's room is a gigantic mess. Toys, clothes, garbage, food, all over the floor (**Image**). You politely tell them they have fifteen minutes to clean this room. You leave and come back when the timer is up. You see that your children are playing. Not cleaning. Playing. Your voice gets a little louder. You tell them to clean their room. You will reset the timer, and come back when the timer goes off.

Another fifteen minutes pass. You check on them. They are still playing. The room actually looks worse than it did before. Your voice gets louder and sterner as you once again tell your children to clean their room. This time you give them ten minutes. You leave the disaster area so you can cool down.

Ten minutes is up. You stomp up the stairs to emphasize your frustration. You check in. There has been some progress. The room is still a mess. But they are starting to make a dent in the mess. One of your children is actually eating the food off the floor. Beats getting out the vacuum. Unfortunately, your patience is running thin. This time you give them one last timer, with a caveat that if they don't get this room clean instantly you will be coming up with a garbage bag. They finally finish cleaning the room.

Sometimes the people we love test our patience.

Or what about all those little annoyances and habits that our spouse does that we try to tolerate? Now, when we are newly weds all the little annoyances and habits our spouse does don't seem to bother us too much. We are clouded by that honeymoon love we have for each other. But, after a few years this honeymoon love wears off, and we start to notice these annoyances and habits a little more. This is when we encourage them to stop doing these things.

Like putting the toilet seat down after going to the bathroom. Seems sensible enough. Right guys? But for some reason it takes a lot of effort for us men to actually put the seat back down when we are done. We can lift it up just fine. But there is some sort of invisible barrier that comes between us and the seat when we need to go put the toilet seat back down. Sometimes we can get on the right track for a while, and get in the habit of putting the seat down. But eventually we get lazy. And one night, we hear a scream, run to the bathroom, to see our spouse stuck in the toilet.

Sometimes the people we love test our patience.

In our gospel this morning, Jesus invites us to repent. To change direction when we are walking in the opposite direction from where God wants us to walk.

Unfortunately, repenting is not easy for us to do. Our stubborn pride can get in the way. Like when we get in a fight with someone. More often than not we know we said something hurtful, but we rationalize it or we downplay it with an awkward joke, because we want to be right.

Or our ignorance can make it hard for us to see that we have wronged someone (**Image: Residential school**). Sometimes we say or do something hurtful, but in the moment, can't see how these words or actions hurt the person. Unless they say something to us.

Or our fear of being vulnerable can make it hard for us to repent. When we repent, we are putting ourselves out there, hoping the person will offer us forgiveness instead of judgment.

Or our anxiety that comes with making a change in our lives can make it hard for us to repent.

Unfortunately, repenting is not easy for us to do.

Well, despite this uneasiness we feel when repenting, Jesus still invites us to repent. In fact, Jesus says that if we don't repent, we will perish.

Now we can interpret this in two ways. First, we can see this as a direct threat from Jesus. That if we don't repent, we will not have eternal life. Some preachers have preached this message to us in the past. Honestly, I don't think this is what Jesus is getting at with his message, which leads me to the second option. Jesus is reminding us of the natural consequences that come when we don't repent.

Repentance is good for us. It helps us let go of the guilt we feel when we have wronged someone. If we don't repent, we hang on to that guilt until it becomes shame. Shame is an emotional cancer. It sticks with us long term. It eats away at us. It causes us emotional pain. It makes it harder for us to love. It isolates us. Shame hinders our ability to be all that God created us to be.

Jesus knows this, and so, challenges us to repent often. So that we can live as forgiven people. Free to be all that God created us to be. Loving one another as God loves us.

Yes. Repenting isn't always so easy to do. And yes. Jesus does strongly encourage us to repent. But Jesus knows that repenting is hard for us. This is why he goes on to share a parable that talks about a fig tree that hasn't bore fruit for three years. When the owner is ready to cut it down, the gardener asks that they give it one more year. The gardener will dig around the tree and fertilize it. Hoping this will give the tree new life. Helping it bear fruit again (**Image**).

Jesus shares this parable with us to say that God is patient with us. God will give us time to get to that place where we are ready to repent. Where we are ready to let go of our stubborn pride. Where we are ready to listen to the person we hurt. Where we are ready to put ourselves out there. Hoping we will receive forgiveness instead of judgment. Where we are ready to change our direction back towards God.

Through Christ, God prunes us. God digs around us. God fertilizes us. God waters us. God breathes on us the Holy Spirit, so that we are moved to repent, to be forgiven, so to, bear fruit for God's kingdom come.

Let us pray, loving God, thank you for your patience. When our words, actions, or inactions are hurtful to you and to one another, turn our hearts to repent. Give us what we need to let go of the stubborn pride, ignorance, and fear that make it hard for us to repent. Reassure us of your forgiving love. And fertilize us with your Spirit so that we can bear fruit for your kingdom come. In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

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