

## **Romans 8**

12 So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. 13 If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live. 14 All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. 15 You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children. With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children. 17 But if we are children, we are also heirs. We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with him so that we can also be glorified with him.

18 I believe that the present suffering is nothing compared to the coming glory that is going to be revealed to us. 19 The whole creation waits breathless with anticipation for the revelation of God's sons and daughters. 20 Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice—it was the choice of the one who subjected it—but in the hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from slavery to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of God's children. 22 We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now. 23 And it's not only the creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free. 24 We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn't hope. Who hopes for what they already see? 25 But if we hope for what we don't see, we wait for it with patience.

## **Psalm 86**

11 Teach me your way, Lord,  
so that I can walk in your truth.  
Make my heart focused  
only on honoring your name.

12 I give thanks to you, my Lord, my God,  
with all my heart,  
and I will glorify your name forever,

13 because your faithful love toward me is awesome  
and because you've rescued my life  
from the lowest part of hell.[b]

14 The arrogant rise up against me, God.  
A gang of violent people want me dead.  
They don't give a thought for you.

15 But you, my Lord,  
are a God of compassion and mercy;  
you are very patient and full of faithful love.

16 Come back to me! Have mercy on me!  
Give your servant your strength;  
save this child of your servant!

17 Show me a sign of your goodness  
so that those who hate me will see it and be put to shame—

show a sign that you, Lord,  
have helped me and comforted me.

### **Matthew 13**

24 Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like someone who planted good seed in his field. 25 While people were sleeping, an enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat and went away. 26 When the stalks sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared.

27 “The servants of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Master, didn’t you plant good seed in your field? Then how is it that it has weeds?’

28 “An enemy has done this,’ he answered.

“The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us to go and gather them?’

29 “But the landowner said, ‘No, because if you gather the weeds, you’ll pull up the wheat along with them. 30 Let both grow side by side until the harvest. And at harvest time I’ll say to the harvesters, “First gather the weeds and tie them together in bundles to be burned. But bring the wheat into my barn.” ’”

36 Jesus left the crowds and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

37 Jesus replied, “The one who plants the good seed is the Human One. 38 The field is the world. And the good seeds are the followers of the kingdom. But the weeds are the followers of the evil one. 39 The enemy who planted them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the present age. The harvesters are the angels. 40 Just as people gather weeds and burn them in the fire, so it will be at the end of the present age. 41 The Human One will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that cause people to fall away and all people who sin. 42 He will throw them into a burning furnace. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom. Those who have ears should hear.”

## **Sermon**

May the words of my mouth and meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer:  
Amen.

Training a dog requires a lot of patience, because patience isn't something at the core of canine character. Training them to go outside to relieve themselves is only the tip of the iceberg. There's tricks, like sitting, rolling over, or shaking, and tasks, like retrieving objects while hunting or guiding people with limited eyesight through the world. While some dogs, through breeding, may have dispositions to these things, the particular tasks don't come innately, and the training process requires patience not only from the trainer, but from the dog as well. But this patience, when combined with this intentional training regimen, produces results. Stanley, our eldest dog, at first was so impatient when food came close to his mouth that he'd try to swallow whole whatever came near his nose. But now, after patient training, he patiently allows a

treat to sit on his snout until he's permitted to eat. This took time to teach him over a period of days. Patience is such a vital aspect in the shaping of a dog's domestic identity that, without patience, dogs would still be wolves.

Fortunately for us, God is patient with us, because patience is a part of God's very character. Certainly, without God's patience, we'd still be mired like Adam and Eve, naked and ashamed in our sin. Yet the psalm describes God as very patient, and Matthew describes God's willingness to wait for final judgement until the harvest, clearly an act of patience.

Perhaps obviously, these passages suggest that God is patient with us, which itself is a wonderful gift of Gospel. God is patient when we self-centeredly demand immediate attention, and God is patient when we've altogether ignored God's existence. Think about that dichotomy. At times, we pray as though no one else in the world mattered, that no one else's needs could

compare to our desire for things like the winning lottery numbers or our sports team to win the next match. We become so self absorbed in our wants that we imagine our simple desires to be divine priorities, and while God is at work seeking homes for orphans, an end to war, and food for those who starve, God patiently bears with our self-absorbed prayers.

Fortunately, God is equally patient with our lack of prayer, our inattention to God's presence in our lives and ignorance to God's activity in our behalf. We curse God for the Browns terrible play on the field but don't acknowledge that God provided us with children who play in our yards, play in our parks, and play in our schools. We assign our streak of bad luck in MegaMillions to God's carelessness, and ignore God's care in providing a home for us to live in, food for us to eat, and jobs that become God-given vocations. Nevertheless, God persists, patiently

providing good for us even when we declare that God's goodness is not enough.

Of course, if God's willing to be so patient with us, this means that God is patient with others as well. We're fine enough with that, aren't we? Except, maybe, when we're not. Much like the psalmist, we relish God's patience with us, but often we lament God's patience with others, especially those that we don't like. In fact, we even appeal that God would not be patient with them. Take today's psalm. Almost in the same breath, the psalmist praises God's patience despite the her own shortcomings, and then asks for her enemies to be put to shame. To use Matthew's metaphor, the psalmist wants God to tear the weeds out from among the wheat, even though the psalmist admitted behaving very weedy quite recently. And yet, God remains patient with the weeds and the wheat, with the psalmist and, most likely, with the person identified as an enemy.

How often have we sought God's vengeance over someone else who committed the same crimes for which God's forgiven us? How often do we treat grace like a zero sum game, seeking all of it for us and expecting God to withhold it from others? All too often. We've treated God's patience like a currency we deserve rather than a gift that flows out of God's very DNA.

Now, I don't mean to say we should be dishonest in our prayer life. God's big enough to handle our temper tantrums and our true immediate needs, and God's smart enough to tell the difference. And fortunately, our willingness to ask God for even the most selfish things puts God in the driver's seat. Walter Breuggeman, an Old Testament scholar who writes extensively on the psalms, reasons that we give God all authority when we ask God to intervene on our behalf. While we may ask for all sorts of wrong or terrible things - and the psalms can get quite graphic

about this stuff - what we've ultimately done is given our right to authority and vengeance over to God. God will certainly come to our aid, but God likely won't fulfill our sinful, selfish desires while doing it. For instance, God doesn't desire shame for the psalmist's enemy named here in Psalm 8, but likely repentance, restoration, the kind of justice that leads to reconciliation instead of destruction. God's patience bears the weight of our hatred, our foolishness, and our denial, and God offers that same patience to others as well, even the others that we envision as our enemies.

Somewhat like a patient trainer must train a dog to be patient, God's patience shouldn't just be something that we receive. It should be something that we learn. Now, if you're offended because I've compared people to dogs, we just don't understand one another. I **love** dogs, so this comparison is an incredible compliment in my eyes. Any well, God's patience with us ensures our relationship when we're at our worst, but it should



also shape our expectations, our desires, our hopes. Created in the image of God, we as Christ's body ought to more faithfully reflect God's patience.

To be clear, this isn't a denial of those times when we need holy urgency. At times, God calls us to immediate action in order to secure the safety of people experiencing abuse, to protect innocents from predatory people. We shouldn't extol the virtue of patience when faced with life and death decisions. Sometimes we must act decisively. Nor should we demand patience out of those experiencing suffering. Victims of abuse, people living in wretched poverty, patients with currently incurable diseases understandably sense the urgency for deliverance, because any delay can mean death. Patience is not a virtue at all times and places, and it's certainly not something we should demand of someone else.

Yet, when we learn patience ourselves, we learn patience in particular in relation to our expectations of God. We want to see

offenders punished, but God wants them to receive reform. The death penalty requires no patience, but turning someone from violence to contrition and compassion requires massive amounts of patience. We want to see God immediately solve the problems we've created as humanity - climate issues, war, economic turmoil - but perhaps God wants to transform us in ways that not only fix the problems, but eradicates our dysfunctional behavior. God doesn't want to just end our problems, but to change in the hopes that problems might not return. But that approach takes patience. A massive amount of patience.

But that's precisely the kind of patience we see in a God who waits to separate the weeds from the wheat. God, the farmer who planted Eden, desired for all creation to bear good fruit, but the existence of weeds doesn't deter our farmer from the ultimate goal. Patience from the Lord of the Harvest ensures that the harvest still comes, that it's not ruined by our vindictive desires to

root out everything that looks like a weed. Patience ensures that fruit is still born. And that's what our patience with God reveals, a trust in God's bountiful harvest, even if it's not on our terms or in our preferred timeline.

I'd be remiss to not to address the absence among us. Jimmy Lefler once sat patiently in this sanctuary every Sunday, awaiting his role to take up the offering. Jimmy patiently awaited Lee, or Mike, or Michelle, or Billy, to pick him and others up from Fairview for events here at CLC. Jimmy lived a life not defined by his abilities or limitations but instead, one that trusted the ride would always come, that his turn in the liturgy would arrive. Like all of us, there were signs of impatience, but they often indicated a hopefulness, anticipating the fruitfulness born out of God's patience. In turn, we now await as patiently as possible until that harvest where we're gathered together with Jimmy, and with all those others who God awaited to mature. But who knows? Maybe

those that once looked like weeds to us, with God's patience, just  
might be bearing fruit. Amen.