**Patience**

Matthew 3:1-3, 11-17

Of the thirteen perfections of Jesus, such as His love, peace, joy and hope, ***the one we probably most dread to study is His PATIENCE***. We are like Inigo Montoya waiting at the top of the cliff for the man in black. “I hate waiting.” (If you’re new, that’s a Princess Bride reference and you should get used to those.)

Safe to say, we all hate waiting. I wonder if the reason is that **we all want to be in CONTROL** and waiting represents surrendering control - admitting we can’t make things happen.

And there we see exactly why Jesus was able to be so patient - because ***He lived in perfect daily, moment-by-moment surrender*** to the Father’s direction and control. Matthew three gives us some hints about how Jesus did this.

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’” Matthew 3:3; Isaiah 40:3

**John the Baptist** was the long awaited voice in the wilderness, predicted by Isaiah the prophet fully 700 years before. We’ve built this worship service around Isaiah 40 already, so let’s just look at **three reminders from Isaiah 40** - three truths about God that Jesus held onto to enable him to patiently trust in the Father’s timing.

1. God is **Eternal** - our challenges are very temporary

“All flesh is grass… the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.” Isaiah 40:6,8

***In Isaiah’s day the danger to Israel was Assyria.*** The Assyrian Empire had already carried off the northern ten tribes of Israel, so all that was left was Judah and Benjamin in the south. And at one point Jerusalem was totally surrounded, under siege. Read the three chapters right before Isaiah 40 for the details.

**It looked utterly hopeless**. There was nothing to be done but surrender and hope for the best. But King Hezekiah went to Isaiah and together they went to the temple and cried out to the Lord - who heard their prayers and answered in mighty power, wiping out the entire Assyrian army right then and there. Even the unstoppable army of Assyria, even the greatest king of that time was just GRASS. Here in the morning, withered up in the night.

Isaiah must have seen my lawn. The grass withers, the flower fades. In my yard, for sure.

1. God is **Eternal** - our challenges are very temporary

“All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.” Isaiah 40:17

To **the eternal God of heaven**, even the greatest empires on earth are like a drop in the ocean, like a speck of dust in the desert. That applies to the United States. And it applies to you and to me as well. God is eternal. We are so finite. Life is so short. Our struggles are just a blink of an eye. Even a lifetime of pain and suffering is a blip on the screen of eternity.

So be patient. Wait on the Lord. Trust in the God of eternity who sees the end from the beginning. Surrender to His wisdom and control.

1. God is **Sufficient** - He is better than anything in this world

“And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” Isaiah 40:5

This was John the Baptist’s job, ***to prepare the way for the Lord Himself*** - the covenant God of Israel to appear in the person of Jesus Christ. The glory of the unapproachable, holy and glorious God of the first temple was revealed - all of that glory, grace, goodness and power embodied in Jesus of Nazareth. As John 1 says, “We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, full of grace and truth.”

**When we struggle to be patient** it’s because ***we have begun to believe that something else is more important than God***. I need this and I need it now: relief from this pain; I need this relationship; I need to have a child; I need my children to grow up; I need a job; I need a different job; I need more money; I need more business; I need more energy; I need more attention, more affection, whatever.

**Isaiah 40 lifts up the glory of the one true God** for us to see and feel and appreciate.

“What has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span? …Who taught him the path of justice? To whom then will you liken God? An idol! A craftsman casts it… to set up an idol that will not move.” Isaiah 40:12,14,19-20

Anything we love, trust and obey more than God becomes an idol in our hearts. Anything in this world will ultimately rust and wither away. Only God is eternal, and only God is sufficient for our needs and desires. God is the glorious Creator of all things who sits above the circle of the earth, who reigns from His throne in heaven, who sees all things and rules over all things. He commands the stars and they take their places.

1. God is **Sufficient** - He is better than anything in this world

“The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.” Isaiah 40:28

Hold this truth in your heart - God is sufficient. Whatever your need today, Jesus can meet it. He alone is what you need. Wait on the Lord. Trust in the Lord. Rest in the Lord. Find your peace and joy in Him. He is enough for you. Anything and anyone else in this world will let you down. Only Jesus will satisfy. He will never let you down.

God is eternal. Trust His timing. God is sufficient. Rest in His power and delight in His glory. One more truth to remember.

1. God is **Compassionate** - He is patient with us

“He will tend his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms.” Isaiah 40:11

The Lord is our Good Shepherd. We are sheep. That is not meant to be a flattering comparison. Sheep wander, they fall over and can’t get up, they get lost, they fall into ditches.

***Think how patient God has been with you.*** As much as we wander, as much as we run away from Him, the Lord is our faithful and compassionate shepherd - leaving the 99 to find the one lost sheep, anointing our heads with oil to heal our wounds and hold us close to his heart.

***Are you struggling to be patient with someone right now?*** Are you becoming irritated with that person’s weaknesses and sins?

Try to remember how patient God has been with you. Think how irritating your sins and weaknesses were to Him. Think what it cost for Jesus to pay for all of those sins. He was so patient to wait for you to come to the end of yourself and finally ask for help - finally come to Him for His grace.

“They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk not faint.” Isaiah 40:31

God never grows tired or weary - but He gives power and strength to those of us who do grow weary - IF we will wait on Him.

I hope you’ve experienced this often. When you start to get discouraged, when you begin to worry and give in to fear because there is something in your life you cannot control - you get on your knees before the Lord and choose to wait on Him. You reject the lie that you are in control and embrace the truth you know about God:

1. God is **Eternal**
2. God is **Sufficient**
3. God is **Compassionate**

Our problems and worries are so temporary. They feel like they drag on forever but in truth “our light and momentary afflictions are not worth comparing with the weight of glory that will be revealed to us.” God is eternal. Look up to ***see the glory of our Eternal God.***

***For He alone is sufficient.*** Nothing else in this world can satisfy our souls. Everything in this world is dust and ashes, crumbling in our hands. So hold those things loosely and hold tightly onto the Lord. Fix your trust and your joy in Him above all.

***For God is compassionate.*** He is so patient, so merciful. So understanding. “We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way - and God has laid on JESUS the iniquity of us all.”

Look at how these truths jump out of Matthew 3 as we close.

1. God is **Eternal**

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 3:2

We worship an eternal God and we wait for an eternal kingdom. Our time of rest and reward is coming, and it is coming soon. For this short life we walk in darkness and the shadow of death. But death and sin will not have the final word, Jesus will. His kingdom broke in when Jesus arrived. King Jesus won the decisive battle when He rose. But the kingdom of heaven will not fully be realized here until Jesus comes back. So for now, we wait, trusting in our eternal God.

1. God is **Sufficient**

“Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness.” Matthew 3:15

John the Baptist was reluctant to baptize Jesus, knowing that Jesus should baptize him. But Jesus insisted that John baptize him **“to fulfill all righteousness.”** Jesus knew that before ascending to heaven in glory ***He had important work to do*** and all the steps had to be done in order.

***Think of the patience of Jesus to submit to this reality!*** This question at the Jordan River was a preview of the temptations of Jesus to take a shortcut. But Jesus didn’t fall for any of those either because he trusted completely in God the Father and walked in daily surrender to the Father’s leading. Jesus was ONE with the Father and found His joy in that union. He said, “I have food you know nothing about - my food is to do the will of my Father in heaven.” Jesus would not be sidetracked by anything in this world because He knew the full glory of the Father.

1. God is **Compassionate**

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:17

At the baptism of Jesus, ***God the Father spoke with an audible voice*** so all gathered there that day could hear this powerful affirmation of love between God the Father and God the Son - with God the Holy Spirit coming down on Jesus like a dove.

Jesus rested in this relationship of love with His Father - He found His joy and peace and patience there, as the Beloved of the Father.

And the miraculous grace of Jesus to us, is that in Christ, **WE are God’s beloved children too**. Jesus is our brother and God is our Father - that is the fullness of God’s compassion and grace to us!

Hear that message to you today, if you belong to Jesus by faith God the Father says to you, “You are my beloved child, with you I am well pleased.”

God is eternal. He is sufficient. He is compassionate. So Wait on Him. Let Him renew your strength so you can run and not grow weary, so you can walk and not be faint.

Let’s pray.