

“You Can’t Hurry Patience” // James 5:7–11 // The Book of James #9¹

Announcement

Before we get started I want to tell you about an exciting event happening this week. **This Wednesday, September 20**, we will be hosting **Live Sent Night at several of our campuses.**

If you’ve been around the Summit for any amount of time you know that “You Are Sent” is something we say every week. But it’s important on occasion to step back and really talk about what being “Sent” actually means.

- This night is an opportunity for us to **broaden our view** of what it means to be engaged in missions, both internationally and in our own communities.
- **I will kick off the night** (that’s all I’m gonna do) sharing a little bit of my heart for missions and specific ways we feel God calling us to be most involved,
- and then we’ll break out into campus specific groups to learn more about how you can serve locally and sign up for opportunities.
- **You’ve been asking, “What’s my next step?”** This is your next step. Come on Wednesday.

We’re doing this regionally, which means some campuses are combined so be sure to visit our website to see where your campus is meeting and to register.

¹ Sources: Sam Allberry, *James For You: Showing You How Real Faith Looks in Real Life*, “God’s Word For You” series, The Good Book Company; Bryan Loritts, “The Pearl of Patience,” sermon preached at Fellowship Memphis, 2013; Brad Hambrick, [“Patience: Balancing Responsibility and](#)

NEXT WEEK I’ll finish up our series in James and then in October y’all have a really exciting opportunity to go through a **series on the book of Jonah** with Pastor Bryan. During that month I’ll be taking some extended time away to spend time with family, to step back and hear from the Lord, and **at the same time**, visit some of our mission partners around the world who are living out the call to live sent. (Each of these partners once sat where you sit before God asked them to go overseas and plant churches!) I can’t wait to share their stories with you in NOVEMBER.

Introduction

So, that’s what’s ahead. For now, JAMES 5, if you have your Bibles... James 5

I remember **being fascinated, as a 4th grader**, when I learned from my teacher Mrs. Kibler about how a pearl is formed²:

- Basically an **irritating little grain of sand** gets lodged inside an oyster’s shell and no matter what it tries, the poor little oyster can’t get rid of it.
- It laments, and struggles, it prays, in whatever way oysters pray: “Lord, if it be thy will, remove this thine piece of sand from the gullet of thy servant.”

But the heavens are SILENT.

- The oyster is frustrated--exasperated even, and, **it’s at this moment that the oyster**, to **quote a 90’s urban poet**, feels like it’s about to lose its mind, “up in here, up in here,” and so the oyster does the only remaining thing it knows to do to find relief:

[Compassion Amid Suffering](#),” a Counseling Commentary on James, from BradHambrick.com. And others as noted throughout.

² Pearls take 6 months to 4 years to form. Mrs. Kibler, I hope you’re proud of me.

- It coats the grain of sand with a milky substance called aragonite, a substance used normally to make its shell, and it covers and covers this tiny irritant until it is transformed into something of great value which we pay 100's or even 1000's of dollars for.

At the end of the day, that incredibly valuable pearl hanging around your neck is the result of an irritated oyster bewildered by the fact that God did not answer its aquatic-prayers.

Here's the principle: **No irritation, no frustration**, no sense of "Y'all gonna make me lose my cool and act the fool (up in here, up in here)," no pearl.

In chapter 5, James explains that God aims to produce pearls in our lives, and for them to develop it's going to take time, so he says, **vs 7: Be patient, therefore, brothers...**

- **Do you see the word 'therefore'?** "Therefore" connects everything James has said before with what he is about to say.
- Think about all James has talked about: he's talked about suffering; our disappointments and frustrations with each other; our unanswered prayers, and our unfulfilled dreams--and he's saying that in all these things, God is doing something good, but to experience the good we have to have PATIENCE.
- **Be patient, therefore, brothers...**

Patience. Patience. Patience. I hate patience. The **Greek word** for patience is makro-thumia. It just sounds nasty, doesn't it?

Let's just all get on the same page for a minute, shall we? You are looking at a guy who is NOT GOOD at patience. I'm glad my wife is not in here right now or she'd be screaming Amen so loudly it would be

distracting and embarrassing. Of all my many faults, this is one of the worst.

And I have a feeling I'm not alone. At the grocery store, **are you the kind of person** who sizes up all the lines to figure out which one will be the quickest? As I'm walking up to the line, I'm calculating who is likely to pay slowly, who is most likely to want to chat with the grocery store clerk, or **the worst**, who is going to pull out coupons? I'm like, "**It's 2023**, and you're going to rummage through your pocketbook to find a mailer so you can save 20 cents on a head of lettuce? Come on!"

And if you're really sick, you keep track of who entered the line at the same time you did to see how well you fare, and if someone finishes a couple spots ahead of me, my whole day is ruined.

Patience. My lack of patience causes problems in our marriage. **Sometimes if Veronica** is telling me about something and I feel like she's taking too long to explain it or get to the point. I'll go (spins finger). I'm telling you those conversations never end well. And y'all, I know it's wrong and I know it's going to end badly but I just can't help myself. I'm impatient.

And, **I feel like it's not entirely my fault, either.** We live in a culture that seems to have conspired against us to inculcate impatience. **One click shopping.** I mean, I love that. I've got Amazon same day delivery and Walmart Plus can have it for me in 2-3 hours and it's worth the price of both memberships just to watch them battle it out over who can get it to me faster.

- **And would somebody please get the Amazon drone system** we've all heard so much about up and working?
- **If we can put a man on the moon**, there's no reason why my replacement computer ink cartridge shouldn't be at my door within 15 minutes.
- And, **if there were ever a business opportunity** waiting to happen it's wedding the drone system to the **Krispy Kreme Hot Now sign**. I mean, when that "Hot Now" sign comes on I want a notification on my phone that gives me the option to have a dozen on my desk within 5 minutes... There's no telling what I'd pay for that.³
- **Streaming platforms** now offer no-waiting gratification In our entertainment: Are you like me and my wife who genuinely wonder how in the world we used to wait a week between episodes of our favorite shows? I mean now, if I can't binge the whole series straight through, I don't even want to start watching!

We are an **instant gratification culture**, and while it's convenient, and I love it, it has its share of negative effects on us.

- **Dr. Paul Brand**, a renowned orthopedic surgeon who spent half of his life working in Asia and half in America said: "People in (technologically advanced) societies live at a greater comfort level--but seem far less equipped to handle suffering, and are far more traumatized by suffering when it comes."
- **Why is that? Why are people so less equipped to endure pain and suffering today?**

³ I have been told by reliable sources that this is, in fact, available technology in 2023. I'm happy they told me ... but this is also bound to be very bad news for me.

The magazine *Psychology Today* ran an article not too long ago explaining that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of students asking for treatment for anxiety, depression, and addictions--and we all know that, but **it was their explanation** for why this was happening that I found most fascinating: "For young American adults, there is no psychic middle ground anymore. Frustration catapults (immediately) into crisis."

- There's **no psychic middle ground** between desire and the fulfillment of that desire.
- We don't know what to do with that space--**that psychic middle ground is called "patience," and we just don't have it.**

But **patience, James says, is absolutely necessary** if you're going to experience anything of God's goodness in your life. He **aims to produce pearls**, but pearls take patience.

So, **first, let's just read the passage**, and then we'll ask: **What exactly is patience**, and then we'll ask, **"How can we develop it?"**

7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. 10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job,

and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

OK, so first...

What is Patience?

“Patience,” as I said, is the Greek word “makrothumia,” and it literally means long-suffering (*makro*: long; *thumia*: suffering). **Long-suffering.**

- We’re not talking about brief flickers of pain in an otherwise charmed life.
- We’re talking about **LONG seasons** of suffering, and LET ME MAKE sure you get that, because sometimes we think that, as Christians, we should live basically charmed lives (**#blessed**),⁴ with **occasional moments** of suffering. A bad afternoon. A sore thumb. A prodigal that wanders for a few months but then comes back home. We get passed over for promotion at work, but very quickly vindicated and rewarded with more.
- **But the word patience in and of itself** implies suffering that lasts a long time. **(MAKRO-THUMIA)**
- And, **all lightness aside**, I know some of you are there now and it’s hard. You are in pain. You’re single and you don’t want to be. You can’t find a job. You’ve been treated unfairly. You were lied about or taken advantage of.

James uses **another word in this passage as a synonym** for patience: **STEADFAST**. Vs. **11: Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast.**

⁴ Kate Bowler, a professor at Duke Divinity, puts it this way: “[Christianity in] American society is not a culture of blessing; it’s a culture of #blessed. ... Got that beach bod by summer? #blessed. Trip to Maui on the calendar? #blessed. Is your family delightfully conflict-free and each child a scholarship recipient? Congratulations. You are #blessed and have thereby won social media.”

“Steadfast” is the Greek word *hupomoneo*, or “hyper-stand” (hupo-moneo). Think of it as “standing that won’t quit.”

Tom Hanks stars in a great movie called “Bridge of Spies” that illustrates this word well.

- The movie recounts the true story of a **Russian named Rudolf Abel** who has immigrated to America and gets accused of spying for Russia.
- **Tom Hanks plays the American lawyer** who defends him. At one point, Abel says to the Tom Hanks character, “You remind me of somebody in my village they called ‘SHTOY-kay Myu-ZHEEK.’”
- **Tom Hanks looks confused**, so Abel elaborates. He says, “This one time... our house was overrun by partisan border guards. Dozens of them. My father was beaten, my mother was beaten, and this man, my father's friend, he was beaten. And I watched this man. Every time they hit him, he stood back up again. So they hit him harder. Still, he got back to his feet. I think because of this they stopped the beating. They let him live. [SHTOY-kay Myu-ZHEEK] I remember them saying. ‘Stoikiy muzhik’. Which means ‘standing man.’”⁵

Standing that just won’t quit.

That’s what **James means by “steadfast.”** You keep getting up. You won’t quit.

- In the words of another 90’s poet, **Chumbawamba**: “*I get knocked down, and I get up again, ain’t nothing gonna keep me down.*”

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRSIPvuYwOY>

And that brings us to the next question:

How Do We Develop Patience?

James answers this through a **couple of illustrations**:

Illustration 1: The Farmer and the Seed (vv 7–8)

Vs 7 See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also, be patient.

- **What does a farmer do after he plants the seed?** Answer: very little! All he can do is wait.
- He's got to wait on the rains, which are totally out of his control. Sure, he can put down some fertilizer and keep the crows away. But **what happens after the farmer plants** the seeds is mostly between the seed, the soil, and the weather.
- If he is frustrated at the speed of growth, the worst thing he can do is dig up the seed and try to fix it. That will kill it.
- I remember during one particularly challenging season with one of our kids, I felt pretty exasperated--I thought I had taught everything I was supposed to teach, but it just didn't seem to be really taking in their lives, so I was frustrated, wondering what I needed to do differently. **What had I not taught, not said?** Where had I **failed**?
- I was talking with a **pastor-mentor-friend**, and he said, "Your problem is that you are thinking like a mechanic, and at this point in their lives you really should be **thinking like a farmer**. I said, "I don't understand." He said, "If a mechanic hears a rattle in the engine, what does he do? He pulls the car over immediately, figures out what is making the rattle, and tightens it. If a farmer is frustrated at the growth of a seed, however, the worst thing he can do is dig up the seed to check on it and try to readjust his planting of it. That's sure to kill it. All he can do is wait. Leave it

alone. What happens from this point on is between the seed and the soil."

- **My friend then told me, "J.D., you and Veronica planted good seed.** Now, you just have to wait. Cover it with your prayers, but stop trying to fix it and let God do his work..
- Or, **to change the metaphor**, another mentor told me that the teenage years are like that **scene in Apollo 13** (which is another great Tom Hanks movie; Tom is no Nicolas Cage, but he easily qualifies as "2nd greatest actor of our generation.")
- **The movie** recounts one of the early attempts to put a man on the moon. **The attempt fails** and the spacecraft is badly damaged, so they are just trying to get it back home safely. Because of how badly it is damaged, Ed Harris is worried it will burn up when it re-enters the atmosphere.
- And when it enters the atmosphere, they lose radio contact with it for like 4 minutes, and all they can do is wait and stare at the place where it is supposed to come out. And if you've seen it you know it's the longest-feeling, tensest 4 minutes of the movie.
- **My mentor-friend said**, "Those 4 minutes are the teenage years for a parent. It's radio silence. All you can do is stare at the place where they are supposed to emerge. You're like, 'Well, they went in at the right angle; I hope the shields work... here's hoping...'"
- **Now, some of you are wondering, "What does being an astronaut have to do with being a farmer?" Here's what they have in common:** It's that middle space, that vacuum of helplessness, and waiting, where you've done what you can do and now you can only trust God to send the early and late rains.
- **Don't try to dig up the seed and fix it.** Stop trying to play God.

Here's his 2nd illustration:

Illustration 2: The Prophets and Job (vv 10–11)

10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Many of the prophets preached for YEARS, meeting with nothing but persecution and opposition, before any of their prophecies came true.

- Think of **Noah**, who seemed like a genuine crazy man talking about a worldwide flood for 120 years before the first raindrop fell.
- Or **Joseph**, whom God had destined to save Israel and rule Egypt but was first betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused and imprisoned for two decades.
- Or **Isaiah**, who wrote those beautiful words in Isa 53 about a suffering but victorious Savior who would be wounded for our transgressions and by whose stripes we would be healed--but whose own life ended not with a big book signing tour or a platinum worship album featuring all those great lyrics he wrote--no, Isaiah's life ended, Jewish history tells us, with the rebellious, unbelieving King putting him into a hollowed out log and cutting it in two.
- Or **Jeremiah**, who for extended periods of time was kept in a **dungeon, submerged up to his armpits** in mud, who suffered so long he wrote a whole book about it called "Lamentations" in which he said, "God has driven me into a place of darkness without any light; surely against me he turns his hand again and again the whole day long."
- Or **Ezekiel who was told by God** to lie down on his left side in public for 390 days, each day symbolizing a year of God's discipline on the people. 390 DAYS. I've always thought, what was that sermon series like? You come in here every week and I'm...
- **Or David who**, after he'd been anointed King, for *SEVEN years* lived in caves, under threat of death, alienated from his family,

lied about and slandered, who could only say, Ps 13, "How long, O Lord?"

- **Or Daniel**, held in captivity for his entire adult life.
- **Or Paul**, beaten and bleeding chained to the prison walls, ultimately beheaded by Nero.

Are you tracking with me here? All of these prophets endured long stretches of darkness--but for all of them, in the end their words came true, and today we consider them **(v 11) blessed**, James says.

- QUESTION: If you'd been living at the same time as them, would you have considered them "#blessed"? Would you have looked at Jeremiah in the dungeon, or Daniel in exile, or Paul in chains, and said, **"There's a blessed man"**?
- It's only now that we consider them blessed. They had to wait for it with... (say it) MAKRO-THUMIA.

And then, James points to one more whose case is so special he has to mention him directly by name: **11 ...You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.**

Poor Job. Job was a man who had legitimately no idea what God was doing in his life. There were things happening in the heavenly realm he had no knowledge of whatsoever. And God allowed Satan to inflict on him all kinds of pain. Body pain. Family pain. The death of his kids. Marriage pain. Friend pain.

But Job never gave up. *SHTOY-kay Myu-ZHEEK*. Standing man. He kept getting up. And in time he came to see two things:

First, that God's presence never left him.

- Job is the one who said, in the midst of his pain, *"I know my Redeemer lives and one day I will stand with him alive on the earth."*
- And at the time, Job **didn't even know half** of what it would mean for God to be his Redeemer--how much it would cost God to stand there with him on the earth.
- Job just sensed God had never left him and would redeem him from trouble.

Second, Job came to see that even when it felt like God had

abandoned his good work in Job's life, he really hadn't. In fact, we learn that at the end of Job's life, "The Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." (Job 42:10). God gave him back double!

Which doesn't mean--I've told you--that that's what always happens in your earthly life--that when you lose your job you're guaranteed a new one just around the corner where you work half the hours and receive twice the pay. No,

- **Job's restoration in chapter 42 is a picture of eternity**, how all things will be restored to us in eternity. But what Job's life shows you, James says, **vs 11** is the purpose of the Lord: "...and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful."

In Job's life we get to see a glimpse of what God will ultimately do with all of us, both in this life and eternity. We see that **though the arc of God's goodness is long**, it never stops bending toward

goodness, and will fully resolve into infinite goodness, and that was true even when Job couldn't feel it.

- **Job was the first one to sing**, *"Even when I can't see it, you're working; even when I can't feel it, you're working. You never stop, you never stop working."*

In vs 9 James identifies the opposite of patience--the sign that you're NOT exercising it. Vs **9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door**

- **Grumbling:** This word takes us back to Israel wandering in the wilderness, because that's what characterized their 40-year experience. Grumbling.
- They didn't trust God, so they grumbled against him, and then they started **grumbling against each other. Which is what always happens.** We take out our frustrations with God and how he's letting our lives go—we take that out on one another.
 - Do you **remember in our study of chapter 4** how we saw that our anger at one another is usually fueled by the fact that we are not getting what we want, which ultimately goes back to a problem between us and God? This is not to say the other person is not at fault, but ultimately your rage comes from something that has nothing to do with them--you are not getting what you want, and the fact that it upsets you so much points to the presence of an idol in your life, which has nothing to do with them. It's against God.
- **James says, "Don't grumble out your frustration with life and God at each other."** And even if that person really is at fault, don't dwell out, don't seethe to get revenge or be vindicated. God will handle that, and he'll be here real soon.
 - **Do you see how he says, "The Judge is standing at the door?"** If I know the Judge is literally standing right there at the door

about to walk in, I don't need you to vindicate me or I don't need to get even with you if he's about to take care of it.

So, **those are James' examples** of how to develop patience—the farmer and the prophets.

Now, using those 2 examples, let's make this really practical:

When you're in that season of LONG-suffering (and you might be there right now), **how can you develop patience** so that God can do his good work in you?

James tells you to look 3 places:

1.  Backward

"11...and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful."

Through the prophets and Job you have seen that the Lord's purpose is good and compassionate and merciful. And Summit, we've seen it now somewhere even more convincing than that. **In the cross and resurrection we see the purpose of the Lord**, how it is compassionate and merciful. Though we endure a crucifixion on Friday, there's a resurrection coming on Sunday. Though weeping lasts for a night, **joy comes** in the morning.

And in the cross and Resurrection--PAY ATTENTION HERE--we see that there's a time gap between the suffering and the resurrection.

QUESTION: Do you ever wonder, after Jesus died, why he wasn't resurrected immediately?

- He was **crucified on a Friday**, but not resurrected until Sunday.
- I can get God waiting until at least the morning--you know, give it at least a full night to prove he's dead; plus a **morning Resurrection is more symbolic** with the sun coming up and everything... (better for the little postcards)

But why wait another full complete day? I mean, how hard must it have been for those disciples?

- The **Messiah they had trusted** themselves to and left everything to follow, was dead!
- They were **confused**. Their whole world had come crashing down. Why wait a whole, full 2 days before Resurrecting?

Well, that delay was, in part, because so much of our lives feels like we live on that 2nd day. It's **that middle space of pain** or delayed gratification, **when we say, like the disciples:** "God where are you? Where is your goodness? It's like you're completely gone."

Listen, our Bibles are filled with three-day stories:

- **Abraham has to walk up a mountain for 2 days** thinking he will sacrifice Isaac, until Genesis says "on the third day" God stopped him and provided a ram as a substitute.
- **Esther fasted and prayed to stop a genocide** directed against her people, and the king changed his mind ... on the third day.

- The question is, why a day in-between the desperation and the salvation?
- **Why isn't every 3-day story a 2-day story instead?**

It's because **God is producing pearls of faith and steadfastness** in our lives. **And pearls take time, and patience.**

So, James says, in a time of waiting, -look backwards and see how God has worked in the past. And then, he says, look...

2. Forward

8 Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

- That word **“established”** means **“become fixed,”** like concrete.
 - Throughout this book, James has talked about unstable people. Like wind, like grass, like a wave of the sea. This word implies the opposite of that.
- **And the way we become established, James says, is by how?** (*Look at your Bibles. What's he say? Not me, your Bibles. I want to see the tops of your heads right now, not your eyes. What does it say?*)
 - **We establish our hearts by reflecting on the coming of the Lord.**
 - **It's at hand**--which means it's relatively soon.
- Remember our illustration from last week--**the rope**? This little period we call life seems so long sometimes, but it's a teeny tiny fraction of eternity. Any suffering you experience now, in the red part, is more than made up for eternity. **And it's relatively close.**

Now, I want to be clear: We CAN and SHOULD expect the inbreaking of God's goodness into our lives now, “in the land of the living.” JOB experienced that, AND many of the PROPHETS did too. We should pray for it and expect it.

But, the point remains, for some things, to get to final resolution, we have to wait until eternity for the “pearl.”

- **God promises he is working all things** in our lives for good, but sometimes we can't see it, and we have to wait until eternity to see full resolution.
- **James says, “Hang on;** it won't be long. The Lord is at hand.”
- I can't help but think of some of the **rich old Negro spirituals** here that arose out of the suffering of black Christians in slavery—blatant, outright injustice—that looked to them like it would have never end. And, in many cases, it didn't have an end in their lifetime. They died in these earthly chains of oppression.
- But they defiantly sang, like James instructs them here: “Jordan River is deep and wide, hallelujah, milk and honey on the other side, hallelujah... Swing low, sweet chariot, coming forth to carry me home...”
- **These slaves felt as if they had nothing on this earth,** so they waited eagerly for HIM.
- **Maybe you feel like there's no resolution ahead for you.** And you know what, I can't stand up here and tell you that you won't die in pain, or suffering, or in shame, **but you can die singing,** “Jordan River is deep and wide, hallelujah, milk and honey on the other side, hallelujah...”
- **What I can promise you is that God has heard every prayer and will answer every one** and will work everything in your life for good, making pearls out of all of it.
 - **Eugene Peterson wrote a great, little book on the Psalms** in which he pointed out that while a lot of the Psalms contain these heartfelt cries of “Where are you, God?” and some of the Psalms even end without clear resolution to their question--“Where are you God? I don't understand!”—the last **6 Psalms** (Ps 145–150) are all praise. Read them! There's no cries of “where are you, God?” There's no lamentations, no complaints--just praise. Eugene Peterson's conclusion: The way the Psalms are arranged is meant to show you that any

prayer followed far enough will eventually turn into pearls of praise.

- **Soon enough, you and I will sing the praise of these Psalms, like Psalm 145:** *“The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works. The Lord fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. All your works, O Lord, will praise you. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.”*⁶
- One day, I’m gonna say that from my heart, because all of those prayers that I’ve prayed, and all of that suffering ... I’m gonna see how it all worked for good and will all end in praise.

So, we look backwards, forwards, and there’s one more direction we look:

3. Upward

That’s to God, in prayer. But that’s what we’ll get to, Lord willing, next week, because it’s the next 8 verses.

Let me close with this: Tim Keller says there are least 3 places where God produces pearls through patience:

Pearls of Skill

- **Nothing really worth anything in your life is one click.**
- No skill you develop that makes you able to make a living is one click. Like Malcolm Gladwell says, to get good at anything takes at least 10,000 hours of patient, repetitive practice.
- For most good things in your life, you need middle space, a day 2 of waiting before day 3 of realization.

Pearls of Grace

- **Genuine friendships and solid marriages** take time and grace, and some of you don’t have space for that.
 - **Let me go back to that *Psychology Today* article** from the beginning. The article said one of the reasons people are having so much trouble maintaining relationships is that we don’t have **relational middle space**.
 - If someone treats us unjustly, or sins against us, or disappoints you or even annoys you, culture says **“Cut ‘em.”** You don’t need that baggage in your life. Cancel them. If they are not helping you, cut them. Find better friends. Join a new small group.
- Listen: **Real friendships, pearls of friendship, can ONLY grow in the soil of grace.**
 - Yes, **the Bible tells us to confront people** when they are in error—and there’s certainly a time to end a relationship.
 - But the Bible points to an enormous middle space of grace in our relationships. It says things like, “it is a man’s glory to overlook an offense” and **“bear with one another”** and **“turn the other cheek”** and **“love covers a multitude of sins.”**
- **If you call people out every time** someone slights you, or cut them every time they disappoint you, you’ll never have any community and you are going to end up lonely.
- **Real friendships, pearls of friendship, can ONLY grow in the soil of grace**

VAMP

Finally, Pearls of Faith

- The **confidence that God is up to something** good even when things feel bad, a confidence Peter says is more valuable even than gold.
- Tim Keller says: “Every hour something will come along that you bristle at, and when that happens you are at a fork in the road.”

⁶ Ps 145:10–13

You can either say, “I trust God, I’m going to be patient with what God is doing right now” and sleep easily; or you can say, “I trust MY understanding of what needs to happen,” and develop an ulcer. Up to you.”

- **Good night’s sleep or ulcer.** Up to you. **Pearls of faith** or pulmonary embolisms. Your choice.

Tim Keller’s definition of faith: “Patience is graciousness, steadiness, and faithfulness in the face of delayed gratification.”

Church, I told you at the beginning patience is hard for me. And so I know, from experience, for many of you, how difficult it is to wait. Maybe that’s you right now! And some of you will even be tempted to walk away from God in a time of waiting. But that’s a terrible decision. I agree with **Phillip Yancey:** “The only thing worse than disappointment with God is disappointment without God.”

With Jesus, I have the confidence that though weeping lasts for a night, joy comes in the morning. And I know that because the Redeemer who died on a Friday and **seemed absent** on a Saturday **resurrected with power** on a Sunday.

- And that’s a picture of what he’s doing in my life. I know my Redeemer lives, and soon I will stand with him victorious on the earth.

I’ve quoted Tim Keller a lot in this message. Recently, you may know, Dr. Keller went home to be with Jesus and I attended his funeral in NYC. It was held in St. Patrick’s cathedral. And it felt like a normal funeral except right at the end, we all stood and sang together an old Keith Green song, There is a Redeemer... Supposedly for the first decade or so of his church’s existence in Manhattan, called

“Redeemer Presbyterian,” they sang it at the end of every service, and it so perfectly captured Tim’s life, and his message, and as I was thinking of it this week, I felt it perfectly captured the hope we have in this message, that I thought it would be appropriate to end our service that way.

There is a Redeemer! That means I can wait. It means all worth it. It means eternity is worth it. **Faithfulness is worth it.** I can wait.

Jesus is worthy of my patience. There is a Redeemer, which means I can be SHTOY-kay Myu-ZHEEK, a STANDING MAN.

So, why don’t you stand now, and XXXX, you come to lead all of us.

XXXX

Missional Blessing