

# What if... we live patiently in the Kingdom of God

Message for Sunday, July 12, 2020  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** James 5:7-11; Revelation 12:7-12

Del Tarr is a preacher who grew up in South Dakota, in the heart of America's wheat fields. From a young age he learned how to drive a tractor, to cultivate the land, to drill the seeds and harvest the crop. There was a Bible verse that always perplexed him. Growing up in an affluent farming area, it never made sense to him. Stirling is a fairly affluent farming area, and maybe you don't get it either.

Psalm 126:5-6, New International Version:  
Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.  
He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will  
return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

"Those who sow in tears." How many of you farmers have cried while you're planting the seeds? Maybe if your seed drill breaks down after one row, but I mean aside from that. It just doesn't make sense.

Then Del was a missionary for fourteen years in the Sahel area of Africa, that stretch of land just on the southern edge of the Sahara desert. Then he understood.

In the Sahel, all the moisture comes in a four month period: May, June, July, and August. After that, not a drop of rain falls for eight months. The ground cracks from dryness, and so do your hands and feet. The winds off the Sahara pick up the dust and throw it thousands of feet into the air. It then comes slowly drifting across West Africa as a fine grit. It gets in your mouth. It gets inside your watch and stops it. It gets inside your refrigerator (if you have one).

The year's food, of course, must all be grown in four months. People grow sorghum or milo in fields no larger than this building. Their only tools are the strength of their backs and a short handled hoe. No John Deere tractors here; the average annual income is between eighty-five and one hundred dollars per person.

October and November... these are beautiful months. The granaries are full - the harvest has come. People sing and dance. They eat two

meals a day - one about ten in the morning, after they've been to the field awhile, and the other just after sundown. The sorghum is ground between two stones to make flour and then a mush with the consistency of yesterday's cream of wheat. The sticky mush is eaten hot; they roll it into little balls between their fingers, drip it into a bit of sauce, and then pop it into their mouths. The meal lies heavy on their stomachs so they can sleep.

December comes, and the granaries start to recede. Many families omit the morning meal. Certainly by January not one family in fifty is still eating two meals a day. By February, the evening meal diminishes. People feel the clutch of hunger once again. The meal shrinks even more during March, and Children succumb to sickness. You don't stay well on half a meal a day.

April is the month that haunts my memory. The African dusk is quiet, you see... no jet engines, no traffic noises to break the stillness. The dust filters down through the air, and sounds carry for long distances. April is the month you hear the babies crying in the twilight... from the village over here, from the village over there. Their mothers' milk is now stopped. Parents go at this time of year to the bush country, where they scrape bark from certain trees. They dig up roots as well, collect leaves, and grind it all together to make a thin gruel. They may pawn a chair, a cooking pot, or bicycle tires in order to buy a little more grain from those wealthy enough to have some remaining, but most often the days are passed with only an evening cup of gruel.

Then, inevitably, it happens. A six-or seven-year-old boy comes running to his father one day with sudden excitement. "Daddy! Daddy! We've got grain!" he shouts. "Son, you know we haven't had grain for weeks." "Yes, we have!" the boy insists. "Out in the hut where we keep the goats- there's a leather sack hanging up on the wall - I reached up and put my hand down in there - Daddy, there's grain in there! Give it to Mommy so she can make flour, and tonight our tummies can sleep!"

The father stands motionless. "Son, we can't do that," he softly explains. "That's next year's seed grain. It's the only thing between us and starvation. We're waiting for the rains, and then we must use it." The rains finally arrive in May, and when they do, the young boy watches as his father takes the sack from the wall... and does

the most unreasonable thing imaginable. Instead of feeding his desperately weakened family, he goes to the field and — I've seen it — with tears streaming down his face, he takes the precious seed and throws it away. He scatters it in the dirt! ... The act of sowing it hurts so much that he cries.

They plant the seeds in the ground because they believe there will be a harvest. But they have to wait, and the wait can be excruciatingly slow.

Do you see the connection between patience and trust? You will never be patient if you believe that the good will not come.

That's where the Kingdom of God comes in.

When I started this series, the most common struggle that people described with their faith was trusting God. I talked about that last week ("What is Jesus is king?"). The next most common issues that people face are patience and forgiveness.

What I aim to do today is to use patience as an example of how living in the Kingdom of God affects our everyday lives.

### 1) Be patient; God is in control

This passage from the letter of James is direct when it talks about being patient.

**James 5:7-8, Today's English Version:**  
**Be patient, then, my friends, until the Lord comes. See how patient farmers are as they wait for their land to produce precious crops. They wait patiently for the autumn and spring rains. You also must be patient. Keep your hopes high, for the day of the Lord's coming is near.**

Can you imagine a farmer being impatient? Try to picture Ross Carlisle or Ken McCurdy kneeling in the field with their faces right down to the ground, yelling at the little corn seedlings to grow faster. Yelling doesn't work well with plants, and it doesn't do any better with people either.

When you're faced with a situation over which you have no control, there's no use worrying about it and getting impatient. Learn from the farmer: just be patient.

### 2) Be patient; God's Kingdom will prevail

James wrote his letter to the churches years after Jesus returned to heaven. Some scoffers ridiculed Christians because their so-called Saviour hadn't yet returned. "He must have forgot about you!" they mocked. James encourages them not to lose hope, but to be patient while they wait. Their patience is based on the fact that, when Jesus returns, everything will be made right.

We see a glimpse of that in the book of Revelation.

**Revelation 12:7-10, Today's English Version:**  
**Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, who fought back with his angels; but the dragon was defeated, and he and his angels were not allowed to stay in heaven any longer. The huge dragon was thrown out—that ancient serpent, named the Devil, or Satan, that deceived the whole world. He was thrown down to earth, and all his angels with him.**

**Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now God's salvation has come! Now God has shown his power as King! Now his Messiah has shown his authority! For the one who stood before our God and accused believers day and night has been thrown out of heaven.**

The kingdom of God will prevail over evil and injustice. Wrong will be made right.

Don't misunderstand. You might get the idea that we just sit back in our Lazy-Boys and wait for God to do everything. If we read through the rest of the letter from James, we see a very active Christianity. It talks about caring for the poor and caring for victims of injustice. It tells employers to pay their workers a fair wage. We do our part, and trust God to do his part.

### 3) Be patient; trust God instead of fretting

Listen to this wonderful promise from God.

**Psalms 37:1-7, New Living Translation:**  
**Don't worry about the wicked.  
 Don't envy those who do wrong.  
 For like grass, they soon fade away.  
 Like springtime flowers, they soon wither.  
 Trust in the Lord and do good.  
 Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.  
 Take delight in the Lord,  
 and he will give you your heart's desires.**

Commit everything you do to the Lord.  
Trust him, and he will help you.  
He will make your innocence as clear as the dawn,  
and the justice of your cause will shine like the  
noonday sun.  
Be still in the presence of the Lord,  
and wait patiently for him to act.  
Don't worry about evil people who prosper  
or fret about their wicked schemes.

That Psalm really says it all: the key to patience is to put our trust in God, in God's timing, in God's kingdom.

### **Next Steps:**

- Ask yourself: "What do I worry about?" That is the place in your life where you do not trust God.
- Pray: In faith, give that concern to God. Instead of worrying, practise being patient, trusting God's way.
- Do: But there are things you *can* do in your part of God's Kingdom. Put your energy there, instead of in worrying.