



John 13 Selections
Believe
Patient

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April 17th, 2019
Maundy Thursday

Tonight we remember and celebrate the commandment that Jesus gave to his disciples: to love one another. Jesus calls this a “new” commandment, though “love” is certainly nothing new to them or to us. What is “new” about it is that it is based on Jesus’ example of love – shown in the foot washing earlier in the evening and shown a day later with his death on the cross, which is foreshadowed in the Last Supper when Jesus broke the bread and poured out the wine. So twice in this evening, Jesus has given them very explicit examples of the depth to which he loves them, and what love looks like.

There are, of course, a number of facets to love. There are different kinds of love, even, which we talked about some a few weeks ago. But the kind of love that Jesus calls us to live out, and the kind of love that he demonstrated throughout his ministry, is a sacrificial love that puts others first. And there are a number of facets to that kind of love, which Paul articulates for us well in 1 Corinthians 13, beginning in verse 4: that love is kind, it doesn’t envy or boast. It isn’t proud. It doesn’t dishonor others; it isn’t self-seeking or easily angered and it doesn’t keep record of wrongs that others commit. It doesn’t delight in evil, but rejoices in the truth; it always protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres. But there’s one other aspect of love Paul mentions in that passage that I glossed over. In fact, it’s the very first word he lists in his “Love is...” section. And that is: Love is patient. Patience is a facet of love.

Our statement of belief that helps us get centered in regards to patience is this: **“I am slow to anger and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.”**

And so as Jesus gave those two examples of love through washing their feet and using the Passover meal as a foreshadowing and representation of His death...as he does this, there are two disciples who stand out who are right there with him, with whom Jesus had to have much patience as he loved them. He was patient with each of them for much different reasons; nearly polar-opposite, in fact.

First is Peter. Peter is always ready to impulsively dive into things. He's the first to volunteer, to speak up, to commit, even if he doesn't really know what he's volunteering for, speaking about, or committing to. He's ready to proclaim Jesus is the Messiah when he doesn't fully understand what that means; he wants not just his feet washed, but his hands and his head, too; he thinks he's ready to proclaim his allegiance to Jesus even as Jesus is about to be sentenced to death.

I came across a story of a guy who helps us to understand Peter a bit. An elderly couple who were married almost 60 years, died within minutes of each other. They had been in good health the last ten years, mainly due to the wife's interest in health food. When they reached the pearly gates, St. Peter took them to their mansion, which was decked out with a beautiful kitchen and master bath suite with Jacuzzi. As they "oohed and aahed", the man asked Peter how much all this was going to cost. "It's free," Peter replied, "Remember, this is Heaven."

The next they went out back to see the championship golf course the home backed up to. They would have golfing privileges every day, and each week the course changed to a new one representing the great golf courses on Earth. The man asked, "What are the green fees?" "This is heaven," St. Peter replied. "You play for free."

Next they went to the clubhouse and saw the lavish buffet lunch with the cuisines of the world laid out. "How much to eat?" asked the man. "Don't you understand yet?" St. Peter asked. "This is heaven. It's free!" "Well, where are the low fat and low cholesterol foods?" the man asked timidly. "That's the best part...you can eat as much as you like of whatever you like and you never gain weight and you never get sick. This is Heaven."

The man looked at his wife and said, "You and your stupid bran muffins. I could have been here ten years ago!" That's like Peter: He thinks he's ready to go with Jesus yesterday, if not 10 years ago. He's ready to jump right in, and pledges that he'll never leave Jesus' side or his cause. But Peter doesn't really understand what he's getting himself into. And so Jesus has a ton of patience with him, as he gently (or sometimes a bit sternly) corrects Peter on

many occasions. Probably with a sigh and a palm to the head on occasion. And here, as Jesus gives the foot-washing as an example of the kind of servant love they are to have, Peter is once again, “all in” without really thinking about what he’s saying. “Not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well!” But Jesus isn’t giving special treatment to him; he’s washing Peter’s feet just as he did the others’.

So that takes patience. It takes educating and mentoring and helping Peter to see what’s really going on here, to understand the depth of things, and what it really means to be a follower of Jesus. And as you probably know, Peter went on to be one of the most influential church leaders in the Book of Acts. So that patience paid off.

The second disciple who stands out as one with whom Jesus had much patience is Judas – the one who would betray him. Judas has essentially been with Jesus just as long as Peter and the rest of the disciples. He’s heard Jesus’ teachings; he’s seen the miracle healings and feedings and so forth. He’s been right there the whole time. And he’s with Jesus here in the upper room of this building for the Passover meal. He is there, getting his feet washed by Jesus, partaking of the bread and the wine that Jesus gave him. We see Jesus showing incredible patience with Judas, as well.

I’m reminded of 2 Peter 3:9, **“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).**

Jesus was patient with Judas throughout their time together. We don’t know at what point Judas started having thoughts of betrayal, but any time along the way, Judas could have repented of the sin that was building and growing in him. I don’t think Judas just up and decided that night that he was going to betray Jesus.

And after Jesus was condemned to death, Matthew 27:3-4 says, “...he [Judas] was seized with remorse and returned the 30 silver coins to the chief priests and elders. ‘I have sinned,’ he said, ‘for I have betrayed innocent blood.’” I would suggest to you that this is Judas’ repentance, and the Lord is patient even with him.

And it might be easy to say, “Well, Judas’ sin is what put Jesus up on the cross. If he had repented of his *thoughts* before he *acted* on them, maybe things would have played out differently.” But we must remember that Jesus died for/because of your sin and my sin as well. It wasn’t just because of Judas; It’s not all his fault that Jesus ended up on the cross. It’s much, much bigger than that, stretching from the dawn of humanity right to today and into the culmination of human existence. **Jesus’ mission was to fulfill the Old Testament sacrificial system as the once-for-all perfect sacrifice; Judas is not the only one who’s guilty and in need of repentance.**

And so what we see is that not only is Jesus patient with Peter and his over-exuberant but under-comprehending impulsiveness, he is patient with Judas as well, because he loves them both. And perhaps more importantly...certainly more personally, for you and me sitting here right now: Jesus is patient with us because He loves us. He invites you and me to partake of the bread and the juice, knowing that it was our sin that put him on the cross as well...knowing that we have fallen short of His glory. He washes us clean – not with a basin and towel, but through his blood shed on the cross, as the only sacrifice needed to atone for our sins. He is patient with us, even under incredible pressure as He bore our sins on the cross, because he does not want us to perish, but come to repentance.

So three questions to end tonight’s message. **First: For what in your life does Jesus need patience with you?** As he invites you to come forward to the table tonight and to partake in communion: what are the things in your life...what are the things in my life...about which Jesus is having to be patient? We may not be as impulsive as Peter or as sinister in our sin as Judas, but undoubtedly there are elements of both in each of us. But maybe you identify a little more with one or the other and it shows what God needs patience for with you.

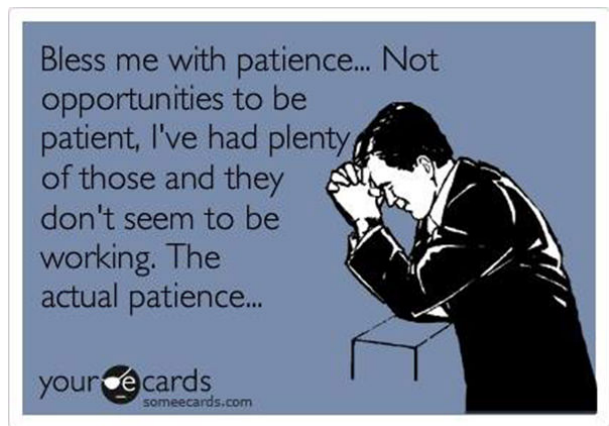
Second: For what in your life do other people need patience with you? And this isn’t to go out tonight and demand that those people be patient with you. ☺ It’s to recognize that many of the things that God has to be patient about with us, others do as well; and they already are patient – even if it feels

like their patience is wearing thin sometimes. My wife and kids have to have patience with me because I mess up on things, am slow to make decisions sometimes, I forget who I'm picking up where and when I'm picking them up, and so forth. It happened earlier this evening, in fact. They need patience with me. And undoubtedly there are people who have to be patient with you, and it's good to recognize that and acknowledge it.

And then, with Jesus as our example of patience: **In what situations do we need God to grant us more patience?** Undoubtedly you've heard it said, "Don't pray for patience because God will respond by giving you opportunities to be patient." This week I came across this meme, however, that I think encapsulates tonight's message pretty well:

Isn't that so true? We need patience: in our homes, in our work places, in church, as we're driving...we have lots of opportunities for patience. And so it's the *actual* patience that we need more of. And the fact is: through

God's Spirit and with Jesus as our model, patience can be ours. It's a gift that God gives us through faith in Jesus as His Spirit dwells and moves in us.



Let's join together in our statement of belief, even if we struggle to live into it...even if patience is not easy...let's join together in this statement and then ask God to help it be more true in our lives than it is right now: **"I am slow to anger and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life."**

Let's pray...Amen.