“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.” **James 5:7-11 ESV**

**“Waiting On The Word”**

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Savior. Amen. Everyone knows the story of Santa Clause. He has become a secular alternative now days to celebrating Jesus Christ. However, some are aware that Santa originates from one St. Nicholas. He was a 4th century bishop of Myra, which is in present day Turkey. “Nicholas is said to have saved a poor family's daughters from slavery by tossing into their window enough gold for a rich dowry, a present that landed in some shoes or, in some accounts, stockings that were hung up to dry.”[[1]](#endnote-1) Thus, the custom of stockings, chimneys, and giving of presents sets the charitable tone of Christmas.

What most do not know is this “good old’ St. Nick had his patients tested. You see, this bishop also attended the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. The council helped to form the Nicene Creed that we still confess today. Yet, what happened there might change your view of Santa. The scholar Gene Veith notes, “During the Council of Nicea, jolly old St. Nicholas got so fed up with Arius, who taught that Jesus was just a man, that he walked up and slapped him! That unbishop like behavior got him in trouble. The council almost stripped him of his office, but Nicholas said he was sorry, so he was forgiven. The point is, the original Santa Claus was someone who flew off the handle when he heard someone minimizing Christ.”[[2]](#endnote-2) St. Nicholas shows us patients does not rest in man, but resides only in One who is truly patient to save sinners. Waiting on the Word means rejoicing over what comes for us finally in Jesus.

The God of all patients lays the foundation. St. James the brother of Jesus shows this when he wrote, “To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion” (James 1:1). These were the churches out among the nations. Certainly, Jewish Christians faced great hardship of rejection by their own people. They also had to be among Gentile Christians who were far the lawful people of Israel. The Word alone for these baptized was their foundation for any life together in Jesus. James told them, “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.” Farming served as a witness to the time for a plentiful crop resting in God’s work and goodness alone. Anything less cuts the harvest short with the farmer wanting to get what God was not yet ready to give.

There is much stress on the church today and the lives of Christians. Conforming to the demands of culture only seems to be giving way to unholy ways with God’s Word. What used be like the mighty John the Baptizer in our society finds the church imprisoned to unpopularity, hate speech, and ridicule with plenty of mockery. We end up wondering why God allows such hardship. It questions Jesus, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” The God of all patients lays the foundation for us. Patients is how He defines Himself. Rather than ending humanity right from the start, God called out to sinful Adam, “Where are you?” It is this hope to save that delayed the Flood and left Noah waiting with embarrassment for 120 years. The promised Word finally came patiently born of the Virgin Mary only to be crucified for sinners. St. James calls for toleration of the times at all times. “You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” God delays judgment not to build up more wrath, but for a greater salvation of the harvest from His Word.

This foundation of God’s patients is before our impatient lives. Worse than the suffering felt upon their lives by hostility and rejection. There was the painful strife that Devil caused between Jew and Gentile Christians. Their own sinful hearts erupted out against each other and it did not alleviate suffering, but only increased it. James told them, “Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.” This grumbling is not like standing up against false doctrine or calling sinners to repentance to hear the Gospel. This is complaining that ends up breaking the 8th commandment, which bears false witness against our neighbor. It despises, slanders and desires to blame everything on another just to make oneself feel justified. The groaning against other brothers and sisters was injurious to the Church. Christ made His judgment a warning patiently to proclaim Him Lord. He rules over His baptized with love poured out as a promise for them.

Much grumbling goes on in the church today, especially in rural and small towns. This poison threatens the vitality of life God wants to give in His Word. Christians blaming their troubles on each other is sin. Worst of all, it is a bad witness that finally gets in the way of the Word. This is why James pointed to the character of those in the Old Testament. He said, “As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.” Why did they suffer? It was not over personality conflict or some man-centered reason, but because they spoke in the name of the Lord. They had the Word and used the Word out of love for what it said. Repentance turns grumbling hearts and mouths to patiently trust in God. Jesus the Judge stands perfectly at the door of His Word and Sacrament to redeem us from the darkness. He is always present making forgiveness supreme for His precious sheep. As it is “given and shed for you,” so suffering before Christ no longer points to others. It lets Christ rule by the same Word that He has given to forgive you.

God’s patients brings forth persistence to rejoice over His way of Salvation. Rather than more hardship, James told the scattered churches to hold fast to the Word. He said, “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.” Patients yields the enduring persistence that looks to God’s promises. This is what Job faced that could still believe in God without grasping why he suffered the way he did. It is the same trust Mary holds up in God’s Word suffering the Christ child saying, “For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed” (Luke 1:48). King David shows how his grumbling from suffering can turn to praise to God. He said, “My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge” (Psalms 71:15). God’s purpose is not suffering, but salvation by enduring with His promising Word. Jesus said, “You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives” (Luke 21:17-19).

On this third Sunday in Advent, a repentant season reminds us there is also a reason to rejoice. What a privilege to pray as the baptized children of Christ. What confidence to pray as Jesus taught us to say, “Thy will be done” and not “my will be done.” Luther tells us, “The test is to be steadfast and to suffer with patience in whatever way we are assaulted, and to let go whatever is taken from us”[[3]](#endnote-3) It is not about the quicker we get out of trouble the better. Instead, it is in such hardship that God speaks to save and give peace. His Word turns us to look to the life we have in Jesus that will last forever. The Lord is compassionate and merciful able to resolve, forgive, and save His precious sheep. He shows it again today promising to relieve the distress by His Sacrifice of love that lets us love Him and others. Waiting on the Word means rejoicing over what comes for us finally in Jesus. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.

1. http://www.worldmag.com/2005/12/slappy\_holiday [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.worldmag.com/2005/12/slappy\_holiday [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Concordia The Lutheran Confessions 592:65 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)