

Love Breeds Patience

Selections from John 18

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Last week we considered the merits of the two styles of luggage we could use on our journey of faith and life. The two choices were a nice ensemble of love or a convenient collection of fear. The luggage of fear is on rollers and is the most tempting. The luggage of love is a nice ensemble but it weights a bit more.

One of the added qualities of love is it will produce patience, of course it takes time. Most of us would prefer to live without needing patience, so this may make the love luggage less appealing. We have created an instant society where much of what we want is available when we want it, 24 hour internet, 24 hour TV, we can buy groceries when the feeling hits and food can be found anytime day or night. If you think about it in some ways we are waiting less than ever before. However, some waits will never change, we still have to wait to find our soul mate, we still have to wait on the job promotion, and wait on ourselves and others to mature. These waits not only will not change they seem necessary to move from childhood to adulthood.

Older people know how to wait, they may not like it, but it is not foreign to them. The younger we are the less we know about how to wait. We grew up with microwaves. We stand in front of the microwave, thinking, "Come on hurry up."

Not only do we not like waiting, we often find it unnecessary. We would prefer every checkout counter to be self-serve, because there is rarely a wait in the self-serve line and we can scan our food, our toys, or whatever. For the younger generation the saying, “patience is a virtue”, is not wisdom, it is a riddle. How can waiting be a good thing? We are wasting time (in line)?

I live with a kindergarten teacher who believes the most important lesson a five year old can learn is to wait patiently in line. For the bathroom, water fountain, or going outside. The discipline of learning you are not always first, it's not always about you, other people need water, the world is not centered on your happiness, she believes to be a valuable lesson taught by waiting your turn. Apparently she's in a minority. Waiting and developing patience seems more than old-fashioned or out of style, like the typewriter it appears patience as a virtue is becoming a dinosaur.

The Chicago Cub fan has waited for 100-years to return to the World Series.

Over the past century, the franchise has perfected the art of losing to the point that fans can't agree whether the Curse of Fred Merkle in 1908 or the Curse of the Billy Goat in 1945 is the factor holding back their team.

Disappointment hurts, but abject failure can be far worse. At least Cubs fans have seen their team in the playoffs four times in the past 10 years. Consider the

patience required of a Pittsburgh Pirates fan. The last time they had a winning season; George H. W. Bush was president.

Being a fan of many sports teams demands patience. Yet with a growing congregation of younger fans with less patience than their parents, colleges and professional teams are quick to change coaches or trade players or do whatever is necessary to show the mob they are making changes. A quick response is more of a virtue than patience in places like Tallahassee, Dallas, and New York.

Ellen was waiting on the results of a biopsy. 'Why does it take two days for it to come back,' she asked. "They can fix my computer from a remote computer in India, why can't I know an answer today about my life. The system is build for everyone's convenience but the patience." Her counselor said, "And how do you know this?" "Of course I don't but it seems unfair to wait," was Ellen's reply.

Her counselor said, "Are you sure you are not saying it is unfair for you to wait? Whether you like it or not it takes two days, this is the way it is. You can whine about it or use the two days to paint your den or use the two days to fill up scrap books but it will take two days, your choice is do you wait with purpose or do you whine."

As you can see the problem goes beyond waiting and its discomfort. Many of us simply do not know how to live with things as they are or how to accept a

situation just as it is. “The deadline was the 10th.” “ I’m aware of that but what can keep you from accepting my application on the 12th?” “ Why is there a withdrawal limit on my debit card?” “ Why do businesses no longer put their phone numbers on what they mail me?” We feel as if we have to change it, make a better. We are impatience with the way things are and what we mean is we want it easier on us.

People no longer know how to wait, but the bigger issue is we don’t understand the value of waiting. A study was done with children. A child was told they could have one cookie now or two cookies and hour from now. The 7 year olds who choose to wait did better in school, had better test scores, and did much better in life in measurable categories.

Having patience believes. A dying patient reported what follows. “It was more than hurrying from here to there it was not believing it would be alright. I was desperate, impatience and so at one moment in my life I did several foolish things because I did not have faith, these things which had consequences for decades, but if I had paused and seen the big picture I would have done things differently. I would have traded the two years to finish college. It was two years of my life; instead I have given 30 years to a back breaking job that I’ve never liked. Further if I had given my marriage a little longer instead of expecting perfection in seven years---I would have saved myself untold misery. I rush not just to the store, but I rush to conclusions, I rush to give up, it’s all a mentality that I need to do it now---there is no tomorrow.”

Patience is believing in God's love. Patience is believing there will be a tomorrow. To wait on a spouse or to put in the time and wait on the promotion, is to ultimately believe you are loved and that God is paying attention. When we are loved and share love we can afford to be patient, because we believe we are being cared for.

When we read the story of Jesus and Peter in John's gospel it is hard not to hear and see the patience of Jesus. Peter has on more than one occasion failed. A brief summary would be, Peter fell asleep when Jesus needed him the most, then he takes a sword and cuts off a man's ear, and then on three occasions he denies knowing Jesus. Jesus must have been frustrated, even disappointed, but because of his love for Peter and his belief in the work of the father he continued on with Peter. Giving Peter another chance and being patient with his weakness. This is what love does. It allows us to have the patience to continue on with people and life in spite of previous results.

Don't give up on that child, believe in God and have patience with them. Don't give up on your dream, have patience. Don't give up on your plan, keeping working it, be patient. When you are tired and running out of patience remember Joyce. In December of 2006 Joyce was facing another brush with cancer, had moved in with her sister, and was terminated from a teaching position because of cutbacks. She was weary. She testified that "typically I respond to such with panic . . . how am I going to make a living . . . I am so tired of

living in between . . . and fighting cancer.” Maybe it was the fatigue or living with her calming sister but this time she did it differently. Each day I started with this, “Lord today is your day, not mine give me what I need, my daily bread. Amen.” It wasn’t overnight but it did not feel like two years either but at Christmas 2008 things were different for Joyce. The cancer was in remission, she was living in a lovely townhouse facing the mountains, teaching British Literature at a community college. Your life could change that drastically in two years so be patience.

When we practice God’s style of love it breeds patience because we know that God cares and in time things will work out. There is nothing wrong with waiting. It is no sin to wait until next year or the next. Jesus’ waited on Peter and we can wait for our new job, or our spouse, or our children, or whatever. Good things come to those who wait.

Mick Jagger is no prophet but he ran into the truth when he wrote, “You can’t always get what you want, and if you try sometime you find you get what you need.” Love with patience teaches that having our needs meet is more than enough, more than we expected, and certainly more than we deserved.