

Scripture Reading:

Acts 21:13 “13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." 15 And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. 16 Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge. 17 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.”

"The Patience of the Kingdom"

As I mentioned last week, we have come to the end of normal or ordinary time in the Church calendar.

We are celebrating the 23th Lord’s Day after Pentecost this year.

- **Next week, we will consider how our season of Advent is both the end and beginning of our Church year!**
- **This week I want to talk about our work in the Kingdom.**

In Luke’s orderly account we have reached the part where Paul arrives in Jerusalem. You have been listening to me preach out of the Book of Acts for almost two years now, so I should be able to ask, what is the theme of this book? That’s right: It is the story of how the Holy Spirit is going to bring glory to Jesus by filling the earth with His Kingdom.

Now we are approaching the end of Acts, so is Paul going to finish the job?

- **We are living almost two thousand years later and there is still much to be done!**

In many ways it appears, and there are many today who believe, that the Kingdom of Jesus has not made very much progress or is even losing some ground.

- **What I want to do this morning is to consider what Pastor Wilson has called the patience of the Kingdom, using as a launching point a couple of the men that we see in our brief text from Acts.**

We meet a man called Mn-A-son, who we know little about other than the fact that he came from Cyprus and obviously had a large home in Jerusalem where Paul and his traveling companions could stay.

It reminds us that even here in the Scriptures we are not given all the details about how the Kingdom advances: Did Mnason know Barnabas who also came from Cyprus? When was he converted or what was his vocation that brought this wealth?

- **We are just not given many details about this man who hosted Paul and his traveling companions!**

Paul is the other example: As one called to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, how does he view this trip to Jerusalem? He was committed to coming even if it cost him his life, both to ensure that the men delivering the gifts for the Saints there arrived safely and also to report back about his work and minister to the Saints in Jerusalem.

These men can help us overcome two problems that we often suffer from:

- **First, we tend to want to know more details than we need to know!**
- **And we often grow anxious about whether the work God has given us to do will actually get done!**

With Mnason, Luke simply gives us what the Holy Spirit has determined that we need to know...

Here, as elsewhere, if we find ourselves always asking about things that are not revealed that is usually not good!

With Paul, we see that he had the confidence to know that the work he was called to do would get done through the power and plan of the Spirit; even if his life was cut short before he accomplished all he thought needed to be done.

So, with these in mind, I want to consider the concept that Pastor Wilson mentioned at our missions conference this year:

- **The patience of the Kingdom.**

I have argued that the theme of the Book of Acts is that the Holy Spirit will fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus! We certainly don't see that happening from a human standpoint by the end of chapter 28, and things still don't look very good even after two thousand years!

- **So, was Luke wrong, or is God slack in getting the job done?**

We must give a hearty NO on both counts and remember that God's timing is not our timing.

To remind us about God's view of the Kingdom, let's do a quick review of several commands and promises of God from the Scriptures that we should be very familiar with... Before the fall of man into sin, God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply: **To fill the earth!**

- **Did that mean fill only the garden? No, it meant fill the earth!**

Now Adam really messed things up when he rebelled: Adam was made in the image of God and thus his choice was VERY significant:

- **Just as God had warned Adam, his rebellion brought sin & death to all mankind; causing the very creation itself to groan under the burden of sin's consequences.**

When someone insists that man needs to have a real or significant choice when it comes to salvation so that he is not just some robot...

- **Be sure to remind them that man already made that choice.**

So God's plan was to start with this first couple and have them fill the earth and take dominion over all the rest of His creation.

- **Had there been no fall... How fast was this going to happen?**

Obviously we are not told, but it was going to take much more time than most other things that God created. God did not start with a small spring & tell it to grow and expand until there were mighty seas to cover the earth. God did not begin with a small hot house to grow the first plants so they could begin to fill the earth. No, He commanded the whole earth to bring forth the incredible variation of vegetation that was food for all the animals and man...

- **And as we can see outside this week, a glorious demonstration of the creative beauty of our God!**

God did not start with a pair of fish or sea urchins hoping they would some day fill the seas...

- **He brought forth all the various kinds of sea creatures and filled the seas with them in short order.**

It is the same with the land animals and birds, but when it came to man, God planted a special garden and placed the first man and women there.

- **He commanded them to go forth from that garden, to be fruitful, and to fill the earth!**

- **This plan to fill the earth with His righteous image bearers was disrupted by sin but not defeated.**

The command to be fruitful and multiply and to fill up the earth was repeated to Noah and his family after the flood.

- So how much of the world was man to fill up? Yes, all of it!
- Is it full yet? Not really!

Next we come to Abraham and the many promises that God made to him. We might have our first hint as to what God has in mind about filling the earth when He tells Abram in Genesis 13:

“And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.”

- Wow, that has to be a pretty big number and it would certainly make the folks over at Zero Population very nervous!
- So do you think we have reached that number yet? I think not!

Keep all of these questions in mind, because I will get to my point about patience!

So was Abraham supposed to cram all of those multitudes into the land of Canaan that God promised him? -- Pretty crowded!

No, we see in later promises to Abraham that it was the same as what God had planned for Adam and Eve. In Genesis 22:18, God declares to Abraham, “and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed my voice!”

- So will that blessing be just for the Kingdom of David?
- Will that promise apply to only Judea and Israel after Solomon’s Kingdom was divided?
- Was it just for the twelve tribes of Israel?
- Is it only for country of Israel that was established in 1948?

No, WHEN God says all the nations of the earth, He means ALL the nations of the earth!

We have often turned to the King’s dream that Daniel interpreted to confirm that the Kingdom of Jesus will fill the whole earth! *[homework if needed]*

I mentioned that Adam’s fall into sin disrupted but did not defeat God’s plan...

- The Bible declares that where the first Adam failed, the Second Adam, Jesus would now succeed.

God in His providence prepared for His Son to come in the flesh and to begin again with one man who would fill the earth with righteous men and women as God intended from the beginning!

We will be reminded in the Advent season that the angels did NOT come and declare, ‘Glory to the God of Israel, and in Jerusalem peace, goodwill toward the Jews.’

NO, the angels sang to those humble shepherds, “‘Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’”

Jesus has come to bring forth the new heavens and the new earth:

- The new creation!

Again we see God, declaring through His angels that everything is very good, just as He proclaimed at the end of the sixth day of creation before the fall.

- The restoration has begun and now the whole earth will be filled with the Kingdom of Jesus.

After Jesus finished His ministry, offered Himself as the sacrifice for sin, and was raised in power He gave the disciples the Great Commission...

Very familiar words that should bring to mind all the questions I asked about those Old Testament passages!

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.” *Matthew 28:18,19*

- **So how much authority does Jesus have? All authority.**
- **Where does Jesus exercise such authority? In heaven AND on earth!**
- **Where are we to make disciples? ALL the other nations of the earth as well.**

Just as Adam and Noah were to be fruitful and fill the earth, just as Abraham was to bring blessing to ALL the nations of the earth and yes, just as Daniel proclaimed in the dream’s interpretation given to him by God Himself,

- **The Kingdom of Jesus is going to fill the earth!**
- **How is it going to fill the earth?**

Jesus is now seated at the Father’s right-hand of power and has sent the Comforter to empower His Church to carry out His command!

Thus, we are going to make disciples by preaching the Gospel and baptizing those who repent and believe and those born to faithful parents. After we baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we then have the task of teaching them to observe, or obey, ALL things that Jesus commanded them!

- **And finally, getting to my subject for this morning, how long will Jesus be with us while we carry out this great commission?**
 - **Till His ascension into heaven?**
 - **Till the destruction of Jerusalem?**
 - **Till the death of the Apostles?**
 - **Till the final apostasy of the Church?**
 - **Till the anti-christ advances the gates of hell?**

[sadly all of these have been taught in one form or another at times]

- **Please take careful note that Jesus said He would be with us ALWAYS, even to the end of the age! [He reminds us of this each week at this Table!]**

The Apostle Paul makes it pretty clear that this is not some milk-toast Jesus ringing His hands hoping that people will make the right choices or the one pictured so He can only stand outside the door and politely knock. In His comprehensive chapter on the Resurrection power of the Gospel, Paul declares this at verse 20:

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.

[please hear what must happen before this event!]

- **25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.**

26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

27 For "He has put all things under His feet."”

- So just what does patience have to do with all of this?

Because patience is often learned the hard way, through trials and tribulations, as Peter and James clearly teach us, we have come to wrongly fear patience...

- We have perhaps joked too often about how a Billy or Kathy must have prayed for patience when we see trouble in their lives.

Patience, as we see it in the Scriptures is far more than just properly dealing with tough times...

- In many ways it is remembering that God is God and we are not!

I mentioned the Apostle Paul as a great example this morning because he understood how to be both driven and patient! Remember that he had written the Epistle to the Romans during this final mission journey, most likely from Corinth. In the 15th chapter Paul refers to the Lord as the God of patience in the midst of a call for us to be faithful to the Great Commission:

Romans 15:1 “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.” 4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. 5 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, 6 that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.”

Now if we take seriously the Biblical picture of the Kingdom of Jesus filling the whole earth and believe that the Book of Acts is the story of how the Spirit of God is going to accomplish this great task, then I would suggest there are two important lessons for us to learn from the God of Patience!

First and foremost we must not allow ourselves to fall into the sin of impatience when it comes to how God’s great plan is worked out...

- Either in our individual lives or the greater picture of the whole earth being filled with God’s Kingdom.

The prayer that Paul lifted up for the Thessalonians should be often on our lips for one another:

“2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.”

We don’t know if the Spirit of God is going to finish filling the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus in this century, this millennium or in the next 10,000 years! We must be careful to not join those who try to discern what God is doing based on the negative news that we see around the world.

As we learned last week, we must look for God’s will in the Scriptures, in prayer and the fellowship of the Saints! We must also apply these same principles to our individual lives.

We want to be the Mason’s of our time providing what God requires to carry out the work that needs to be done. We must not do so for the credit that we will get, or not get.

- We do so to demonstrate that we really do believe that Jesus commanded us to obey everything that He taught!

As we do so, we must be patient and not get ahead of God’s plan.

As I prepared this message a couple of examples from my childhood certainly came to mind and I hope they are still relevant.

- Does anybody still do those paint-by-number kits?

Yes, my artistic talent is right up there with my music talent: I do great as long as I have someone who knows what they are doing to follow!

- Anyway, if you followed the numbers and stayed in the lines you could produce a nice picture!

What was a sure recipe for disaster was trying to do too much too soon and not allowing the time for the paint you had already applied to properly dry!

- You would soon have a real mess on your hands and little hope of putting things right again because you covered up the numbers and mixed the colors!
- As we learned last week from Proverbs, God begins with simple instructions and expects us to patiently carry them out before He turns us loose with real oil paints and a blank canvas!

I know that the second example is still around...

- So how many of you boys have done model airplanes?

Sorry dads, after this morning, they will all want you to teach them how!

They provide another great example of the importance of patience:

- The patience to follow the instructions AND to wait for the glue to dry!

Those who have done these models know what I am talking about!

You think, OH, I see how this goes together and only after the glue is dry do you realize there was something else that had to go in first.

- Following the order in the instructions is important!

Or as you follow along with those instructions, you just can't wait to do that next step even though the glue has not fully set on what you just did...

- 'I will be careful,' you tell yourself and soon you have a real mess on your hand!

Those may seem like silly examples, but if you think about how we do so much in life, they do teach the important lesson of patience in very practical ways!

Now I mentioned two lessons about the patience that we need and I want to briefly remind us of the second.

While we are learning to be patient as God carries out the great plan that we now believe He has for our lives and for the whole world...

- We must remember that there are many, many Saints in the Church today who do not believe that the Kingdom of Jesus will fill the earth before His return!

There is a lot of history regarding how we got into this state, but it is the age that God has chosen to place us: So we must decide how we are going to approach those who are not as convinced as we are of such things...

May I suggest that we must be patient!

Yes, we must be diligent to teach the whole counsel of God and we should encourage people to study many of the passages I have mentioned or quoted this morning, but we must do so as those who serve the God of patience.

Pastor Wilson is also wise when he often points out how amazing it is when the Spirit of God patiently takes five or ten years to teach us a particular truth from the Scriptures...

- **And then we turn right around and expect our brother or sister to get it in fifteen minutes!**

Considering these two places where we must learn patience, perhaps one of the songs from the music machine record that my children grew up on puts it best:

Have patience, have patience

Don't be in such a hurry

When you get impatient, you only start to worry

Remember, remember that God is patient, too

And think of all the times when others have to wait for you.

As we prepare to celebrate the season of Advent we should celebrate the coming of Jesus as the Lamb who came to save His people from their sins,

AND we should be excited about all that will be accomplished as the Kingdom of Jesus fills the earth before He comes again to judge the living and the dead!

- **As we strive to serve the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, may we always remember to have the patience of the Kingdom!**

Communion Meditation: Psalm 110:

"The Lord said to my Lord,

"Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."

2 The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! 3 Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power; In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth.

4 The Lord has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."