

## 12/11/16 ..... 3 Advent A

-- *"I want patience and I want it right now!"* Perhaps you've seen this saying somewhere. I've actually seen it on someone's sweatshirt. It says something about the times we live in. We seem to want everything at our fingertips.

-- For instance, many people endanger themselves and others in a car by texting or endless talking on a phone they're holding in one hand while trying to drive the car with the other. Nothing can wait, so it seems.

-- During this time of year, we want Christmas to arrive as soon as Thanksgiving has occurred. Those who actually wait to put up Christmas decorations until this time of December or later are out of step, not to mention fighting colder, nastier weather.

-- In biblical times, patience was a challenge, though in a slightly different way. People were focused on day-to-day life. The future was uncertain, so planning for it was not a priority.

-- James speaks about patience today. He's addressing first century Christians who were starting to wonder why Christ hadn't come yet to establish the heavenly kingdom. They were chomping at the bit for that day.

-- He gives them two examples of those who had to exercise patience. The first is the farmer, who has to wait for the seeds to bear fruit. He is dependent on the rain, and he knows he's not in complete control of this process.

-- The second is the prophets. They spoke to the people of their own time. First, they told them what was wrong and what they had to change. Then, they held out hope of a better future, because God is merciful. We have a vision of that future in the 1<sup>st</sup> reading. But it takes time to work itself out.

-- The prophets were not in complete control of the process, either. The rulers and people had minds of their own, and often they would not

listen to them. In fact, they might punish them for their words. But the true prophets persevered.

-- We hear this call to patience halfway through the Advent season, as we celebrate Gaudete Sunday. "Gaudete" means "rejoice." We don't rejoice because everything is great in the world. We know that's not true.

-- We rejoice because God is ultimately in control of all things. And God's vision will come to pass in time. Like the prophets, we will not likely see the completion of that vision in our earthly lifetimes. But we trust that God's work is being done.

-- We also hear this call to patience as Monday is designated as a day of prayer and solidarity with families of immigrants. They have to exercise great patience in the entire process of entering a new country, establishing themselves and dealing with various government requirements to settle in a new land.

-- Anyone who knows me knows that I am not the most patient person in the world (just see me at the computer). Often, I look too far ahead and am in danger of missing opportunities in the present moment.

-- God offers each of us opportunities to experience his love and grace if we are open to them. May we not miss the kindness shown to us by family members, friends and even by strangers. May we look for ways to offer kindness to those we meet this coming week.

-- For, just as God provides rain for the crops, so God rains down his loving grace on each of us. We only have to be aware of it, and have the patience to allow it to do its work over time.