

Patient joy Gaudete Sunday

15 12 13

O Lord Jesus Christ,
who at your first coming sent your messenger
to prepare your way before you:
grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries,
may likewise so prepare and make ready your way
by turning the hearts of the disobedient
to the wisdom of the just
that at your second coming to judge the world
we may be found an acceptable people in your sight.

Our text may be found in the Epistle of James, chapter 5 and verse 7:

‘Be patient, therefore, beloved until the coming of the Lord.’

December 15th was my mum’s birthday. This year, December 15th is the third Sunday in Advent, Gaudete Sunday, so called because of the first word in Latin of the opening verse, the introit traditionally appointed for the day, is ‘Gaudete’ – ‘Rejoice’. What the third Sunday in Advent and the fourth Sunday in Lent have in common is the possibility of me wearing rose pink vestments – a thing I get to do just twice a year so I have to be patient in between if I want to be in the pink ! So, this morning, with the text and the day in mind, I’d like to look at the twin themes of patience and joy.

So, my first question – are you patient? Not easy being patient if you want to get up and go, get up and make things happen here and now. Not easy to be patient if you are anxious for a result, anxious to relieve pain or suffering or discomfort. But here, in our text today – ‘**Be patient, therefore, beloved until the coming of the Lord.**’ – James is urging us to just that! Well, we know Christmas is just ten days off so we haven’t got long to wait for that but what James is really writing about is the Second Coming when Christ the King shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. And that, my friends, is something none of us knows when it will happen though James, bless him, writes that ‘**the coming of the Lord is near.**’ And to help us be patient, James cites the example of a farmer who has to wait for the rain to fall, early and late, to make his precious crop grow and, in due time, be ready to harvest.

Another example of patience, or rather lack of it, is John the Baptist in prison sending some of his disciples to his cousin, Jesus, to ask, ‘**Are you the one who is to come or are we to wait for another?**’ Silly question! But it does show John’s state of mind. John knew that Jesus was the Messiah. John recognised him as such when they were both still in their respective mothers’ wombs! John baptised him in the Jordan, reluctantly because Jesus needed no spiritual cleansing, and John may well have heard the voice of God and seen the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. John said as much to some of his own disciples by pointing Jesus out to them and saying, ‘**Behold the Lamb of God.**’ Poor soul, languishing in prison, John began to doubt what he knew to be true, possibly because he didn’t think things were happening quickly enough. Jesus simply points to the evidence ‘**the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf**

hear, the dead are raised and the poor have good news brought to them.’ He is doing exactly what the prophet Isaiah foretold he would ! So not only should John be patient, he should be joyful too

And so, lastly, my second question – are you joyful ? Some of us, by nature, are miserable, unhappy, down-in-the-dumps. I guess it’s a combination of character type and life experience. It’s hard to smile when things are pretty bad. But joy isn’t the same as happiness. Joy is at the centre of our being and does not depend on what happens to us or what is happening around us. Rather joy is the knowledge that we are loved by God and we are cherished by God and that ultimately all will be well. We do have Christmas to look forward to in ten days’ time and the Second Coming whenever. The one tells us how much we are loved and the other tells us that we will be called home with those great words of approbation, ‘Well done god and faithful servant’.

So let’s try to be patient for we have every reason to be filled with present joy. And to encourage you, I’ll leave you with the wartime motto current today – ‘Keep calm and carry on’ – in our case with a smile if not on our face then in our hearts !

I have spoken in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist
St Bartholomew’s, Dinard
15th December, 2013*

G: Sermons 29 : Patient Joy

