

Patience is Not Waiting



Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

-James 5:7-11 (NRSV)

Having been raised in rural Ohio, I felt a small-town kinship when I first moved to the Palestinian village of Beit Jala, just south of Jerusalem. Connection to the land came from the sense of purpose and fulfillment that working the land gives people. Being in close relationship to the Creator through cultivating a harvest and providing for one's family and community can give people who do this work a profound fulfillment.

Being close to the land entails a patience that is not what many of us in the modern US understand at waiting. If you have ever planted a field or had a garden you know there is much to do beyond planting and sowing. Preparing the ground, weeding, being watchful of unhealthy pests and many other tasks are activities that take place year-round.

All people plant with the expectation of harvest. However, we are not necessarily planting in fields of earth. In today's text James is talking about farming to people who understood that patience and waiting are not the same things. Patience understands that there are things in our lives which take preparation, effort and investment of resources. Waiting doesn't have to mean killing time. We wait for what takes time, and in the meantime we prepare. We prepare our hearts and minds to be at peace while we work for peace. We work at building relationships with other people that will not only help peace find a home in our world, but relationships that are themselves the fruits of peace.

This past October I led a band of pilgrims to the Holy Land of Israel and Palestine. There were two activities that were core to our experience and exemplified the intersection of our faith, politics and personal journeys. For several mornings we picked olives with Palestinian Muslim and Christian farmers in Beit Jala. We also celebrated Shabbat with Jewish Israelis in Jerusalem. We will continue our work while we wait, expectant and ready, for peace.

- Reverend Doris Warrell

Field Director, Executive Director, Churches for Middle East Peace

For Meditation

What are the actions I need to take to prepare for peace? Do I follow my calling as a peacemaker in not only what I do but how I do it? How do I avoid grumbling against others while doing my work as a peacemaker? Am I in touch with the source of my strength?

Prayer

All are blessed by having endurance and patience.

All are blessed by finding strength in God and in the children of God.

All are blessed by having faith that the rains will come, and peace will prevail.

