

This is who we are. Part 3—Patience Text: Ephesians 4:1-6

Warming Up

Questions:

1. *What is one of the worst inventions in the history of the world?*
2. *What word would you use to describe your experience with God recently?*

Digging In

Read **Matthew 11:1-6**.

John the Baptist had many advantages over others in his understanding of Jesus. He knows Jesus, and interacts with him, even before he is born. He likely grows up with Jesus. He is called by God to prepare the way for Jesus. The Gospel of John tells us he hears the voice of God affirming the Sonship of Jesus, and sees the Spirit descend on Jesus. And yet...while he is in prison, he exposes great doubts about Jesus being the Messiah.

Questions:

1. *Why do you think John the Baptist doubts that Jesus is the Messiah at this point in the story?*
2. *How does Jesus respond to John's questioning about whether or not he is the Messiah?*
3. *How do you think God responds to you in your own doubts?*

Jesus demonstrates great patience with John in his doubt. For the first Christians, Jesus revealed the patience God has always had for his people.

Read **1 Timothy 1:15-17**.

Questions:

1. *Why do you think Jesus displays such patience with us?*
2. *How have you experienced the patience of God in your own life?*

Read **Ephesians 4:1-3**.

Questions:

1. *Why do you think the early Christians were so clear and direct about the importance of practicing patience together?*
2. *What would a church look like that didn't make patience a priority?*
3. *What would be true of a church that **did** make it a priority to practice patience?*

Sending Out

Read **Galatians 5:22**.

We are reminded that any effort at patience can only find fruitfulness as a gift from God's Spirit. The first Christians believed that patience was a gift of God but could only be received if it was practiced every day.

The word for "patience" here is used specifically for our relationships with others. God gives us patience in difficult circumstances, but also patience with difficult people. In fact, some have suggested that God places difficult people in our lives *in order to* grow the virtue of patience in us.

Questions:

1. *What do you find more challenging, being patient in a difficult circumstance or being patient with a difficult person or people?*
2. *On a scale of one to ten, ten being Christ-like, how would you rate your ability to be patient?*
3. *What are some ways we can help each other grow in the gift of patience?*

Closing

Take a moment in silence to come before God and ask the question, *"What word or phrase or idea or moment does God want me to remember from this morning and carry with me this week?"*

Close with prayer.