Sermon- 2nd Advent Dec. 9&10 FLC

Title: “Practical Patience”

Texts: Isa 40:1-11, 2Peter 3:8-14, Mark 1:1-8

Prayer

Salutation

**Bridge**

 **Brothers and sisters, I’ve known many of you for a long time now, some for as long as thirty years. So, you know all about me. You know I’m a practical guy, who has done things from a practical perspective in my previous plumbing occupation. You know that, and because of those influences, I therefore am very much like Peter, the epistle writer for today. In that I am at times very blunt, and most likely do not think before I speak. So, for those of you I don’t know well yet, now you know. People sometimes lose patience with me. Until they figure me out. The good thing is, God puts up with me and definitely has patience with me. And that is what we are here to explore today—practical patience.**

**Law**

 **When we look at all three of the texts for today, the theme found in them is repentance and patience. In Isaiah, the people who had been taken into captivity had experienced, practically, the effects of the generations of sin that the Lord had seen and patiently waited for them to come out of. But they had failed to do so. Finally, after exile from the promised land, they had cried to return, had come to repentance and the Lord heard them. They would return to Jerusalem. The text cries out, “Comfort, Comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” The punishment was harsh. And now He had forgiven them after they had repented of their sins. They found that their God was and is a merciful God.**

 **In the Epistle, Peter talks about the hard fact of the second coming, much like the last Sunday of the church year two weeks ago where Christ is coming to judge the world. He is very blunt and says that God is being very patient with a sinful world, and he does not wish any to be lost but all to come to repentance. He practically says, in my translation, “Get it together and get ready!” And for those in our world who have poor hearing or just don’t care when they do hear it, it will be a surprise and a mighty roar!**

 **And finally in the Gospel, John the Baptist, the one spoken of and predicted in the Isaiah text comes to fulfill prophecy and prepare in a practical way, by baptizing in the Jordan for the forgiveness of sins. He was there, according to scripture, to prepare hearts for the coming Kingdom of God in Christ Jesus. He was the guy standing on the street corner with a sign saying, “Repent, the end is near!” And he was right. And he took it to the house of Israel.**

 **Therefore, in all three of these texts, the theme is repentance and patience. God patiently waits for people to repent of their sins. It is a practically simple theological premise. The only problem I see with it is that these events happened many years apart. And today, it is no different! God is still exercising His patience—with US! We do everything sinful that everyone has ever done before. And maybe even something new! Each week we begin our Divine Service with confession and absolution. How many of those sins did you think of? I’m serious! Practically speaking, when was the last time you really *pondered* your sins? When I sit down and get really serious about personal introspection, like Luther did, I am brought to deep despair! And if I were to remain there in my sins, understanding the implications thereof, I’d find I’d be *worthy* of being carted off into captivity, and not to Babylon, but someplace much worse. At least that’s what Peter tells me and you. And I’m telling you today that you *must* think about this on a personal level and repent. One on one, with the One who saved you, the One John came to point out.**

**Gospel**

 **Practically speaking then, it comes down to this, “But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” And He does. Once again, He says, “Comfort, Comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned…” And He does that every time we take those sins to the river to be washed away. And when Jesus went to John, He took those sins upon Himself. Washed in the dirty waters of the Jordan, filthy with the sins of all men for all time. Yours and mine.**

 **If you are like me, and you are a sinful human being, it takes time to comprehend that. It takes faith to believe it. And I thank God for the gift of my faith and He Who He sent to us that we prepare again for this Advent season. We look forward to celebrating His first coming. Last week’s Advent candle was that of hope and this week’s is that of preparation. Practical preparation. Our loving and patient God is giving us and billions of people like us, time, before that which Peter has told of us will occur. And we all know what time is, a certain gift we appreciate more when we have used much of it. And we are certainly grateful that we receive the fruit of repentance here in the river of the Divine Service, the forgiveness of sins.**

 **Through Christ, we are given many things. As the hymn says, “our house, goods, honor, child and spouse”, but most of all our eternal life through Christ, Our patient and Loving Lord. As His bride, we wait in preparation and patience for His return, knowing His plan for our lives, both now and in eternity. All brought about by His plan of salvation for us, and an unbelievable plan that he would do such a thing for us. One where He’d send His Son to be born of a mere human creation, to live amongst us, as an unbelievably perfect human, and then go down to the river with John, all leading to His walk to the cross where those sins were paid for, once and for all. Such an incomprehensible gift!**

**Conclusion**

 **Dear brothers and sisters, the first coming of Jesus was no small thing. And in this Advent season we are given the Word and the sacraments to get to know Him like He knows us. Practically speaking, as I began this message, you get to know the other person by taking the time to get to know them. Sometimes, it takes thirty years like me with some of you, but sometimes, it takes a lifetime of patience. Getting to know Jesus, on the other hand, is easy. His Word to you is found in Here. He says, “**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” **For He accepts you as you are when you come to Him humble repentance, faithfully relying on Him for all things, body and soul. When we do, He is pleased and will certainly bless us. God be with you this joyous season of Advent, preparing for those things He has promised and given to us until He comes.**

**May the peace of God that surpasses all our understanding, fill our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen**