The Learned Habit of Patience

Scott Engebretson

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Neglected Virtues Series

Hebrews 6:13-15

Interacting with the Sermon

Synopsis of the Sermon

Pastor Scott began in Hebrews where it reflects on the life of Abraham. Abraham had to “wait patiently” for what he was promised. This is just a snapshot of the waiting that Abraham had to do and Scott takes us back to Genesis to look at the nitty gritty of this “waiting” that Abraham had to do. Genesis 12:1-3 tells the promise that Abraham was given: “I will make you into a great nation.” At the end of this passage, there is a reference to Abraham’s age. It seems to be a throw-away verse, but his age is referred to several more times, so it must be intentional. The promise came to Abraham when he was 75 years old but his son that was to start this “great nation” wasn’t born until he was 100 years old. He had to wait 25 years for God to fulfill his promise. To learn patience, we must first learn to be patient with God and accept His timeline.

Scott points out that if we took a look at a cross section of our lives right now, it might not be a pretty sight. Often, in the moment what we experience and see is not an encouragement. But it is the overall picture of our lives that God will look at – not simply one section. To get through these difficult times in our lives, we need a regular encounter with Jesus. His presence is what will sustain us through unanswered prayers and unanswered questions. We can encounter God in many ways, but in our context, we have a few ways that we offer people to regularly connect with God. We gather for a church service each week and also gather in small groups each week. We respond to God in worship and also gather together around the communion table each week to remember what he has done. We also give people the opportunity to receive prayer. Oftentimes when we are struggling, we tend to isolate ourselves, but we really need these avenues of connection with God through community.

The second place we can learn patience from the life of Abraham is patience with others. Scott talks about Abraham’s trying to take control in crisis by moving to Egypt but then we see a change in him with his relationship with Lot. When they part ways, Abraham is open handed with him and seems to let go of his need for control. He allows Lot to choose his own way, even if it means him taking the promised land. Where can we be more open handed? We can learn patience as we let go and give up control and allow other people to make mistakes, take risks and do the job in their own way. Sarah also begins by trying to take control and have her servant bear her a child when she continued to suffer from infertility. She was getting impatient with God’s timing. We make mistakes, but God leaves opportunity to trust Him and continue to give up control.

Finally we need to learn patience with ourselves. We need to have freedom to fail. This freedom comes as we learn God’s patience with us. He uses 2 Peter 3:9 to illustrate this point. God is “patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” Scott points out the current season of Lent. It is a time when we can remember how to fail well. This season is an opportunity to press the pause button and take a look at our lives and where we are lacking and begin to practice repentance. Some of the sins that we observe in our lives will be difficult to face and difficult to overcome, but with the habitual practice of letting Jesus in we can slowly see change.

*In 5 minutes or less, briefly give a synopsis of this week’s sermon. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend’s message did you find to be most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain.*

Getting the Conversation Started

*These questions can be used as ice-breakers in the beginning OR interwoven between the questions below to draw the group into the discussion.*

* + - What is something that really tries your patience? Road rage? Waiting in line? Bad customer service?
    - Have you decided to give up anything for Lent to help clear the room of clutter? Did you commit to engage in any practices?

Scripture Study

Remember that Observation questions can be found right in the text, Interpretation questions have several potential answers and it’s our chance to learn from each other and try to understand the text together. We’ll make some suggestions for these answers but you or your group members may have other thoughts to add. Finally, Application questions are where we begin to apply the text to our own lives and we have time to share more personally.

Read: Matt 11:25-30

*25At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. 26Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.*

*27“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*

*28“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

Overview: (taken from Leon Morris’ commentary on Matthew in the Pillar New Testament series)

*This passage is in three sections. In the first, Jesus expresses his thankfulness that the way he teaches is not something that is open only to the learned and intelligent; even little children may apprehend it. In the second he reflects on the relation between the Father and the Son, and then in the third he invites the world’s downtrodden ones to find peace and rest in him. There are parallels to the first two in Luke 10:21-22, but the invitation in verses 28-30 is found in Matthew’s gospel only.*

VV. 25-26 *It is not totally clear what “these things” refers to. Some commentators say that it refers to the secrets of the Kingdom which was the focus of Jesus’ preaching. Others suggest that it is the secret of when Jesus will return, or Jesus’ true identity. For our purposes, we will assume “these things” refers to the things of the Kingdom of God i.e. the ways things operate under God’s reign and rule.*

1. Who has God revealed his secrets to? (observation)
2. What does this say about God’s values and how His Kingdom works? (interpretation – God is loving enough that he makes his truth available to the humblest people. His truth is simple and easy for anyone to understand. And God intended it to be this way. It is “pleasing” to him that his Kingdom is not just for the super intelligent to figure out. We all have access – and in fact the simple-minded are more equipped to understand His ways.)
3. How does this make you feel about your place in the Kingdom? Do you feel able to understand the truths of God? Why or why not? (application)

VV. 27-28 *“All things” can refer to the totality of existence but it probably at least refers to all “knowledge” especially knowledge of the Father. Jesus is claiming a relationship of closeness with the Father that no one has dared yet to claim.*

1. Who knows the Son? Who knows that Father? (observation)
2. What does it mean that only the Father knows the Son? (interpretation – God is the one who knows the identity of Jesus as the Son of God. This truth isn’t clear to the disciples yet.)
3. How does Jesus say knowledge of the Father will be revealed? (observation – knowledge of the Father is connected with the will of the Son.)
4. What does this mean for us who want to get to know the Father? What hope do we have of knowing Him? (application – the knowledge of God will come through Jesus. And we can trust that he desires to reveal the Father to us.)

VV. 28-30 *In this section, unique to Matthew’s gospel, out of Jesus’ will to reveal, comes this invitation to “come to him.” The Greek words for “weary” and “heavily burdened” are powerful ones. The one implies toil and the other endurance. The one refers to the weary search for truth and for relief from a troubled conscience; the other refers to the heavy load of the sorrows of life.*

1. What illustration does Jesus use for the “rest” he offers? (observation – a “yoke” and a “burden”) What else does he instruct them to do? (observation – “learn from me”) What is this “burden” like? (observation - “easy” & “light”)
2. How can a “yoke” or “burden” be a source of rest? (interpretation – In this passage, Jesus’ rest isn’t simply not doing anything. It isn’t sitting in silence or sleeping more or going away for the weekend to the beach. Jesus gives an illustration of work. Slow, steady, meaningful work. We actually take weight onto our shoulders but somehow that meaningful burden gives us “rest” where our own yokes and burdens that we place on ourselves only drain the life out of us.)
3. What do you think Jesus wants us to learn from him according to the earlier verses? (observation – knowledge of the Father)
4. How could this “yoke” of Jesus build patience in us? (application – as we start to know him more, to learn who the Father is and learn Jesus’ ways of working, we will find ourselves releasing more control, trusting God more, finding peace in the midst of chaos, finding comfort in terrible circumstances.)
5. St. Augustine said at the beginning of his *Confessions* “God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless til they find their rest in you.” Jesus offers rest in this passage. How can we offer this “rest” to others who don’t know Jesus? (application – try to undo the burdens “religion” has placed on people. Offer friendship & community to people. Offer meaningful work through service. Attempt to introduce people to the person of Jesus – share the hope of the gospel and his radical act of Love.)
6. Have you experienced Jesus’ rest in your life – you carried a heavy burden but then you traded a heavy burden for Jesus’ “yoke”? How did it look? (application – personal sharing time if anyone is willing/able to share)

Ministry Application

*Below you’ll see some options for ministry time with your group. We always encourage you to reserve time in your group to pray for one another and wait on the Holy Spirit.*

* + - * Practice group meditation with this passage. One person read verses 28-30 slowly 4 times. Each time pause in between and allow the words to soak in. If you want, have people jot down a few things the Lord brings to mind that they need to lay down in order to take up his “yoke”
      * Break into groups of 2-3. Share one thing that is weighing on you. Don’t give advice on how to fix the problem or burden. Simply listen and then pray verses 28-30 over them.
      * Pray for those who are heavily burdened in your life that may not know Jesus that they could find rest in God.