# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

**A sermon preached by Mike Rooney**

**“God’s Grace Working Through Us”**

**John 12:12-19**

**April 2, 2023**

IMPATIENCE

Are any of you impatient?

I’m impatient.

I’m impatient about things that are not very important. For example, I’m impatient to break 80 on the golf course. I think I’m good enough—no, I know I’m good enough—Chuck, Am I good enough? Well, being impatient doesn’t enhance my enjoyment of golf.

I’m impatient for the Gonzaga Bulldogs to win the March Madness college basketball tournament. Aren’t you? We know they can do it, but it just doesn’t seem to happen.

I’m impatient about more important things. I’m on the Pastor Search Committee and I’m impatient that the project is not already finished. Now, don’t get me wrong, we ae making progress for sure, but I’d like it to go faster! Happily, there are members on the committee who remind me that we are working on God’s time and to stop fretting.

I’m impatient about really important things:

I’m impatient for our elected representatives to do something to improve or resolve the awful situation on our border with Mexico!

I’m impatient for the Ukrainians to prevail in their war with the cruel, invading bullies from Russia!

I’m impatient for justice and peace and real government to arise in Haiti where the people are suffering terribly and the world just stands by and watches.

I’m impatient for unity and not divisiveness in our country!

In short: I’m impatient for the forces of good to start winning over the forces of evil in the world! Because it sure seems to be going the other way.

Well, I think there are examples of impatience and its consequences in the bible. Let’s start with today’s Palm Sunday scripture reading beginning in John 12: 12-19

*The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A large crowd of Passover visitors took palm branches and went down the road to meet him. They shouted, “Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hail to the King of Israel!” Jesus found a young donkey and rode on it, fulfilling the prophecy that said: “Don’t be afraid, people of Jerusalem. Look, your King is coming, riding on a donkey’s colt.” His disciples didn’t understand at the time that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. But after Jesus entered into his glory, they remembered what had happened and realized that these things had been written about him. Many in the crowd had seen Jesus call Lazarus from the tomb, raising him from the dead, and they were telling others about it. That was the reason so many went out to meet him—because they had heard about this miraculous sign. Then the Pharisees said to each other, “There’s nothing we can do. Look, everyone has gone after him!”*

So where do I see impatience in this story? I see the crowd that is excited, enthusiastic—they are celebrating the arrival of their hero, BUT THEY’RE ALSO IMPATIENT! Jesus’ ministry has been gaining momentum for 3 years. He’s performed many miracles. He’s antiestablishment and champions the underdog. He just recently raised Lazarus from the dead—He can do anything! And some people say He’s the Messiah—THE NEXT KING! So they are impatient for Him to take control, take down the Romans, and establish the new promised kingdom. And what happens? Because they miss the point about Jesus, whose kingdom is not of this world, He doesn’t do what they expect and this leads to disappointment, discouragement, and even betrayal—as some of these same crowds will soon be screaming, “CRUCIFY HIM!!”.

A little bit further on in the Gospel, we see another example of impatience and its consequences. Jesus has been arrested by the Jewish leaders and taken to Pontius Pilate for sentencing. Pilate interviews Jesus and can’t find any crime. He learns that Jesus is from Galilee and therefore under Herod’s jurisdiction so he sends him to Herod. That investigation goes nowhere, so Jesus is sent back to Pilate who talks to Him again. He basically says to Jesus, “Come on, work with me here! What am I supposed to tell this mob which is calling for your death??” He finally becomes impatient and just washes his hands or the matter. We all know where this leads.

There are many examples of impatience in the Old Testament.

There’s the story of Jacob and Esau. Esau comes in from the field and is so impatient for something to eat that he sells Jacob his birthright for a bowl of stew!

What about Moses and the Israelites? Moses goes up on Mt. Sinai to receive the tablets of the covenant, the physical embodiment of the covenant between God and his people. And while he is there on the mountain, out of sight, the people become impatient. Impatient enough to make a golden calf to worship instead of the true God. Impatience here led to a very bad decision for when Moses came down from the mountain and discovered this mess, his righteous anger led to the execution death of many of the crowd that had rebelled against God.

Later on, when the Promised Land is in sight, the Israelites ran out of water. They complained and protested to Moses. Moses and Aaron spoke to God in the Tabernacle and God told them that He would provide water from a nearby rock. When Moses and Aaron came out of the Tabernacle, the people were more insistent than ever. I can just hear them: “WHAT DO WE WANT? WATER!! WHEN DO WE WANT IT? NOW!!” Their impatience was contagious—Moses tapped the rock twice. God didn’t tell him to do that; He said HE would provide. In response to this display of lack of trust, God declared that no one who had originally left Egypt—including Moses—would be allowed to enter the promised land, and that the people would wander in the wilderness for 40 years. IMPATIENCE-----RASH DECISION----BAD CONSEQUENCES.

So, I’ve described the problem with impatience; now what do we do about it??

PSALM 37 GIVES US SOME ADVICE: In verse 7 it says:

BE STILL IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

AND WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM TO ACT

DON’T WORRY ABOUT EVIL PEOPLE WHO PROSPER

OR FRET ABOUT THEIR WICKED SCHEMES

And even better in verse 34:

DON’T BE IMPATIENT FOR THE LORD TO ACT

TRAVEL STEADILY ALONG HIS PATH

HE WILL HONOR YOU, GIVING YOU THE LAND

YOU WILL SEE THE WICKED DESTROYED

Verse 7 recommends FAITH. Verse 34 contains an active verb: **Travel Steadily**

So this seems to be the formula: FAITH AND ACTION

So if impatience often leads us to disappointment, discouragement and other bad consequences, how should we respond? FAITH + ACTION.

Jesus addresses both points in the gospels. First, about FAITH:

In John 14 Jesus told his disciples at the Last Supper: “TRUST IN GOD AND TRUST IN ME!” “I WILL NOT ABANDON YOU AS ORPHANS”

In Matt 21, after performing a miracle with a fig tree He said to them: “IF YOU HAVE FAITH AND DON’T DOUBT, YOU CAN DO THINGS LIKE THIS AND MUCH MORE…..YOU CAN CAUSE MOUNTAINS TO BE THROWN INTO THE SEA”

In Luke 17, He said: “IF YOU HAD FAITH EVEN AS SMALL AS A MUSTARD SEED, YOU COULD SAY TO THIS MULBERRY TREE, “MAY YOU BE UPROOTED AND PLANTED IN THE SEA, AND IT WOULD OBEY YOU”

And of course, Paul writes in Philippians, “DON’T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING, INSTEAD PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING”

Alright, Faith. It’s in God’s hands. But that doesn’t mean we just sit back and observe. We must also act—as the Psalm says: TRAVEL STEADILY ALONG HIS PATH.

Jesus reminds us in John 15:

“YOU DIDN’T CHOOSE ME, I CHOSE YOU. I APPOINTED YOU TO GO AND PRODUCE LASTING FRUIT.

And a few verses later in John 15: I WILL SEND YOU THE ADVOCATE, THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH WHO WILL TESTIFY ABOUT ME. AND YOU MUST ALSO TESTIFY ABOUT ME!”

And in the great commission he tells us: “GO NOW AND MAKE DISCIPLES----AND TEACH THEM”

So if I’m impatient and you’re impatient, let’s remember: with faith mountains can be moved and God has not abandoned us as orphans. But he has also chosen us and appointed us to produce lasting fruit. This part about ACTION can seem intimidating—like it might take some courage, but remember what St. Francis said: “PREACH THE GOSPEL ALWAYS, AND WHEN NECESSARY USE WORDS!”

Bringing us back to the Palm Sunday story, that crowd expecting their King was not wrong—He was right there. His Kingdom was not of this world then—but it will be --in God’s Time.

As I was thinking about this opportunity to speak about IMPATIENCE over the past few weeks, I was listening to some music on my I-pod while I was walking to the mailbox, and I heard a song by a band called ZZ TOP that hit me. Now ZZ TOP wouldn’t normally come to mind if you are thinking of Christian Music but they have a song called JESUS JUST LEFT CHICAGO that spoke to me. This is a bluesy rock song in which Jesus just left Chicago and He’s bound for New Orleans. Now this is a working trip, not a vacation. He makes a stop in Mississippi, where muddy water turns to wine, then he heads out to California…… but it’s the last verse of the song that really hit home: YOU MAY NOT SEE HIM IN PERSON, BUT HE’LL SEE YOU JUST THE SAME

YOU MAY NOT SEE HIM IN PERSON, BUT HE’LL SEE YOU JUST THE SAME

BUT YOU DON’T HAVE TO WORRY

CAUSE TAKIN CARE OF BUSINESS IS HIS NAME!

Be patient, He’s taking care of business—He’s got this.

Let’s Pray:

Lord, be patient with us, even when we are impatient with you.

Renew our Faith. And even when we so fervently desire it,

May not our will, but thy will be done. Send us your Holy Spirit

To guide us, as we Travel Steadily along your path.

Amen.