

Jan 26th – Sermon Notes

1. Called to Freedom

Yesterday morning, as I spent time alone with the Lord, I found myself a bit all over the place. I was fiddling with random things, my mind wandering to a million different thoughts, and just couldn't seem to stay focused.

But then a smile spread across my face, and my heart started to dance. It dawned on me that I could invite the Lord into that very experience of being distracted and fellowship with Him in my efforts to manage it. Instantly, it wasn't just my issue; it became ours. What initially felt like a barrier to connecting with the Lord became a shared experience between us. It was wonderful! I remembered that being with Him wasn't a performance and He wasn't there grading my focus or my ability to stay on task.

I was reminded that He can bless *whatever* I bring to our time together, no matter how scattered my thoughts may be. He understands the fragments of my mind just as well as the deepest and loftiest expressions. And then this thought flashed like a beacon: It is more important to the Lord that I believe the right things about Him than it is to say things in the "right" way to Him.

In the words of the apostle John, "...*we know and rely on the love God has for us*" (1 John 4:16). We rest in His love for us, not on any skills we bring to the table. In that moment, I chose to believe that He delights in me – not in my presentation, which led me to rejoice in my relationship with Him all the more.

- It's more important to the Lord that I believe the right things about Him than it is to say things in the right way. He wants us to believe and rely on the love He has for us. The love demonstrated by Christ's death on our behalf (Romans 5:8) and the love that is ours because of it.
- He wants us to believe Ephesians 3:12 (NIV) ¹² In him, Christ, and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.
- God is always more concerned about how I am doing than what I am doing. Why, because with Him the heart of the matter is always the heart of the matter.
 - Isaiah 29:13, which says: "The Lord says: 'These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.'"
 - **God doesn't want us to just go through the motions.** "You delight in truth in the innermost being." (Psalm 51:6).
- **He is our ally in every intention of good. That means it's never just "my problem" or "my issue." It becomes ours.**
- Even in the Old Testament: "In all their distress, he too was distressed" (Isaiah 63:9).
- The Lord wants us to use that freedom and confidence of acceptance and access to love.

2. Liberated to Love

1 Thessalonians 5:12-15 (NIV) *...be patient with everyone...*”.

Ephesians 4:2 (NIV) ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Relationships are like a book. In relationships, patience is like reading a book, where each issue is a new chapter. Patience is taking the time to read the pages and not just skip to the conclusion.

Ephesians 4:1-3 (NASB77) “showing forbearance to one another in love...”

The rebuttal to patience is “sometimes people need a fire lit under them,” or a “kick in the pants,” or to be “kicked out of the nest.” But there is a big difference between inspiration and irritation. True patience seeks to uplift and support, recognizing that nurturing someone's potential requires empathy and understanding, not pressure and impatience.

Be patient with everyone.

- Fellow motorists are entitled to our patience. Customer service reps are entitled to our patience. Children are also entitled to patience. Being a parent is not a license to yell or be harsh with our kids.

And finally, be patient with yourself, life is not about perfection; it's about progress. We are becoming every day and little adjustments can make big differences in key moments. We don't know when those key moments may occur. **Showing patience at a critical time for someone can be a memory that will last them a lifetime.** And it doesn't require you to be patient all the time.

I still remember the patience I was shown when I wrecked a dear sister's brand-new car. I remember that 45 years later.

We never know what blessings lie on the other side of patience. We never truly know what positive transformations and unexpected blessings may emerge from our patience with others.

All of us can think of someone whose patience with us made a tremendous difference. May God give us grace to be that someone to someone else.