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"Fruit-Full: Patience"  
Ephesians 4:1-6  
Galatians 5:22-23

### **Opening: Recap of first three sermons**

- For the past three weeks, we've been exploring "the fruits of the Spirit," examining how the Holy Spirit works in us, shaping us into people God intends us to be.
  - o There are nine fruit.
    - Each represents an attribute of the Christian character.
    - And as Christians, we hope that these qualities are seen in us.
    - And the fruit is what God will produce in us, through the work of the Holy Spirit.
  - o So far, we've looked at love, joy and peace.
    - We've examined how the Spirit works to shape us into more loving people and how prayer plays an important part in allowing the Holy Spirit to work.
    - We've explored Joy and how life is bright and sweet when we are joy-filled.
    - And we've pondered Peace—the need to trust God—to allow the Holy Spirit to chase away the worry in our lives.
      - Otherwise we rob ourselves of peace.
- Now, both Sandra and I have mentioned this already, but it bears repeating.
  - o Because it's important to understand that the fruit that is produced in each of us—things like love, joy, peace and patience—these aren't things we can cultivate and produce on our own.
    - These are things which the Holy Spirit cultivates within us.
  - o The fact is, if it is left up to us, our natural human tendency is to cultivate those things which run counter to the Spirit.
    - It's called sin and our sinful nature tends to work against the Spirit.
    - When the Spirit isn't working in us, we worry more, we are less joyful and less loving.
  - o The Apostle Paul mentions this in the scripture immediately before verses 22 and 23, when says "For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh."
  - o So, the goal for each of us is to open ourselves up,
    - To welcome the Holy Spirit into our lives.
    - Allow it to work in us, to shape us and bear good fruit in us.

### **Pomegranate: the fruit of Patience**

- Today, we are looking at Patience.

- The fruit of Patience is like a pomegranate.
- There is a picture of a pomegranate on the front of your bulletin and as you can see, the pomegranate is a fruit about the size of an orange and inside the fruit are many small seeds, which are surrounded by this reddish-purple fruity flesh.
  - And it are these seeds which are eaten.
- The fruit of the pomegranate is loaded with nutrients. It is very good for you.
  - It's high in antioxidants and Vitamin C.
  - It has anti-inflammatory qualities and has been shown to reduce the risk of certain types of cancer and heart disease.
  - So yes, pomegranates are good for you.
- And patience is good for you too.
  - And to eat a fresh pomegranate, you'll need patience.
    - Because to get to the fruit, one has to remove these seeds—a process that takes time, is tedious, messy and can be downright irritating.
  - This past week, as I was researching online about the pomegranate, I came across a video on how to deseed a pomegranate in only 10 seconds.
    - Now one might think that a video about something that takes 10 seconds, would be a short video, right?
    - But this video was nearly 4 minutes long
      - And the person in the video as much as admitted that the “10-second” claim was perhaps a bit of an overstatement.
  - Well, after watching several videos, all promoting the best way to deseed a pomegranate, I have decided that whether you break them apart under water, whack them with a wooden spoon or cut them through the center, eating a pomegranate takes patience.

### **We need patience in our lives—a black portfolio**

- I suppose patience is one of those things which we could all use more of in our lives.
- I'd like to think I'm a patient person and I suppose there are times when I am.
  - But if I'm honest with myself, I have to admit that I don't know if “patient” is a word people would use to describe me.
- That reality struck me square in the chin this past Monday.
  - It was early and I was driving to work, thinking about this sermon and starting to formulate some thoughts in my mind about patience.
  - When I got to work, I realized that I'd left my black portfolio sitting by the computer in my office at home.
    - I needed some papers that were in that portfolio, so I called Tamra, my wife, and asked her to check on it.
    - While on the phone, she walked into our home office and said “I don't see it here.”

- “Are you sure?” I asked, “It has to be there. I put it there on Friday.”
- “There is a folder here,” she said.
- “No, it’s not a folder, it’s a black, leather portfolio,” I said.
- “It’s not here,” she said.
- “It’s got to be there. It’s sitting on top of some papers, right next to the computer monitor,” I said, thinking she must just be overlooking it.
- Now our exchange went on like this for a while and each time I said something, I’m pretty sure my voice projected an increasing degree of frustration.
- Tamra, who remained composed and calm said, “Let me look further and call you back.”
  - We hung up and a minute later, there came a ding on my phone. Tamra had texted me a picture. It was a picture of the area on my desk where the portfolio was supposedly sitting, only it clearly wasn’t there.
  - And then came another ding- and another ding- and another- ding- ding- ding.
  - Seven dings in all—each a picture of a particular area of my desk showing that the portfolio was not there.
- Now how do you suppose I reacted to that?
  - Do you think I texted back saying “Thank you honey, that is so helpful”?
    - I’d be kidding if I said I did that- that’s not what I said at all.
  - What I said was “Please STOP, that’s not helping.”
  - “Just stop looking for it. I will find it later.” I texted, thinking to myself “I’ll find it sitting on my desk, later today.”
- Later that day, I did find it—sitting on my desk, right next to my computer.
  - The only trouble was, it was sitting on the desk in my office here at church, not at my home, as I’d thought.
  - Well, I took a picture of that portfolio and texted it to Tamra, saying sheepishly, “See, I told you it was on my desk!”
    - And I fully realize that I am blessed to have a wife who is far more patient with me, than I am with her.

### **Impatience throughout the week**

- Starting the week off like that, got me to thinking about the myriad of things which can put our patience to the test.
  - And as I went through this week, I made list of those things and I thought I’d share it with you, because maybe my list sounds a bit like your list.
  - For starters, I lose patience when I am not organized.
    - Like when I can’t find something I’m looking for, such as a portfolio.
  - I lose patience when I’m in a hurry.
    - As much as possible, I attend the Tuesday morning staff meetings here at church and I try to arrange my schedule to accommodate that.

- I run a pretty tight schedule sometimes and occasionally I find myself running late to get to the meeting and that tests my patience.
- And whoa to the person in front of me who might be driving a bit slower than I want them to in that moment.
  - Because they run the risk of me treating them, just like the jerk behind me, who thinks I'm going too slow.
- I find myself losing patience standing in the checkout line at the grocery store.
  - I often use the self-checkout line, because I only have a few things and it's faster.
  - But sometimes when all of the stations are busy, I have to wait and I just hate that!
    - Inevitably as I stand there, I look around at each station and notice things like that person over there sure is taking their time.
      - Can they speed it up? Don't they know people are waiting?
    - And that person over there with a cart FULL of groceries, don't they realize self-checkout is for people who just a few items. They should go over to regular checkout.
    - That's how that works, right?
- I lose patience when I assume things about people around me.
  - Because, I tend to assume the worst.
    - Like when I assumed Tamra was sending me all of those pictures, to prove me wrong, when she was really just trying to jog my memory.
    - Or when I assume someone isn't trying hard enough, because they struggle to figure out something that to me, is simple.
- I lose patience with Bureaucracy.
  - To me that word gets translated as "Bureau-crazy" and I lose patience when I feel like I'm not in control.
- I lose patience when others interrupt me.
  - I had a Board of Directors meeting this week and I had a lot to do that morning, getting ready for it.
    - And people kept coming into my office with questions, wanting my help, or just to say hi.
    - And looking back on that, I wish I'd have been more helpful and less blunt in telling others that I was too busy for them.
- Lastly, and this is a bit of a weird one, I noticed that I lose patience more easily with people who know me well, than with people who don't know me.
  - And I'm not quite sure why that is, but I think maybe it's because I'm hoping I can hide that particular weakness from people who don't know me.
  - It's kind of like how my parents could be yelling at us kids one second and then the phone rings and it's the pastor and they turn on the instant charm.

## Me, Me, Me

- Well, perhaps at least one or two of these things are sounding familiar to you.
  - If you're like me and you're being honest, you might say to yourself "the Holy Spirit has a lot of work to do in me" and that's probably right.
    - The Holy Spirit has work to do in all of us.
- Did you notice though, that the items in this list, the items which irritate **ME**, have everything to do with **ME** and very little to do with others around me.
  - The truth is as we examine our impatience, we can't help but notice our ego at the center of it.
  - It's that sinful human nature we mentioned earlier and it's doing its thing.
  - We lose the Spirit and our human self takes over and gets the best of us.
- It's good to recognize when our ego gets the best of us, because then our eyes are opened to those situations where we need to ask the Holy Spirit to work in us.
  - Because impatience can be very damaging.
    - It creates disunity.
    - It causes hurt feelings.
    - It causes anger and resentment.
    - It destroys the unity of Christ's church.
  - But when we invite the Holy Spirit to work in us, we are able to, as Paul puts it in today's scripture, "make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
- The Holy Spirit maintains unity, by helping us to see the good in others.
  - The Spirit helps us to walk in the shoes of someone who is not us.
  - The Spirit reminds us that we don't want to be that impatient person.
    - Rather, that we want people to see in us, the God we serve—the God we read about in Psalm 103.
      - Merciful, gracious, slow to anger.
      - Patient, not accusing.
      - Showing unwavering love.
- Isn't that the kind of person we all yearn to become?
  - And when the Holy Spirit works in us, and is able to move our ego out of the way, even just a little bit, each of us can become more like that person.
  - But we first need to invite the Spirit to work in us.
- And that is my prayer, for me and for you.
- Amen.