

## • Sermon: James 5:7-20. “What are you waiting for?”

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Sermon text and audio available for download at [www.waitara.anglican.asn.au](http://www.waitara.anglican.asn.au)

### • “Are we there yet?”

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Do you remember going on holidays as a kid in the car? I think the most difficult part of a family holiday is the trip there and home. Usually it takes about half an hour before one of the kids says: “Are we there yet?” “How much longer?” “How much further?” “Why is it taking so long?”

That is what life is like for us as Christians waiting for heaven! How much longer? Are we there yet? You see, as Christians, we have this great desire, this great longing, to reach our final destination of heaven. Especially when we see the world the way it is.

I can just imagine James writing to these churches like they’re all packed into the car and on their way to the family holiday. Here they are in these little communities, living close together and sharing each others’ lives. And James is telling them how difficult living together like this in a Christian community can be! And so it’s helpful to be aware of some of the difficulties we can face and how to deal with those difficulties.

So here it is – 4 lessons for community living.

### • Community living lesson 1. “Patience”

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<sup>5:8</sup> *be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.”*

We’re almost there, James says. So be patient. It’s like a farmer. A farmer plants a valuable crop and he just has to wait for it to be ready to harvest. He can’t hurry it up. He can’t make the harvest come any quicker. He can’t change that. He has to be patient.

But how? How do we “be patient”? It’s hard to be patient. Especially when life is hard or relationships are strained or our direction in life is challenging us, or when the pressures of the world are all around us. How do we be patient?

### • Community living lesson 2. Grumbling

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<sup>5:9</sup> *“Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged.”*

Grumble and you will be judged. Grumbling is a serious issue. It’s one of those things that can really hurt and even destroy a community. Someone starts grumbling about you for some reason. And so you start grumbling about them. And then someone else starts grumbling. He did this. She said that. I don’t like the way this is done. And Jesus is saying to us: “You know I can hear you don’t you? You know I’m the one who’s going to judge you. And I’m right here. Listening to every word. I hear every word you say and I know how you’re feeling in your heart. And I will judge you for your grumbling. So stop it.”

So how do we put a **stop** to grumbling. That has to come from a change of heart. And I think this is a helpful thing to remember. When people annoy you, or frustrate you, two things:

1. This is part of life together. It happens. We can’t all get on perfectly all the time. Personalities are different and sometimes we have a bad day!

2. We are all annoying! We all do things or say things that sometimes upset other people. Understanding that means that we can show more understanding to people instead of grumbling about them.

You annoy me. I annoy you. Sometimes we can talk those things through. Other times we can just let them go. Sometimes it's sinfulness that needs to be addressed. Sometimes it's just someone having a bad day or a stressful time. And that's life together in a community.

- Community living lesson 3. Promises

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<sup>5:12</sup> *Let your "Yes" be yes and your "No" no, or you will be condemned.*

For the churches he's writing to, James really puts this problem high up on the list! It's obviously something that's causing lots of problems. The problem seems to be that people would give their word to say YES or NO and then change their mind!

Why is this such an important issue for church communities? Because it's all about trust. When people give their word and break it, they break trust. And it takes a long time to build up trust. And it can be a little thing, like turning up to an appointment, or it can be a big thing, like cheating in a marriage. But trust is trust. Your word needs to be **good** as a Christian. If you want to say No, say No. If you want to say Yes, say Yes. So it's really important that we are true to our word, and if we break that word, that we work hard to repair those relationships.

And finally...

- Community living lesson 4. Prayer

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<sup>5:13</sup> *Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.* <sup>14</sup> *Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

This is life in the community of God. If you're in trouble you pray. If you're happy, you sing songs of praise. If you're sick, you ask for prayer. James paints a picture of a church community that is open and sharing – not just on a Sunday, but all through the week. This is why we're called the body of Christ.

And as we come to the end of the book of James, it's great to finish by talking about prayer. So let's finish with the two examples of prayer James gives us:

- 1. Example 1: verse 14

<sup>14</sup> *Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

Now, we could spend a lot of time talking about the significance of oil in this verse. But it's not the point! The oil could be for some sort of anointing, or it could be oil used as medicine, since oil was commonly used for healing in those times. Today, it might be like taking chicken soup to someone who is sick.

But, oil aside, what's the POINT of what James is trying to say here? If you're sick, don't go through it alone! You're part of a family. Call your church – the elders – leaders – a minister, a home group leader, a trusted mature Christian from your church – call them to come over and pray for you. Sometimes we're afraid to ask for help. Afraid of being a burden on people, aren't we? But we are a community. So we don't go through the struggles of life alone.

- 2. Example 2: If there is sin in your life you need to deal with, pray. Verse 16 –

<sup>16</sup> *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*

So James is not only talking about praying for physical sickness and healing, but also for spiritual sickness and healing. Dealing with sin. Praying for help.

James wants to remind you that your prayer can be powerful for this church community. Remember Elijah the prophet. Verse 17

- <sup>17</sup> *Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.* <sup>18</sup> *Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.*

Pray for one another. Pray for physical healing. But also pray for spiritual healing. Share your struggles in sin with each other so you can pray for each other. You don't need to blurt out all your sins to the bible study group! Find that Christian brother or sister you trust, and pray with them. Ask for their prayers to help you through that spiritual struggle. Why is this so important? Why does James finish the letter with this? Verse 19:

- <sup>19</sup> *My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back,* <sup>20</sup> *remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*

Pray for each other is about helping each other stay on track, helping each other hang in there and keep strong in our faith. And this is what it's all about while we're waiting for heaven. Getting to the end of the journey together. Facing the struggles of the journey together. Rejoicing together. Praying together. And remembering...

## What are we waiting for?

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<sup>5:7</sup> *Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming.*

This is our destination – this is what we're waiting for – Jesus is returning. So be patient. Hold off the grumbling. Keep your word. Pray, Rejoice, Confess, support each other. Because that day is coming, when Jesus, the judge of all people, will return. And he will not just face you. He will face every one of your friends, every person in your church, every person in your family, and in your workplace... every person. And the way you live your faith can have such an impact on the people around you. And for each other here today, the way you live, speak, and act - has the power to keep the person next to you on the right path.

Let's pray. For each other.