

Third Sunday in Advent – Epistle

Patient Care

James 5:7-10

Third Sunday in Advent

Analysis by Marcus Felde

James 5: 7Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. 8You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! 10As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

DIAGNOSIS: Suffering, Grumbling

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Grumbling*

We impatient inpatients on this epistle's ward are talking to each other. What we are saying is not nice. We are grumbling (v. 9). We want the suffering to end. We are sick of taking medicine. We are tired of being here. We are even turning against one another, as if that could help anything!

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Trusting Not*

This must be the Cardiac Unit. "Strengthen your hearts" (v. 8), say all the patient charts. Do we suffer from congestive heart

failure, which inhibits “inspiration”? Is our heart rate way too fast, so that we imagine God too slow? Nurse practitioner James thinks we have dearth-of-faith disease, and he’s probably right. Faith includes trusting the promise of the kingdom, but we seem to doubt what we’ve been told by our Lord about his eventual coming.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – Judged

“The Judge is standing at the doors!” (v. 9). And we are wondering: “Excuse me, nurse, they have taken away my roommate, and I do not know where they have laid him.” (I have a hunch they took him to the morgue. His heart always was beating to a different drummer. Well, his grumbling days are over.) “Hey, wait a minute, where are you taking me?”

PROGNOSIS: Suffering, Not Grumbling

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – Judged Not

Advent announces “The Lord is near.” That reminds me: “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.” Even on this ward, especially on this ward, we live by that schedule. We know One patient who died, but they couldn’t keep him in the morgue. That One promised to come back for me, and anyone else who will wait for him. I’m not talking about the fellow I saw in triage, but the guy in the Trinity.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – Trusting

Reminded of this Good (Old) News, I now know I am not dying but convalescing. There’s a big difference. Now my heart is listening to Jesus, seeking his pace, his pulse. “Our hearts suffer arrhythmia, Lord, until they rest in thee” (a la Augustine). Jesus said he’ll be back? He’ll be back.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – Grumbling Not

We’re talking on the ward once again. But we’re talking more like the prophets now (v. 10), who knew how to suffer and be

patient. We talk about God. We talk about the Messiah. We talk resurrection, faith, and hope. We talk about what we're going to do when we get out of this hospital. Who we'll spend time with. Hymns we'll write. Major prophets, minor prophets, micro prophets, whatever. We talk life. (Until we hear the blessed cry "Out, patients!")