**10-6-19**

 **The Patience of Faith**

**By Rev. Sheryl Stewart**

Lamentations 1:1-6; 3:19-27 2 Timothy 1:1-14 Luke 17: 5-10

RR: Psalm 136: 1-9, 23-26

**Summary: Because faith trusts that God, not seen by our eyes, is both real and shall prevail, patience is faith’s life blood.**

The disciples had a big request for Jesus when they asked, “Make our faith greater.” Jesus replied with the story of how a faith muscle that is even the size of the smallest seed – a mustard seed – could do miracles. Then, Jesus seems to switch topics and tells another story about how a servant goes from a hard day’s work to a hard night’s work before getting around to his own desires.

 How do these two stories relate, and what do they have to do with increasing my faith? To get the answer, I went to that sad book that kept its faith in the middle of disaster: Lamentations. Faith trusts in what you don’t see; if you saw it, you wouldn’t need faith. Israel had lost their Temple and their freedom. When they thought about their homelessness, they were depressed! But in the middle of all that pain, their hope returns when they remember one thing: The Lord God’s unfailing love and mercy continues.

 So, Lamentations decides: “It is best to wait in patience, wait for God to save us, and it is best to learn this lesson in our youth. You see it here: the driving force of faith is patience. My Aunt Barb would say, “Don’t ask God for patience, He’ll send you trials, so you get plenty of practice!” She could have said the same thing about faith.

 Paul, patiently writing letters from prison because he could not practice his ministry in person, encourages Timothy to keep alive the gifts God gave him during a prayer session which he had with the young man. We cannot know what gifts of the Holy Spirit Timothy received, but I bet you are familiar with gifts God has given you.

 The apostle Paul was a preacher stuck in jail; so, he wrote letter after letter. I am a preacher, too. To keep that gift alive, I must preach, and keep practicing what I preach. Maybe you are a dancer or singer and perform to show your love of God and life. You must rehearse; you must practice! Maybe you cook, garden, sew, mow grass, or build; doing any of these things takes practice and patience to keep your skills and gifts alive!

 This is like that children’s song I sang for you about patience a month or so ago.

*“There was a snail named Sammy who was always in a hurry.*

*He never stopped to talk and always seemed to scurry.*

*He outraced all the squirrels, With chipmunks he’d collide*

*Until, one day, his father took his speedy son aside!*

*Be Patient, be patient; don’t be in such a hurry!*

*Be patient, be patient; don’t cause your folks to worry!*

*Remember, remember, that God is patient, too.*

*And think of all the other times, someone’s had to wait for you!”*

 The smallest seed, patiently growing in whatever weather or season life sends its way is one example of patience. A servant who goes from field hand to waiting on table before dealing with their own agenda is another patient example. Patience is not a burden; it is an opportunity to exercise power in God’s way.

 I read an article about how women experience power. We hear Jesus talking about moving a mountain or transplanting a tree to an impossible location, and we don’t think of this as “Power over” but rather as “Power to!” Faith is not power over the world or others; rather, faith has the patience to wait on God’s gifts to make the difference as we put into practice what God gives us.

So, Lord, increase our faith that we might have the *power to* grow in all seasons and share the gifts you have planned for the world through our lives! Amen.