



James 1:7 - 11

<sup>7</sup> Be 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. <sup>8</sup> You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup> Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! <sup>10</sup> As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

Thought: The secret of living in the moment

If you were to ask my nearest and dearest what my most endearing quality is, they would tell you without a flicker of hesitation that it is .. my patience!

And of course, they mean it in jest ... because according to them, I don't have any!

They will tell you with great glee, that I get annoyed and impatient:

when, whoever is driving the car, doesn't get instantly my perfectly clear instructions on the way ahead.

Or with that someone who invariably delays us by announcing that they need to visit the loo just as we are all about to sit down for the meal, I have lovely prepared.

Or when I must wait my turn to speak when I am literally bursting to say something.

Our reading from the Epistle of James urges us to be patient and to not grumble against one another. And that does sound like some pretty sound advice, particularly at this busy time of year when tempers can get frayed. And yet, I can't help feeling that it seems rather churlish to liken our minor frustrations and irritations with the real hardships of persecution faced by those first century Christians for whom these words were initially intended.

So, it is not the call to patience which catches my attention in this passage. It is that encouragement to "strengthen your hearts for the coming of the Lord is near". It is the idea of making the most of Advent before the onset of Christmas.

And that invitation to make the most of something is about learning the difficult lesson about living in the now, about living in the moment.

And what does living in the moment look like?

Let me tell you about my friend Derek. Derek had this amazing gift. He had this rare and precious ability to connect with anyone, and I mean anyone, he came into contact .. the person at the supermarket checkout, the elderly gentlemen sitting alone in a café, commuters on a busy London train ..

I spent years wondering how he did it until I finally cracked the secret of his success. And this is how he did it:

First, he would give to whoever was in front of him, his complete attention. And even if it was just for a fleeting moment, he would make you in that moment the centre of his world.

And then he would instinctively know the words that you most needed to hear.

And finally, he would invariably draw you into seeing the absurdity of most things until you would be howling with laughter.

Derek had serious health issues for most of the years I knew him, but it never dented the joy that radiated from him. He died more than ten years ago and there is a gaping hole inside me, he left behind. I have tried over the years to emulate what I learnt from him with variant degrees of success .. and I suppose that is what you would call his legacy.

Yet, what strikes me most today about his legacy is that, there is in there, something about what it means to live in the now, to live in the moment; three simple tenets for our spiritual journey through advent:

- A call to make the most of meeting the embryonic Christ in each day of Advent until we become partakers in His full incarnation on Christmas day.
- An encouragement to be alert to hearing in each of those days of preparations what it is that we need to hear.
- And finally that invitation to find room each day for thankfulness, and joy and fellowship in the Lord of compassion and mercy.

So let me finish by just wishing you a rich and blessed 9<sup>th</sup> day of Advent.

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