

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Dec 15th 2013

“See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth,

being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You too must be patient.” James 5:7-8

My husband has farmed all his life. When a reference is made in Scripture to a farmer, I experience a deep connection with the passage. I have witnessed over the years how patient my farmer has been as he waits for the tiny seeds to hopefully become robust stalks of corn or hearty bushels of beans. As can be expected, hardships happen. One year there was a bumper crop which was quite exciting.

Unfortunately a hail storm came and within minutes the crop was completely beat down and destroyed. It was an isolated storm and the insurance agent questioned what had happened. While it was quite obvious a hail storm hit, at the same time it was somewhat unbelievable that this hail storm had been so isolated. I was home with my then one year old son when the hail hit. It was such a frightening storm, he ran to me for comfort. After the storm hit, I went outside and took pictures of the hail which helped with evidence for the insurance adjuster.

As we experience our journey this Advent season, today’s readings remind us that hardships happen and we experience blindness, deafness, lameness and muteness. In those times when we experience the desert, we might relate to John the Baptist and feel as though we have become imprisoned. We might lose sight on how to live with our hardship because the land has become too parched. As we read in Isaiah, the parched land will exult or rejoice greatly. There is hope. Jesus is our hope. Jesus doesn’t ask us to deny how real and difficult hardships are. He invites us to experience the hardships with him. Jesus comes to set captives free: to restore our sight, hearing, walking and speech.

Dear loving and gracious God, please help us role model the patience of the farmer waiting for the precious fruit of the earth as we await the coming of the precious infant born of Mary in Bethlehem this Advent season.

Jan Schnack