

What do you want to be when you grow up? (SLIDE) Raise your hand if you have been asked this question. And what did you say? We hear this question a lot, especially when we're young. We respond with answers like teacher, or doctor, or firefighter, or ballerina, or maybe quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings...maybe. Some people feel called into professions, and I am not just talking about pastors. My mom says she has known she was a writer since the time she scribbled her name on the living room walls when she was five. My sister-in-law Abby wanted to be dentist as soon as she started brushing her teeth. My Grandpa Fred was as simpatico to farming as my Grandpa Bill was to sales. Cousin Chris had to be a pilot. Some are not so sure of their calling but end up in the right profession anyway. Take Pablo Picasso. (SLIDE) He once said this, "My mother told me, "If you become a soldier you'll be a general; if you become a monk you'll end up as the pope. Instead, I became a painter and wound up as Picasso."

We wait (SLIDE) throughout our lives, and we wonder who we will become, where we will end up, with whom we will spend our time. It's something we all do, whether we like it or not. In fact, life is one big waiting game. Regardless of who we are or our life circumstances, we are always waiting, wanting, and wishing. Almost like a game of Jeopardy, we say, "I'll take career changes for \$500, Pat." Or "Waiting for Mr. or Mrs. Right for \$1000." That might even be the daily double question. We wait (SLIDE) to welcome a child or to sell a house. We wait for positive test results from the doctor, for enough money, enough time, enough you-fill-in-the-blank, to get to our next step. Sometimes the categories aren't so big. We wonder whether or not an anticipated package scheduled for delivery will actually show up when planned, or how much longer it will take for someone to respond to our message. We begin road trips, and even though the GPS tells us down to the minute how much longer we have until we arrive at our destination, we constantly wonder, (SLIDE) "Are we there yet?"

In anticipation and excitement, sometimes in fear and uncertainty, we wait, and a lot of time there's nothing we can do about it except be patient. Our theme this year (SLIDE) reminds us, read this with me, "As

God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." Easier said than done. Clothed with compassion? You got it. Kindness? Sure, we can do things every day. Meekness? Humility? Ok, we can work on that. Patience? Are you kidding me?!

(SLIDE) I admit I am the least patient person in the world, though perhaps we're all tied in that category, along with Samuel from our scripture today. This Bible story is one of my favorites, perhaps because Samuel's mother's name is Hannah, but also because his whole existence is because of his mother's patience. Hannah longed to be a mother but she couldn't get pregnant, so she prayed and prayed, like we often do when we long for something. One day, when Hannah was at the temple, Eli, the priest, found her, on her knees, praying and bartering. She told God, "If you give me a son, I will give him back to you." (SLIDE) In her impatience, she had faith. Samuel was born, and though nobody asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up, Samuel was given to the temple, under Eli's care.

One night, Samuel heard his calling. Like many of us while we're waiting, Samuel had restless nights. Night after night he was left, waiting, even confused, after hearing his name called. He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am." Eli said, "It wasn't me, so go back and lie down." Nights later, Eli realized what was going on, and instructed Samuel. When the Lord spoke again, Samuel replied, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."

When we are (SLIDE) "clothed with patience" we are called to trust in the Lord with our whole being. It doesn't mean our prayers will be answered how we would like them to, or when we would like them to. In fact, many times it feels like God is always late. But we that in the waiting, God abides with us and we are promised in the end things will be ok. Our hope lies in the dwelling of Christ in our lives, here and now, in the celebrations and in the sorrow, in the busyness and in the waiting. The Lord is our light and our salvation. Whom shall we fear? Of what shall we be afraid? In our suffering, we have hope of relief. In our loneliness, we have hope of community. In our sin, we have hope for mercy and second, third, fourth, even fiftieth chances to try again. In our impatience, we have hope for what's to come. Even in death, we have hope of new life in Christ.

While we wait, we can turn to God and say, “Speak for your servant is listening.” We can trust that no matter what we face, God abides and God provides. In the restlessness of our hearts and with our voices we can be patient and proclaim, (SLIDE) **“Amen.” (SING)** Amen, meaning “Yes,” or “Let it be so,” isn’t just a way to end our prayers; it’s a way of giving them to God. Clothed with patience, we can live into the words from Philippians, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” **Let it be so. Amen.**

Though it is hard to believe this is my last Sunday as your Children, Youth, and Family Pastor, I have some confessions to make. If I don’t share them now, I might never. Are you ready? Confession: I hated the dunk tank you subjected me to at my first Block Party, my first day on the job. Confession: Charlie the Church Mouse sounded exactly like Pastor Paul. Confession: I love sharing a birthday with Pastor Veryle and Pastor Peter, triplets born just a *few* minutes apart. Confession: No matter how much butter or cream sauce you add, I hate lutefisk. Confession: Steve, Deb, and Sheryl have made up the best children, youth, and family ministry team. Confession: I prefer a costume to an alb, the robe we usually wear in worship. Confession: Carol Hokel regularly spoiled me with chocolate. Confession: I was never supposed to be your pastor.

Five years ago I waited impatiently for my first call. I was assigned to be a pastor up north. After a handful of interviews with churches in small communities, where I was sure I would be miserable, I reached out to the seminary. I had heard about a congregation called Christ the King. Nestled off 694, this church prided itself on quality worship, outreach, children, youth, and family ministry, and music. You were looking for a new pastor, but you didn’t want someone fresh out of school, and actually you had already extended a call to someone else. Disappointed, I continued interviewing up north. Later I found out your plans fell through and you began the call process again. I begged the synod up north to allow my name to be shared with you. With the help of Rollie Martinson, soon I began interviewing. I had to turn down the call I was offered at another church in order to interview here, with no guarantee I would be chosen. Somehow, I believed things

would be ok. Confession: God had plans for us, and what grand plans they have been! To my prayer, to our prayers, of **“Let it be so,”** God answered with a resounding **“Amen.”**

As excited as I am for a new adventure, I am sad to leave you. When I sat down to write this sermon, the words didn't come easily. I usually get a nudge from the Holy Spirit through the inspiration of scripture and the creativeness of Dr. Seuss, or Where the Wild Things Are, or a donkey bike, or Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz costume, or other fun props.

Today? I come, simply as I am. I come as a person, a fellow sinner made a saint by the grace of God, a follower certain of the promises we have in Christ. I come as a grateful pastor and friend, as someone humbled by your compassion, kindness, humility, and patience with me and with my family. I thank God for you and for our time together, for the ways we were woven together in...love, for the times we were able to Count it all...joy!, remembered that Christ makes all things...new, trusted that Jesus changes us inside, outside...upside down. You are tremendous, and I know God will continue to do amazing things in you, with you, and through you as you care for those you love, those you are struggling to love, and those you haven't even met yet.

No matter what you want to be when you grow up, or where life takes you, remember you are chosen to be clothed with compassion, humility, and patience. You are loved, you are cherished, you are beautiful, you are full of wonder, and you are forgiven. May God's peace, promise, and patience be ours today and always as we proclaim, **“Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” Let it be so. Amen.**