

**Look forward to the coming of the day of the Lord!**

**<sup>8</sup> But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**

**<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.**

**<sup>11</sup> Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives <sup>12</sup> as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.**

The President-elect won the election by promising change. He has begun appointing his presidential cabinet. But with these appointments, men and women from the Clinton administration, there does not seem to be that much change. Even the members of the mainstream media, who pushed so hard to get Obama into office, are asking, “Where is this promise of change we’ve been listening to for the past 9 months?” We wait for a promise, look forward to its fulfillment, and when it does not happen we begin to grow impatient

That’s the case in Peter’s second letter, our lesson for this morning. The Apostle Peter wrote to members of Christ’s flock to teach them how to deal with persecution. Unbelievers were taunting these Christians asking, “Where is your God? Where is this “coming” that he promised? Things have been going the same ever since the beginning. We doubt that this great and final day of the Lord will ever come!” Some resisted the idea of a Day of Judgment and moral accountability. We can speculate that perhaps they did not want to believe that a just God would hold them accountable for their actions.

Peter clearly states in vs9, “**The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise.**” He has promised to come soon!

Even back in the days of the prophet Habakkuk (2:3), he prophesied that the day of judgment would not delay. Even though the destruction of Jerusalem by the hands of the Babylonians didn’t happen for another 66 years, God wanted his people to know, “This will happen.” In the New Testament books of **Hebrews 10:37** and **Revelation 22:12,20** Jesus promises to return a second time to judge and it will be soon. But we ask, “But he hasn’t come yet! We’ve been waiting for over 2,000 years! I’ve personally been waiting 30 years, or 50 or 80years! Is he delaying his coming?”

Do you ever notice how time seems to fly by quickly and other times it drags on? When friends or relatives are in town to visit time seems to fly by, or maybe for others, time does not move quick enough. Peter reminds us and his readers, “**God is not slow in keeping**

**his promise, as some understand slowness (vs9). With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day (vs8).**" The apostle informs us that God is not bound by time. In our finite minds we cannot comprehend this, for at 10am church starts, 6:50am tomorrow morning the bus arrives. My doctor's appointment is at 1pm. The plane leaves at 7:35pm and it arrives exactly at 9:22pm. A thousand years will pass by and to God it seems like only a day. If God is not bound by time, why is waiting or delaying his final coming?

Peter says, "**He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance (vs9).**" Like the traveler who arrives at the ticket counter just before the gate is about to close and the airline employee radios the pilot, "Hold the plane! Joe's on his way through the terminal now!" The pilot delays the flight so Joes don't miss his connection. In the same way God doesn't want anyone to miss the connecting flight to heaven. He wants all people to be saved. So he gives all people a time of grace, time on this earth to come to believe in his Son as the only way to heaven. Unfortunately, some hear this message and refuse to believe, it, and when God does come....it will be suddenly, unexpectedly... like a check in the mail that you didn't expect and boy, it sure will help the family this Christmas. Like a divine call to a pastor to serve at another congregation, came out of the blue. Or like a death in the family, or as Peter says in **vs10 like a thief who breaks into your home and steals your stuff.** You don't expect it, but there he is. For those who are unprepared for the last day this will not be a fun surprise.

On that that day the Lord promises that the **'Heavens (sky) will disappear with a roar of the fire, the elements (everything that the earth is composed of) will be destroyed by fire; earth and everything in it will be laid bare.** In the verses preceding our lesson, Peter addresses those who scoffed at the Christians. They forget that the earth has not been going as it has since the beginning. The LORD once destroyed the earth with water in the days of Noah, just as he promised. Do they not think that God will destroy it again, and this time by fire, just as he promised? Why did God destroy the earth with the flood? It was full of sin and corruption. Why will he destroy this world? Same reason... Peter says, "Everything will be laid bare." Everything will be destroyed by fire. That means the mighty and magnificent structures built by man's hands, the modern marvels, sky-scrapers, battleships & aircraft carriers, airplanes, buses, great bridges that span the waters, all will perish by fire. If these great structures will melt, that means all of our material possessions that we have stuffed in our homes will be shown for what they are; perishable.

Peter asks the obvious follow-up question... keeping all this in mind, **what kind of people ought we to be? (vs11).** He answers in vs11 & 14, "**Holy, blameless, godly lives, innocent, at peace with God, spotless, looking forward, upward where our true lasting treasure is.**" That means we do not hold onto material goods and set our hearts on them. It's so easy to do this time of year when many are thinking, "What am I getting for Christmas? What am I giving for Christmas?" Tax refund season is right around the corner and many are already thinking, "What am I going to buy with my refund?" God doesn't say that we can't purchase or possess the finer things in life. It's ok to have these things, but to grasp them tightly with our hearts and minds, then we are not looking forward and upward, but we are like Lot's wife who looked back at what she was losing.

**Vs10 “Everything will be laid bare.”** Literally in the Greek language this says, **“Everything will be will be found, or exposed for what it is.”** Your deeds, your thoughts, your words of clinging to your material possessions will be exposed on the last day. How does that make you feel? Well, what if all your works, thoughts and words, whether good or bad, from this past week were projected on the wall in front of everyone here this morning? You might begin to squirm in your seat, bolt for the door, run away and never return. One day the patience of God will have an end and then he will hold judgment. Every sinful thought, word and deed will have to be accounted for. That’s a frightening thought to stand before the judge. It makes us not want to look forward to that day. Peter gives us every good reason why we will look forward the day of the Lord.

This past Friday Pro football hall-of-famer O.J. Simpson was convicted and sentenced for kidnapping, theft, use of loaded weapon. Imagine that you are Mr. Simpson. You know you committed the crime. The evidence is obvious. You’re going to jail. But the Las Vegas judge looks you in the eyes and she says to you, “This court has found you innocent.” You look around and ask, “Is this some kind of joke?” She replies, “No joke, Mr. Simpson. You are free to go. Someone has taken the blame for you.” In our human minds we know this would never happen. But it happened to you!

On the Last Day the Judge will summon all the people of the world to stand before, people from every language, skin color and nation. He will summon each of you to stand alone before the Judge. There your sinful deeds, thoughts and words will be exposed. You alone will be held accountable for own sins. There you will stand exposed in the nakedness of your sin and shame. But not you. This will not happen to you. You will not stand before the Judge exposed, but covered in the robe of Christ’s righteousness. When Christ went to the cross, the Father saw as if his Son committed all of your sins. He declared his Son Jesus guilty of all your sins. At your baptism Christ covers you with robe of his righteousness; that is, everything that he did right. He did everything right during his life. He obeyed all of his Father’s commands. He never once held onto the things of this world. Instead he always was looking heavenward. That righteousness has been placed over you. All you did wrong was placed on him.

You are holy, blameless, spotless, at peace with God, innocent.... Therefore the Judge will slam his gavel down and declare you innocent. I ask you again, “Do want to stand before the Judge?” Absolutely! “Are you looking forward to God’s promise to come again soon?” Yes! His coming and judgment mean that we will live in a place (vs13) **where righteousness dwells.** Christ promises to create a new heavens (sky) and a new earth, a new creation, a new place for us to live (vs13). We look forward to that place because it is the reason why we sing in our Christmas hymn “Joy to the World,” *no more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground.* One day they won’t. One day there will be no more sins, no more reasons to be ashamed, no more death. That is the place where we are going, the home of righteousness, Christ’s righteousness, his perfection won for us.

My dear friends, this is who you are; holy, blameless, at peace, spotless. Therefore, this is how you will live; as spotless, blameless, innocent children of God. This means that you and I will look forward to heaven and take to heart Christ’s promise, “I am coming soon!” This means that we will live like he’s coming soon. No longer will we be

focused on material goods. As we peruse the ads from Sunday paper and glance through the J.C. Penny Christmas catalog we will think, "I don't really need these things." Instead we will focus on eternal possessions, like the Gospel. What a treasure the Gospel is! The Holy Spirit has given us the good news that Jesus Christ came to earth to take our sin on him and give us his righteousness! Meditate on, study and share that treasure of the Gospel. Focus on Bible study so that God's Word can continue to remind you that He is coming soon, so that we can be ever vigilant. Another way to continue looking forward is by thinking back to your Baptism, the day the Holy Spirit clothed you with Christ's righteousness through the power of the water and the Word. Take advantage of the Lord's Supper whenever it's offered. His promise is there too, to strengthen you and grant you patience while you wait for his coming. Another way to look forward to his coming is to be praying for and contributing to the construction of our new building. Yes, it will be made out of material possessions. But the purpose and function it will serve: to remind us of Christ's coming and to prepare those in our community who do not know about Christ's second and final coming.

We hear promises all the time, from presidential hopefuls, from our own friends and family members, even from pastors. Sometimes those promises do not come to fulfillment and while we wait we grow impatient. Have patience with God's promise to return soon. He will come. Look forward to his coming. When Jesus says, "Behold! I am coming soon!" We respond, "Amen! Yes Lord Jesus! Come quickly! Amen!"