

This will be my final sermon for the series from 1 and 2 Peter. I am not going to touch on all the remaining verses but instead try to touch the heart of Peter's final comments and the closing of his letter.

It is very clear that as we looked at two weeks ago, Christ is returning to this earth again. It will be sudden and it will be certain. Some will be ready and watching but many will not.

On December 7, 1941 the American forces at Pearl Harbor were attacked by Japanese planes. The Americans were caught totally flatfooted and unaware. When an army radar operator saw blips on the screen and reported them, an officer said, "It's probably just a pigeon with a metal band around its leg." At 7:55 on a calm peaceful Sunday morning, the first attacks began and when it was all over eight battleships and three cruisers were sunk or damaged and 220 planes were destroyed or severely damaged. More importantly 2,300 men were killed because everyone was caught unaware.

Peter knows that when Jesus comes there will be no warning although there will be signs. There will be indicators.

But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day.⁹ The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.

¹¹ Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live,¹² looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, He will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames.¹³ But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth He has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.

¹⁴ And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in His sight.

¹⁵ And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved. This is what our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him—¹⁶ speaking of these things in all of his letters. Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters to mean something quite different, just as they do with other parts of Scripture. And this will result in their destruction.

¹⁷ I am warning you ahead of time, dear friends. Be on guard so that you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing.¹⁸ Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

All glory to Him, both now and forever! Amen. 2 Peter 3:8-18 NLT

It is hard to not preach from verses like:

But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. 2 Peter 3:8 NLT

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, He is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. 2 Peter 3:9 NLT

¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief.* 2 Peter 3:10 NLT

We should never forget these powerful words of admonition.

Our time is different than God's time.

The Lord has been patient while the world gets worse and worse and finds new ways to sin, He has been waiting to give more people time to repent.

His coming is going to be unexpected, in a hour when you are not thinking it will happen.

What I want to do is address the topic of what we should be doing while we are waiting for Christ's return.

Some people would have us think or believe that the world around us has become so polluted that it is hopeless and therefore we should just circle the wagons so to speak or hide behind the walls of our church buildings and hope that Jesus returns quickly. Nowhere in scripture do I find that as a credible option.

Based on Peter's parting words I think we can find our place as this world draws closer to an end.

1. God has some purposes for us while waiting:

a. Possess Holiness and Godliness

Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, 2 Peter 3:11 NLT

We are to wait for His coming by living holy and godly lives. This is a recap of everything we have been studying since the beginning of the summer when this series started.

We were told to be holy: 1 Peter 1:15, "But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy."

We were told to love our fellow Christians: 1 Peter 1:22, "So now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters."

We were told to be subject to human institutions: 1 Peter 2:13, “For the Lord’s sake respect all human authority. . .”

We were told to embrace suffering: 1 Peter 4:1, “Since Christ suffered physical pain you must arm yourselves with the same attitude He had, and be ready to suffer too.”

We were told to serve: 1 Peter 4:7-8, “The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other. . .”

b. Pursue purity and peace

¹⁴ And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in His sight. 2 Peter 3:14 NLT

These are two foundational rocks of Christian living. Purity is simply living clean. Nothing to hide. Nothing to hide in our thoughts or actions both seen or unseen. Living pure and blameless speaks for itself. The most peace I’ve ever experienced is when I have nothing to hide. You and I can live in such a way that there is nothing between our soul and our Savior.

Peter says, “While you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives. . . .” There may be times where you have to defend the truth or even your freedom but on an everyday basis our lives should be lived in peace. We shouldn’t be itching for a fight or always out to attack someone. Embrace peace in your home. Try to embrace it at work and at play. Some of you need to embrace it at the game. . .but I’ll let that go lest I feel convicted for how I used to act about kids games.

c. Push for His coming!

looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along 2 Peter 3:12a NLT

This is an amazing admonition and suggests that we can speed up the coming of our Savior. By doing and carrying out the work we have been given to do it allows more people to hear the Word and come to repentance. We are not on this earth to just fill time or worse yet kill time. Our life is filled with end-time significance!

Christians have been charged with telling others about Christ’s story. You can do that yourself but at a minimum you shouldn’t just be soaking up church for yourself, you could be inviting your friends and neighbors to your church. The quicker the message is shared and people have opportunity the more likely it is that Christ will return. I don’t know God’s tipping point but we can work for Him and hasten His return.

If you have ever gone to see the Harlem Globetrotters you get two teams for the price of one. The second is called the Washington Generals. They have one purpose: Be doormats for the Globetrotters. The passively get stomped in basketball. It is their job to lose.

God did not call his church to be sparing partners for the devil to bang around at his pleasure as if spiritual defeat was our job. God called the body of Christ to be more than conquerors and to storm the gates of hell and to wreak the same havoc in mass that Jesus, Paul, Peter and the other disciples did individually.

Let us lay aside with great disdain doing anything we would be ashamed of at His coming.

2. God has given us some promises while we are waiting

Often in our lives there is an intimate connection between waiting and receiving, between promise and fulfillment. If we were to truly embrace that fact that Jesus is returning just the promise alone of His return would encourage us on a daily basis. It would also serve to detach us from the pull and pressure of performance in this world.

On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames.¹³ But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth He has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness. 2 Peter 3:12b-13 NLT

We are waiting for a new heaven and a new earth. We are not motivated by the fact that the curtain is going to come crashing down on this world but we are motivated by the promise of a new heaven and a new earth.

When the Lord returns we will be walking onto a new stage more grand and glorious than anything you or I have ever witnessed. We don't talk about it enough. "The hope of heaven" is a phrase rarely heard in our society. We put our hope in a lot of things but heaven rarely makes the cut. I've read people's blogs and words, looked at their pictures of natural beauty in some park or highly desired destination, but nothing we have ever seen or heard will compare with a new heaven and a new earth.

Here is a very sacred truth: When the Lord returns, we will have reached the very beginning days of human history, before sin entered the world. An understanding of that truth alone ought to motivate us to possess a growing faith. It ought to produce in us a discontent with anything less than a full commitment to holiness, godliness, purity and peace.

3. God's patience toward us while we are waiting

¹⁵ And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved. This is what our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him—¹⁶ speaking of these things in all of his letters. Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters to mean something quite different, just as they do with other parts of Scripture. And this will result in their destruction.

The purposes of God often develop slowly because His grand designs are never hurried. The great New England preacher Phillips Brooks was noted for his poise and quiet manner. At times,

however, even he suffered moments of frustration and irritability. One day a friend saw him feverishly pacing the floor like a caged lion. "What's the trouble, Mr. Brooks?" he asked.

"The trouble is that I'm in a hurry, but God isn't!" Haven't we felt the same way many times?

Some of the greatest missionaries of history devotedly spread the seed of God's Word and yet had to wait long periods before seeing the fruit of their efforts. William Carey, for example, labored 7 years before the first Hindu convert was brought to Christ in Burma, and Adoniram Judson toiled 7 years before his faithful preaching was rewarded. In western Africa, it was 14 years before one convert was received into the Christian church. In New Zealand, it took 9 years; and in Tahiti, it was 16 years before the first harvest of souls began.

Hebrews 12:1 tells us to "run with endurance" the race set before us. George Matheson wrote, "We commonly associate patience with lying down. We think of it as the angel that guards the couch of the invalid. Yet there is a patience that I believe to be harder -- the patience that can run. To lie down in the time of grief, to be quiet under the stroke of adverse fortune, implies a great strength; but I know of something that implies a strength greater still: it is the power to work under stress; to have a great weight at your heart and still run; to have a deep anguish in your spirit and still perform the daily tasks. It is a Christ-like thing! The hardest thing is that most of us are called to exercise our patience, not in the sickbed but in the street." To wait is hard, to do it with "good courage" is harder!

David Livingstone went to darkest Africa as a lone missionary. After some time his missions committee wrote to him saying, "Some people would like to join you. What's the easiest road to get where you are?" He replied, "If they're looking for the easiest road, tell them to stay in England. I want people who will come, even if there's no road at all!" Sometimes the pathway of the Christian life appears to change from a smooth-surfaced road to a stony track or no road at all.

Jesus is coming back. Stay focused. Stay strong. Fall in love with Jesus more than you ever have.

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. — Martin Luther King

This song may not make it into the sermon but for me the words and tune are in my head. Fanny Crosby wrote it.

When Jesus comes to reward His servants,
Whether it be noon or night,
Faithful to Him will He find us watching,
With our lamps all trimmed and bright?

Refrain:

Oh, can we say we are ready, brother?
Ready for the soul's bright home?

Say, will He find you and me still watching,
Waiting, waiting when the Lord shall come?

If, at the dawn of the early morning,
He shall call us one by one,
When to the Lord we restore our talents,
Will He answer thee, "Well done"?

Have we been true to the trust He left us?
Do we seek to do our best?
If in our hearts there is naught condemns us,
We shall have a glorious rest.