

*2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent*

*December 10, 2017*

*2 Peter 3:8-14:*

***“Moving Beyond the Moment . . .  
From Patience to Peace”***

*Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

God's perspective on time is not the same as ours. He is the ruler over time and governs all human history according to his own gracious purpose. If our sinful desires could have their way, we would use time and govern all human history to nullify the purpose of God and serve ourselves endlessly. When we as Christians - who daily struggle with sin - are impatient, it exposes our inability to fully comprehend what God is graciously doing. Our impatience is an outward expression of our inability to control our lives, the lives of others, and trust that God is love and will do what he has promised to do when the time is right.

We have those moments when we wish that God would just "get on with it." We desire to be out of this place and finally home in the new heaven and earth. Or, there are other moments when we might get distracted by the down here and say: "not yet Lord, I have some things to do, let me stay here just a little while longer!" We would be wise to leave such weighty matters in the hands of God as the apostle Paul did when he wrestled with his own desire to depart from this world (Phil. 1:23). Nevertheless, we frequently advise God as to *what* he should do and *when* he should do it, and our advice is motivated by what happens to be most convenient for us. Moreover, it doesn't help that we are surrounded by a host of people who mock the rule of God and his gracious purpose when they "needle" us with statements such as, "if there is a God, why would he ever allow this and that to happen?" or "Where is he? If he is out there, why doesn't he do something for you?"

Before our text for this morning, the mockers ask: "Where is the promise of his coming?" - as they reason that time keeps on going by without any real proof of a God who will finally do anything about sin and unrepentant sinners. How ironic it is that they cry out for the day of judgment when they themselves are by no means ready for that day to come! How stunning it is that they blame God for all the trouble when he is not to blame. In fact, the sole cause of their potential damnation is their own love for sin (they love darkness rather than the light). They alone are to be blamed! The mockers are "walking according to their own desires," as Peter says in verse three, despite God's incredible patience and call to repentance. And, the mockers have no right to call on God to give an account for his actions or lack thereof. Such mocking indicates just how steeped they are in their own evil desires and ignorant they are of the patience and love of God. Curtis P. Giese, in his commentary on *2 Peter and Jude*, comments on this verse and gives excellent advice to all who believe in Jesus Christ:

Rather than speculate about the time of the parousia (the second coming), Christians are to confess Christ, who entered time in his incarnation and now is seated at the right hand of the Father, overseeing time according to his good and gracious will. Especially are we to proclaim Christ's historical acts of salvation in earthly time, which have eternal consequences: his sinless life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection. These culminate in his glorious second coming.

Our text for this morning begins with the words: "But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish,

but that all should reach repentance.” This is why God allows the sins of mankind to go unchecked for a long time. Paul writes (Romans 3:23-26):

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Thanks be to God that he didn't end the world before the present time in order that he might be just and justify us (declare us righteous) through faith in Jesus Christ! The Lord is not late or failing to keep his promise. He is patient. And his patience stands as a testimony before the whole world of his mercy and desire to save. This is what accounts for what appears to be an absent God who will not immediately bring an end to sin and unrepentant sinners.

The sad reality is that while God is patient and would have all saved, not all are saved. This is a mystery and requires us uphold God as God, but one thing is not mysterious, the fault does not rest with God. The Lutheran Confessions [FC SD XI 81] cite this verse (2 Peter 3:9) to affirm the Biblical doctrine of election: “God is not the cause of sin, nor is he the cause of the punishment, the damnation. The only cause of man's damnation is sin, for the “wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). And as God does not will sin and has no pleasure in sin, so he does not will the death of a sinner and has no pleasure in his damnation. He does not will that ‘any should perish, but that all should reach repentance’ (2 Pet. 3:9).”

The patience of God in our lives, moves us to be patient with him and others. Thus, our theme for this morning, **Moving Beyond the Moment: From Patience to Peace**. For the moment, whatever the moment might bring, we have the promise of God and look beyond to the promise fulfilled. Christ will come again and do all that he has said he will do. In the meantime, as we struggle along in the midst of so many storms of life that would disturb our patience and create impatience and even unbelief, we are bid to struggle and overcome such as these as we fix our eyes on Christ and remember the words that the Lord spoke in the presence of Moses in Exodus 34:6-7: “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

Nowhere do we see this more powerfully displayed than at the cross of Jesus where our Lord and Savior absorbed into himself each and every one of our sins in order that we might be forgiven and have eternal life. Again, our theme is **Moving Beyond the Moment: From Patience to Peace**. In Jesus, we see that the patience of God means salvation which moves us from all the moments down here to the moment when we forever see him face to face. This causes us to patiently wait and to even wait in peace.

The Scriptures talk about “the peace which surpasses all understanding” that “guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” It surpasses all understanding because it is found in the midst of the sin and all the

troubles that result from sin. Peter makes it clear that God will be faithful. Receiving the forgiveness of sins and knowing that God is for us becomes our peace no matter what a moment in life might bring. While many walk as enemies of the cross and abuse us, we are certain of our citizenship in heaven, and we patiently await our Savior who will accomplish everything for which we are waiting. As our text for this morning says, “the day of the Lord will come, he will remove all that is impure, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

Peter writes in our text: “Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” By faith, we are already with the Lord. Still, we are waiting, and waiting is not an easy thing to do. And what does Peter mean when he refers to us as “hastening the coming” of the last day? The book of Acts (17:30-31) calls the last day “fixed” while commanding all “to repent.” And, in Matthew 24:14 we are told that the “gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

When a Christian is certain of the promise of God, resting in the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, further busying himself or herself in living lives of holiness and godliness, praying “thy kingdom come,” while proclaiming the reign of heaven to those who are headed for hell, thereby growing the church through the command to repent, two things happen. First, we wait for the repentance of people. Secondly, by our proclamation, the kingdom grows and the testimony moves out to all nations that leads to the coming of Christ. And when we make this our “business,” time passes by because we are no longer dwelling on the fact that we are waiting for ourselves, but rather speedily advancing the reign of heaven. Waiting is not a dwelling on the fact that we are waiting - that would make time go slow and create impatience. Rather, waiting is an active participation in the hastening of the mission of God. The kingdom grows and we live at peace with God in Christ, even before we reach the new heaven and new earth, for by faith, we are already with the Lord as others are when they join us in repentance. In this way, we are really moving beyond the moment, no longer serving ourselves, but fulfilling the purpose of God, even already living in his kingdom by faith. Before you know it, we will see it with our own two eyes!

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott