

## Sermon 12-10-17 What Kind of People Are We to Be? II Peter 3:8-14

Dear Eager Ones Waiting for the Lord's Return:

Are you a person that is always on time? Or are you someone who is known for being a little late when it comes to time.

Being on time is an admired quality to have in one's life. I am sure you can think of someone right now in your circle of family and friends who is always on time. If they say 9:00 O'clock they will be there at 9:00 O'clock. Likewise you may know someone who says I will be there at 9:00 O'clock and you can always add 10 minutes or so to their arrival time.

Some cultures around the world are more concerned about time than others. Doing some research on the subject of time, I found out that time is all important to some cultures while to others relationships take precedent over issues of time.

- Americans – we feel rushed and time decides when we make our appointments and when we work and when we rest
- Japanese – have a low tolerance for tardiness and delay – trains one minute off are delayed
- Piraha tribe of Amazon rainforest- have no concept of time because they have no numbers or letters....no past because everything is present to them.
- Hopi tribe of Arizona – have only two words for time: sooner or later.

The Apostle Peter writes about time in his second epistle. He speaks to us about God being on time with his plan to someday come back to this world and usher in eternity.

At times God may seem slow to us in keeping his promises. God may seem to us not to be on time especially when we are facing difficult times. When believers are being persecuted for their faith and their lives are being threatened I can't help but imagine that they must wonder about God's delay in coming back to this old sinful world. They must cry out:

**"Lord, when, when are you coming back to deliver us?"**

Some skeptics of God have said: “If it turns out that there is a God, I don’t think he’s evil. I think that the worst thing you can say about God is that he is an underachiever. God’s program for the world isn’t making a lot of progress. Just look around at all the suffering. Why doesn’t God put an end to starvation, poverty, recession and homelessness? Why doesn’t he alleviate pain, sorrow, tears and the deep hurt in our hearts?”

Peter reminds us, though, that God is not slow in keeping his promises to us. God is not on our timetable but on his. Psalm 90:4 **“For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by...”**

The Lord has a reason why he has not come back thus far. He is waiting so that more sinners will repent and turn to him.

What are we going to do in the meantime why we wait for the Lord’s return?

Peter says: Live in the realization that the time is short and we have important work to do. Be ready to meet him anytime – even today.

So, while we wait what do we do?

- We may pray as we do in the Lord’s Prayer: **Thy Kingdom Come**
- What are we praying for in this part of the Lord’s Prayer: Thy Kingdom Come?
- We pray God to give us the Holy Spirit so that we may believe His Word and lead godly lives and that God may bring many others into His kingdom of grace.
- **Missionary Anthony DiLiberto** serves the Lord through the LCMS in Peru as a career missionary. He is a mercy outreach specialist, he identifies and develops ways for members of the church to put their faith into action, reaching out with the love of Christ to their neighbors in both word and deed. His request is this: “Please pray that we may reach out to Peruvians with the Good News of the Gospel as we proclaim the Good News.”

God understands time much more differently than we do. Our view of Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming may seem like a long time in coming but from God's view it is very short. So, while we wait we pray and serve in His kingdom.

Remember the first coming of Jesus as a baby in the manger was thought to be a long wait by God's people in the Old Testament, too. But the Apostle Paul reminded God's people that Jesus came at the right time. Galatians 4:4

**“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman...”**

God has an immense capacity for patience. Before he comes back in judgment he will wait for more people to come to faith. Romans 9:22 “God...bore with great patience the objects of his wrath...” Think of what God puts up with while he waits to come back...

- He endures endless blasphemies against his name
- He endures rebellion, murders and the ongoing breaking of his law
- He endures people rejecting him and lying about his Word

God waits patiently while he is calling and redeeming more and more people. God desires for people to repent and believe. I Timothy 2:4

God is not only in control; he is always on time. Scoffers would make us believe that God has fallen asleep or he is inept or he does not keep his promises. Scoffers assert that since Jesus promised his 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming and has not yet come he was either lying or is incapable of keeping his promises.

Jesus never stated the exact time in which he would return. It is in the Father's hands...God is never late and he is never delayed by outward circumstances or by someone else's timetable. God's timetable is based on his love and patience and forbearance. Ezekiel 18:23 “Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?” God is pleased when they repent and believe. He has not returned for one simple reason - it is not yet the Father's time.

According to vv 10-11 Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming will be sudden and terrible for those who do not believe. According to Revelation all unbelievers will be terrified when they

see God sitting on his throne and they will call on the mountains to fall upon them rather than face the judgment of the Lamb. Chapter 6:12-17

For us, though, we will not be afraid. For us the Lamb is a gentle Savior but for those who have proudly flaunted their unbelief they will have to face God's judgment. No one who has rejected God can survive the Day of His Wrath.

Realizing that the earth is going to be burned up we should put our confidence in what is lasting and eternal.

- Do we spend more of our time piling up possessions in our homes?
- Or striving to develop a more Christlike character in our hearts?

When Peter speaks of the Day of the Lord this was a special term that the Old Testament prophets used to describe God's special intervention in the history of the world.

The Old Testament prophets saw this as a Day of darkness and damnation a day when the Lord would act in a climatic way to vindicate his name, destroy his enemies, reveal his glory and establish his kingdom. II Thessalonians 1:7 "...and give relief to you who are troubled...this will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels."

Like a thief this Day will have a surprise arrival. It will be sudden, unexpected and disastrous to those who are not prepared. I Thessalonians 5:2 **"For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night."**

There will be a great noise, a whistling and a crackling sound as objects are being consumed by the flames of God. God will incinerate the universe and recreate it. The atoms, neutrons, protons and electrons are all going to disintegrate.

In verse 11 Peter gives us a straightforward challenge: "How astoundingly excellent you ought to be!" We are to conform our lives to God's Word in the light of the reality of his coming judgment. II Corinthians 5:9 **"So we make it our goal to please him..."**

What manner of people ought we to be?

- Holy – to be holy is to be separated from sin. God’s holiness will replace our natural tendency to sin. God wants us to have a heart transplant. Our holiness is the gift we receive from God as he gives us his righteousness and the ability by the Holy Spirit to live lives that will shine in darkness. Matthew 5:16
- Godliness – Peter warns us against living according to the desires of the flesh. 2:20; 3:3
- Labor in the Lord’s vineyard – Matthew 28:19; I Corinthians 15:58

In verse 12 Peter says we are to “speed the Lord’s coming.” Can we “hurry” Christ’s return? No, God is on his own timetable. But Peter is referring to our minds and hearts that we daily be mindful of the Lord’s kingdom and do that which will serve God’s purposes.

God’s purpose for mankind is not destruction but recreation. Isaiah 66:22 “As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me...” He will purify the heavens and the earth with fire and will create them anew. We can joyously look forward to the restoration of God’s good world.

Our daily lives are to express an eager expectation of the Lord’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming. What would you like to be doing when He returns? v14

We do not fear this Day but eagerly hope for it. I John 2:28 **“And now, dear children, continue in him so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.”**

When the Day of God comes, man’s day will be over. A new world will arise one of righteousness and the old, sin-cursed universe will be destroyed. Romans 8:19-22

This promise of a new universe is rooted in the Old Testament: Psalm 102:25; Isaiah 65:17 “The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”

### **New Heaven and New Earth**

The word “new” means new in quality...different from before...righteousness will settle in and take up permanent residence in the new world. Isaiah 60:18 “No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders...”

We will enjoy the peace of Christ which knows no worry or fear. To have this peace right now means that you and I will have this strong sense of assurance concerning our salvation.

God has dealt with our sin. The human approach to sin is to...

- ignore it
- justify it
- rationalize it

Not, so with God. He has dealt truthfully with our sin.

- we receive his righteousness
- we enjoy his forgiveness
- Isaiah 1:18 **“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”**