

Second Sunday in Advent

December 10, 2017

2 Peter 3:8-14

Repentant Readiness for Jesus' Return

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Dear Friends in Christ Jesus,

It is common for the writer to give the reason for the letter. The aged Peter is no exception. Earlier in chapter three, he had written to the scattered Christians, "This is now my second letter to you, as I have written both as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking." Wholesome thinking, what better preparation could there be for Jesus' Second Advent?

Scoffers in the last days prior to that advent deride two teachings. They ask with derision, "Where is this coming he promised?" They also "deliberately forgot" that God had created the earth with his word. Such thinking is not wholesome but follows their evil desires.

Giving answer to today's scoffers and liars requires wholesome thinking, and a sincere mind on our parts. That means using the Scripture. It means remembering who God is. It means trusting God will keep his promises no matter how long it may take.

Peter encapsulates the application of his message by calling on us to make every effort to be found living in holiness when the end does come. Here is how. **Repentant Readiness for Jesus' Return.** God's patience gives us time for repentance. God's promise is a new home of righteousness.

Last week's Advent message was watchfulness. This week it is repentance. Watchfulness and repentance go hand in hand. A broken and contrite heart God will not despise. Turn to the Lord and he will have mercy on you. "Make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him."

Repentance is the attitude of heart and mind we desire Jesus to find in us when he returns. As Christians we live in the state of grace in repentance 24 hours a day. It is in this same time frame we look for God to keep his promise and our Lord returns.

As we live in time, we are not to forget that God is eternal. God lives apart from time. Eternity means there is no time. Peter is giving us this as a point of truth against the scoffers. In time it may look like God is slow in keeping his promises, or has forgotten them. Yet "For the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand yours are like one day." God is not slow as we consider slowness in time. God is in the timeless now being patient with us "not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance."

My concern is not that Jesus will return "like a thief" but that I do not abuse God's current patience for my repentance. Make use of God's patience in daily contrition and faith. Drown the Old Adam in the waters of your Holy Baptism. Today is the day. Then, when the Lord does return suddenly like a thief you will have readiness in repentance for Jesus' return.

The Lord's return means the destruction of this world and the universe with fire. The old will pass away as the old life has passed away from us in repentance for our new life. Our new life prepares us for the new heaven and the new earth. God's promise is a new home of righteousness.

Peter wrote that the scoffers would forget that God created the world and the rest of the universe with his Word. What this leads to is forgetting that God has control over the destruction of the heavens and the earth. God called all things into existence and formed them as he wanted. God will destroy their current form and in keeping with his promise "we look forward to new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

For us who hold Creation as an historical fact, the destruction of the universe is not problematic. Exactly how and when does not matter. God has not revealed the specifics of the end as he has revealed what and how he did all things "in the beginning." We do know God will keep his promise and do it.

There are people who falsely believe that mankind has the power to destroy the earth and all the people on it. This power does not lie in our hands. The end of all things as we know them is no less a miracle than the creation of all things. God is being patient now as his Word calls the elect to faith and then the end will come.

In light of Jesus' advent, Peter asks what kind of people we should be, "living in holiness and godliness, as you look forward to and hasten the coming of the day of God?" We no longer live our lives in the love of sin as if we belonged in this sinful world. The Spirit has changed us. We need to live in a new world, a sinless world.

We need to live not in a world that loves unrighteousness. We want to live in a world created for righteousness souls to dwell.

We hasten the coming of the day of God as we spread the gospel. The faster we spread the good news to lost souls that Jesus is your Savior, the faster the Holy Spirit will call them into the church. God calls the elect before bringing the curtain down. When all the righteous through faith in Christ are safe in the church, the end of one creation will come. The new creation will take place for us to live there with Christ eternally.

The details of the world's end are interesting to discuss, maybe even argue about. It is tempting to confront the scoffers or dismiss them. Something is better for those who foolishly believe God is slow in keeping his promises, or that God did not create the heavens and the earth. Something is better for us as we look ahead to see the Christ coming on the clouds of heaven. More urgent are the Lord's call for repentant readiness for Jesus' return as we prepare for a new home of righteousness. Amen. <SDG>