

Chan Willis – F.P.C.
December 4, 2011

“Peter: Waiting”
2 Peter 3:8-15a

Last week we started off this holy season of Advent with a Lessons & Carols service. One that might not have been what you were expecting. You may have been looking for more songs that you were familiar with. Songs that spoke more of ‘silent nights’ in a ‘little town of Bethlehem’... songs that described ‘angels heard on high’ serenading a child born ‘away in a manger.’ And I promise, those songs ARE coming!

But as we eagerly await the celebration of the One ‘born on Christmas Day’, there must first come that period of anticipation. In the Christian calendar... not the same calendar that retailers and advertising agencies use... before the season of Christ comes, we must first experience the season of Advent. Advent means “coming.” And in the process of that ‘coming’...that time before which something really great gets here... there first must come a time of preparation, a time of getting ready... a time of **waiting**.

As you and I prepare ourselves for the ‘coming’ of our Lord Jesus Christ in this holy time of ‘waiting’, it is with the hope... indeed, the **belief** ... that we will one day see our Savior with our very own eyes. And as we seek to grow stronger in our faith... a faith not based on the world’s attitude of ‘seeing is believing’, but rather, ‘*believing is seeing*’... what better place is there to go to ‘see more clearly’ than through the eyes of those who actually SAW Jesus. These next few weeks we will focus on some of those who were closest to our Lord: John, Mary, Peter, the shepherds. Some of those who looked into the very face of God in Christ... whose faith was made sight. This week, we will consider the words of that ‘eyewitness’ known as the ‘rock’ ... the disciple who knew just what it meant to have that ‘sinking feeling’ ... **Peter**.

As I read this particular passage from Peter’s 2nd letter to fellow believers, I was particularly struck by the irony of Peter’s emphasis on ‘patience’ and ‘waiting.’ If there’s any disciple of Christ who showed the LEAST amount of ‘patience’ and ability to ‘wait’, it would be Peter! This is the guy who couldn’t *wait* to get out of the boat and try to walk on water like Jesus did. The one who would always practically step on the Lord’s words in getting out the response that was on his mind. The same Peter who fell asleep while *waiting* for Jesus to pray.

The same disciple who, in defense of Christ, would cut the ear off of one of the guards who came to arrest Him... and yet, would later just as fiercely deny even knowing the Lord. Patience, and waiting, didn't necessarily seem to be Peter's 'strong suits.'

And you know, I can **relate!** As I thought about this topic that I was to address today... WAITING... I thought about how hard it is for me to wait. I was reminded of all of the different ways that you, and I, are called upon to wait. Grocery store check-out. Bank teller lines. Hospital waiting room. TRAFFIC! All of these try our patience. And what is the joke about what happens when you pray to God for more patience? That most often He gives you more situations that TRY your patience! There just may be some truth to that.

Let's face it, whether or not it's in a check-out line, or in traffic, or the 2nd coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the issue is not whether-or-not we will have to **wait...** but rather, what are we going to do WHILE we are waiting? We know that the goal is worthwhile... but is the journey to get TO that goal as rewarding?

In the grocery store checkout, we are buying food to eat. In the teller line, we are dealing with money so we can, among other things, BUY that food. In a hospital waiting room, we are there because of someone we love. In that line of traffic we are trying to get home, also to care for someone important... a family member, a pet, ourselves! Because of the importance of whatever the end-goal may be, that makes our time of waiting important. Even though we may think of that time as unproductive, or wasted, because of what we will gain in the end, we should do all that we can to make that time productive. To not feel that we have wasted our time. Because what we have done in the meantime has helped us to be ready when we reach the 'end-of-the-line.'

So what does Peter say to us about being ready in order to reach 'our kingdom's goal'... the 'end of the line' of our earthly existence? Through the eyes of the one who truly saw our Lord 'face-to-face,' here is what I see as the important 'take-aways' from this passage.

While no one may know the time when Jesus will come back, the time IS coming nonetheless! It has been 2000 years since Jesus first left the earth; if he hasn't returned yet, it is easy for some doubters to say that He may never come back! In the verses just prior to this

one, Peter talks about *“scoffers... (‘doubters’ who) say, ‘Where is this ‘coming’ he promised?’”* And he wrote this letter only about 30 years after Christ’s resurrection!

Peter, in speaking of the *“fact...that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years”*, is in effect saying that to God, time means nothing like it does to us. To the One who holds all of creation in His hand, to the God who is the Giver of all that we have... including time... how much of it we spend waiting is not really such a big deal. HOW we spend that time, however, is!

Do we spend our ‘time of waiting’ knowing and believing that Jesus could come back at any moment, *“in the twinkling of an eye”* ? Do we... or perhaps, just as importantly, do our friends and family... believe that *“the day of the Lord will come like a thief ...when the earth...and everything on it will be disclosed* (or “laid bare,” “destroyed”).” A ‘thief’ is one who enters into a house and takes valuables when the resident is not prepared, or is away. If Jesus would come today... knocking at the door of your earthly tent, your ‘house’... seeking the precious valuable of your heart (or of those whom you love), would he find you all ‘at home’... ‘prepared’ for His arrival? OR, will you be surprised, ‘asleep,’ not ready for the most important guest we will ever welcome into the ‘home’ of our heart...

And further, if we believe that *“the day of the Lord”* is indeed coming, then we MUST be prepared... ready. And so, as Peter says, *“while you are waiting... strive to be found by Him at peace, without spot or blemish, and bear in mind that the Lord’s patience means salvation.”*

As the Lord ‘tarries’, as He seemingly ‘takes His time’ to return to earth, let us not take that as an opportunity to doubt the truth of His promises, but rather, let us thank Him for His patience. That because of His ‘slowness,’ Jesus is allowing more time for non-believers to *“come to repentance... not wanting any to perish.”* That *“the patience of our Lord means salvation.”* In what ways are you and I bringing the Good News of God’s salvation to those who scoff at the Lord’s coming?

And for those of us confident of the Lord’s promises of salvation, let us *“strive to be found... at peace, without spot or blemish.”* That last part sounds pretty much impossible. How can ANY of us, sinful, imperfect humans as we are, be found *“without spot or blemish”*? Simple. Because of the blood of the Lamb... because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ made on

our behalf... our sins are washed away. If we simply “*come to repentance*”... daily lift up to God those ‘spots and blemishes’... those ugly parts of us that only Jesus knows...we know that through Him, our sins are forgiven. And that, in the words of our Savior, **“in me you may have peace.”** (*John 16:33*) Only in the loving, outstretched arms of Jesus can we find true, everlasting, perfect **peace**. A peace... and joy... that doesn’t merely **‘await’** us in the **future**... but should be with us as we **‘wait’** in the **present**. As forgiven followers of the Prince of Peace, we await the arrival of the most honored dinner guest (who will one day host US at a truly ‘heavenly’ banquet!) not with *fear*... but with *JOY!* Joyful because we are **ready**. Ready to cry out, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

As we think about how we are called to be ‘prepared’ to ‘wait’ on the Lord, one of the most familiar passages in Scriptures is from *Isaiah 40*. Those words of the prophet that remind God’s people that their **“sin has been paid for.”** A voice that calls out to us **“Prepare the way for the Lord.”** And perhaps the most memorable Bible verses that relate to this issue of ‘waiting’ ...

“...those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary,

They will walk and not be faint.” (*vs. 31*)

And so, my brothers and sisters, let us run and not grow weary. Let us walk and not faint. For as we wait on the Lord, He WILL ‘renew our strength.’ So as we look forward to the coming **“day of the Lord”**... when our most special ‘dinner guest’ will arrive... may we be strong... may we be ready. And in Peter’s words, **“while you are waiting...strive to be found by Him at peace, without spot or blemish, bearing in mind that the Lord’s patience means salvation.”**

CHARGE & BENEDICTION (2nd service)

This time of Advent, of course, leads us to Christmas. That day so long ago that marked the earthly birth of our Savior in a humble stable in a small town.

We know that very few people acknowledged this world-changing event.

It largely went un-noticed.

One of the most well-known lines describing its occurrence was that

“there was no room at the inn.”

"While You Were Sleeping" (by Casting Crowns)

*America, what will we miss while we are sleeping...Will Jesus come again
And leave us slumbering where we lay?
America, will we go down in history As a nation with no room for its King?
Will we be sleeping...Will we be sleeping?*

My brothers and sisters in Christ, when **"the day of the Lord comes like a thief"** in the night, like Peter, will we be **waiting**? OR, 'will we be sleeping'?

CHARGE & BENEDICTION (2nd service)

***"...the Lord longs to be gracious unto you; He rises to show you compassion.
Blessed are all who wait for him!" (Isaiah 30:18)***

***May the Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
And be gracious unto you. The Lord lift his countenance upon you,
And give you peace."***