

## 2 Peter 3:8-14 – Why Does God Make Us Wait?

29 days until Christmas. For most of us (adults) that's probably good thing. Sure you're looking forward to Christmas, family coming home, maybe taking a trip elsewhere. But maybe you're glad you've still got 29 days. There's a lot to do, to prepare, and you know how fast it will come.

29 days until Christmas. For a child....that is an eternity. Trying to explain to a 3-year old what a "Christmas list" is and that we still have to wait for a couple weeks to see if we get those things.....that's a challenge to say the least.

Waiting seems to be far more difficult for young children. Whether that's waiting through a 10 minute car ride home; waiting for Grandpa and Grandma to come on Christmas; or simply waiting for life to change. A couple days ago, my 3-year old surprised me by saying out of the blue, "Daddy, it take sooo long to grow up." I responded, "Waiting can be difficult can't it?"

And that's very true for adults too. Just ask the Christians to whom Peter wrote in today's lesson. It had only been 3 decades since Jesus had left this earth. And Peter's audience was already growing impatient of waiting for their Lord's return.

And for some other New Testament Christians, it's been 2000 years. And we're still waiting. Waiting can be difficult. Especially when that waiting isn't just sitting around and taking it easy, but having to face many painful and seemingly impossible challenges while we wait. And with every single monotonous work week, every sickness that breaks down our bodies, with every broken family, every disappointment, we long more and more for Jesus to come back, but with every single one of those challenges, it seems harder and harder to remember that He actually is going to one day relieve us from this.

It's not easy to wait. But whether we have to wait 30 years, or 2000 years, Peter's words this morning help us understand why we have to wait. ***"Do not forget this one thing, dear friends:" He says, "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."***

Did you know that the lifespan of the average housefly is about 4 weeks! (So if there is a fly on the wall and you are too lazy to grab the flyswatter, you can just wait a month and it will be out of your hair!) How a housefly would define the terms long and short would vary greatly from a person who lives 80 years. We could say that Christmas is in 29 days and that seems pretty soon, right around the corner for us, but that would be an entire lifetime for a fly.

For our God, who has no beginning and no end, our entire lifetime is a blip on the radar screen. He has an infinitely longer existence than me, so how he defines long and short is a little different. ***"a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."***

Now an important point worth noting here: Some apply this verse to the days of creation in Genesis. We cannot take it that way. That would be like comparing apples and oranges because the words of Genesis about creation mention days from our human understanding of morning and evening as a 24 hr period. But Peter's point here, is that God doesn't see time like us. Not just because his lifespan is much longer, but because he is outside of the realms of time! Time is his creation for our benefit, not his own. We veer off track when we try to tie God down to our system of time!

So why does all this matter? Because it helps us understand why we have to wait, sometimes for so long. There is a reason, a very good reason, why Jesus has delayed his coming again in glory to deliver us. It's not because God doesn't understand our concept of time, it's because of something far greater. He says, ***The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.***

God is waiting because he wants to give people like us a chance to repent and live. The only reason the world has lasted long enough for you and I to gather today and read this book is that God still has people to gather into his church.

Christ was ready to come at the time Peter wrote this letter, Christ is ready to come today. But he delays that action for one good reason: The patient love for souls.

As Paul says to Timothy, ***God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*** And as he writes to the Romans, ***“God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.”***

He wants one more day, one more month, one more year, so that people in your family, in your neighborhoods, so that your friends might be able to learn the simple message of John 3:16. ***“God so loves the world, and that he gave his only Son.”*** He wants people to believe and not perish.

God calls you to be patient and wait, while he is patient in gathering. But he promises you, this isn’t going to last forever.

**(Part II.)** Peter says, ***“the day of the Lord will come like a thief.”***

I think Peter had something on his mind from his past when he wrote this section. On the Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus and his disciples were walking through the temple in Jerusalem. The disciples were looking all around at the beautiful structures ***“Look Lord, what massive stones and magnificent buildings!”*** Then Jesus replies, ***[“Ah, yea] do you see all these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down..... Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready.”*** You see the clear connection between Jesus’ and Peter’s thief illustration.

Why do many of you have home security systems? Whether that system is an alarm or a concealed carry...why do you have it? It’s because a thief isn’t going to write a note on your door a week or a day before he comes which says, “Dear homeowner, just so you know, while you and your wife are out for dinner next Friday night, I’m going to break in and take your big screen, your jewelry, and all your valuables.” Thieves don’t leave notes like that. And that’s Jesus and Peter’s point. They come unexpectedly. That’s their goal. To come when no one sees it. And that’s what Jesus will do.

Peter says, ***“The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare”<sup>11</sup> Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives<sup>12</sup> as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.”***

How do we get ready for Christ? How do we prepare for his coming? Peter says, ***“live holy and godly lives as you look forward [to it].”*** What does that look like? Isaiah and John the Baptist put it this way: ***“Make straight paths for the Lord,”*** In other words God wants us to make a straight path for him into our heart; which means: hide nothing from him. And the biblical word for that is “repent.” When it comes to your relationship with God, when it comes to being ready for Christ, he wants you to be completely honest and upfront with him about who you are and what you’ve done. Sometimes that’s difficult, because we all have some very scary things to hide.

Back in 2008, law enforcement in Phoenix arrested a man named William Wallace Keegan. He was sentenced to five consecutive life sentences for major drug trafficking. The reason he got five consecutive life sentences was because he was doing this for over 30 years. And the reason he was able to allude the authorities for over 30 years was because he had all ten of his fingerprints surgically altered. He had someone scrape off the fingerprint from each of his fingers replace them with fake fingerprints, something incredibly painful to do. But to William Wallace Keegan, that seemed like a good option to him because he knew, if people knew the truth about who he was and what he had done, something bad would happen.

Maybe most of us wouldn’t get prison time for our worst offenses, but I think most people are pretty good at hiding certain things about themselves. What’s the one thing about you that you are most ashamed of? What’s the one thing you refuse to let anyone in on? Are you willing to share that with the person sitting next to you this morning? Probably not, for the same reason that, when God gave Adam a chance to repent of this world’s first sin, Adam didn’t confess. Instead he told God, ***“I hid because I was afraid.”***

The truth is, ***“Making straight paths”*** makes us uncomfortable. So instead we have a tendency to dig deep valleys people will have to labor through before they’ll get anywhere close to knowing us. We build mountains

and hills so high that everybody trying to figure us out will give up before they get anywhere close to the summit. We lay down long, winding roads and crooked paths so that nobody will ever find what's really inside us. And it all of which boils down to the same fear Adam had in the Garden of Eden - the fear of unacceptability. If I tell the truth, if I confess who I really am, no one will love me. And we know it.

Adam knew that God commanded him to stay away from that tree, and he didn't. He knew that God threatened to punish sin, his guilty conscience told him that. But what he didn't see was the same thing you and I often fail to see. ***"If we confess our sins to him," he is faithful and just and will forgive us."***

The story is told of a young mother who years ago was making her way across the hills of South Wales, carrying her tiny baby in her arms, when she was overtaken by a blinding blizzard. She never reached her destination. Her body was later found by a rescue team beneath a mound of snow. When they found her, she was wearing almost nothing. Before she died, she had taken off all her outer clothing and wrapped it around her baby. When they unwrapped the child, to their great surprise, they found he was alive. Years later that child, David Lloyd George, grew up and became prime minister of Great Britain. That child found peace and comfort while waiting in the middle of a blizzard by helplessly resting in the arms of someone who loved him.

The point is, there is only one way I can make myself ready for Christ and his coming: It's not by covering up who I really am...but acknowledging, "I am a sinner. I struggle every day with it." But it's also understanding what Jesus has done to redeem me and acknowledging that it is only through his blood that I'm made ready. And it's only there that I find my peace and comfort, by resting in the arms of my redeemer as I wait through the blizzard that is often this life.

And it's that my friends, which allows us to look forward to what Peter describes as ***"a new heaven and new earth, where righteousness dwells."***

On Judgment day, God doesn't take everything away from us. Once this world of sin is destroyed, he will speak his creative word, and a new heaven and earth will spring into being. And this won't be something entirely different, but our same universe, dismantled, destroyed, yes ***"it will pass away."*** But it will be rebuilt, transformed and renewed. And this new world will have some great advantages over the old: heaven and earth will be together, not separate. And the throne of God and of the lamb will be in the city, ***and "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."***

Don't be afraid of judgment day. But also don't forget that it's coming. Instead remember why your God makes you wait. It's to prepare those you love, and to prepare yourself by "repenting"...in other words, admitting who you are.

And when Jesus does finally return, be assured he will say to you.. "I already know exactly who you are. You are the one whose robe has been washed and made white in my blood. You are the one whose name I will never blot out from the Book of Life. You are the one who I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven." And so Christians, we look forward to that day. And as we wait, we say with John, ***"Come quickly Lord Jesus! Amen."***

