

December 7, 2008
Advent 2

“Don't Forget the Day of the Lord”

2 PETER 3:8-14

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. ¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. ¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

Have you left your home, driven two blocks down the street, and wondered to yourself, “Did I close the garage door before I drove away from the house?” In fact, you found yourself turning around, driving back past your house, and making sure the garage door was closed. The other day a man was standing in front of me at the grocery store. He had a grocery list on a post it sticker attached to the handle of his shopping cart. More than three items and you need a list to remember what they are. A few years ago there was a story about retired couple who were on a cross country road trip. They stopped in New Mexico for gas. 60 miles down the road the husband turned to talk to his wife and she was not there. He had forgotten her at the gas station. Have you ever forgotten to take your medication?

It helps us to make lists for ourselves as we plan our days so we don't forget to make a phone call, pay the property tax, or even someone's birthday. Today God's Word is encouraging us to remember the day of the Lord and put it at the top of our list each day of our lives. The day of the Lord is the day that Jesus will come in glory and end this world in which we are living. It is the day when he will take us to the place he has prepared for us, a place described in God's Word for today as “a home of righteousness.” Today we want to speak to you about the amazing tension or balance that comes with remembering the end point of your life and how it affects the beginning point of each new day.

Remember the end of your life when Jesus returns

When you consider the end point of your life, or the final destination, it is important to remember that the Lord does not count time the way we count time. We are told, “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day.” The Lord does not see time the way we see time. The child cries out for help and mom says, “Just a minute, I am coming.” That minute for the child may seem like an eternity, but for the parent that minute is only a few seconds.

A thousand years to the Lord is like one day, or even one second of time because God is eternal. He has always existed and he will always be there. We cannot take this verse and apply it to the days of creation in Genesis. That would be like comparing apples and oranges because the words of Genesis about creation mention days from our understanding of morning and evening, a 24 hour period of time.

Have you ever had a night when you cannot sleep when time seemed to go so slowly? So the church in these last days longs for the day of the Lord to come quickly, but it seems to come so slowly from our perspective and our understanding of time. We are like the impatient little children in the back seat of a car on a long road trip to grandma and grandpa's house for Christmas. In the days before DVD players for the children, you could hear them say only one hour into the trip, "Are we there yet?" Jesus tells us at the end of the Revelation that he is coming soon, and the church of every age responds with the words, "Come Lord Jesus." We want him to come now, as quickly as possible. When we face surgery, financial problems, or problems with our families, we fall asleep at night, and wake up in the morning yearning and longing for the day of the Lord to come quickly.

There is a reason, a very good reason, why Jesus has delayed his coming again in glory. The answer is found in verse 9 that says, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some count slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." It is not always possible for us to keep our promises, or check things off our list in a timely way. That is not true with the Lord. He has a reason to delay his return, and it is not because he has forgotten about us, or that he is too busy, or that he is overwhelmed with the work load of taking care of his church in these last days. The Lord delays his coming because he is patient with people who do not believe in him. He wants one more day, one more month, one more year, so that people in our families, or some of our neighbors and friends, or even large numbers of people in heathen countries can learn the simple message of John 3:16. "God so loves the world, and that he gave his only begotten Son." He wants people to believe and not perish. It is a terrible thing to face the end of the world and the eternal fires of hell without having Jesus as your Savior. The Lord wants everyone to come to repentance, including the Muslims in the Arab world. He wants them to put their trust in him not in themselves and their good deeds.

The day of the Lord will come when we least expect it. That Jesus made clear to us. That same point is made in our text which says, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief." The thief does not always come in the darkness of night, he may strike your home in the middle of the day when your home is empty and you are at work or doing your errands. It does not say the day of the Lord "might" come as a thief. No the Lord tells us this day will come like a thief. There is a real advantage to not knowing the exact time of Jesus return, because it helps us live each day of life with a certain amount of hope and expectation as if Jesus were coming today.

What will happen when the day of the Lord comes? "The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will melt with fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." I read that the heat from the recent fires that hit the Santa Barbara area were so intense that it melted metal. All the energy that the Lord expended when he created the universe in a flash will suddenly be reversed as he destroys this present universe also in a flash, one sudden cataclysmic explosion. It is not a day that we fear, because we will be safe in the arms of the Lord when he returns as he takes us up to be with him in the air. It is

also a day on which the Lord will instantly create a new heaven and new earth, a place far superior to anything we have seen or experienced here in this life. We love to see beautiful scenes of mountains and waterfalls and meadows and canyons and beaches, and sunsets, because they remind us of far better world that Jesus has planned for us.

Let's talk about being prepared for that day when it does come. As a child I grew up with the fear of a nuclear bomb. In fact there were even drills in the schools where children went into the safety areas, usually underground basements, where they could be spared in case of a nuclear bomb. I remember being afraid to fall asleep at night because I might not be ready to meet Jesus if the Russians unleashed missiles with atom bombs and I burnt up in an explosion in the middle of the night. I tried to falls asleep constantly praying, "Lord Jesus forgive me of all my sins." I didn't realize that through Jesus perfect life, and perfect death, and the blessings of my baptism that I was full covered and fully ready for the day of the Lord to come.

Permit me to illustrate how Jesus makes us fit and ready for his coming with the story of a man who bowled a perfect game, a 300, twelve strikes. It happened in Michigan to a 62 year old man named Don Doane. He bowled his first perfect game, and shortly after sharing high fives with his teammates he fell to the ground. They thought he had fainted, but he actually died of a heart attack. One of the his friends said, "It was like a book, a final chapter, he three his 300 game with his friends, gave each other high-fives, and it's like the story ended. He died with a smile on his face."

I tell this rather sad story, because you know that we need perfect scores to have eternal life with the Lord. The Bible calls these perfect scores, "Righteousness." Bowling a perfect game is like a piece of cake compared to living the perfect life God expects of me. That is why Paul in Romans 3 says, "Therefore no one will be declared righteous (or perfect) by observing the law, rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." There is no way I can make myself worthy because no amount of good will ever be able to compensate for the evil I have done. But in his love our heavenly Father has given us Jesus. That's what Christmas is all about. It is about the gift of God's Son who had perfect scores in everything he did on this earth, including the perfect sacrifice he paid for our sins at the cross. That perfection of Jesus is given to us as a free gift and through Jesus we have all the perfect scores we need to make it through that final day.

Remember the beginning of each new day

These perfect scores that Jesus puts into our account affect how we face each new day. We can look forward to the new home Jesus has purchased for us. "But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and new earth, the home of the righteousness." Heaven will be a home of righteousness. People will love each other perfectly, and there is nothing better in life than having people around you who genuinely love and care about you. There won't be any fights in this new heaven and new earth, no bad words, no evil thoughts, no lack of caring. Did you hear about the man who was arrested this past week for battering his wife with a cheeseburger? He took the MacDonald's cheeseburger and smashed it into her face, not once but twice. There won't be any of that in this new heaven and new earth where the wolf will live with the lamb. We can wake up each day and look forward to this whole new world.

What a profound affect this coming of the Lord has on how we plan out each new day on our calendars and on our lists and in our thoughts. We are told, "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming." We are encouraged to "make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him." Do you want the day of the Lord to come more quickly? Then live your life for Jesus. The US Army says, "Be all you can be." Jesus says, "Be all that you are!" You are justified, declared righteousness and pure. Now live that life in everything you do. People will see your new life, They will want to have the same Jesus and same peace that you have. That will speed the day of the Lord's return, as we reach that final number of people the Lord calls into his church. The Lord knows that final number, and he knows when to come again in glory.

Don't forget the day of the Lord. Pray that it comes soon, even in your life time or even this week. Live each day as if the past is forgiven, the future is guaranteed and the present is exciting. Amen.