

## Sermon for Trinity

Advent 2,2023

Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

This reading from 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, makes a marvelous Advent lesson for us. People sometimes struggle to explain Advent to those who have never heard of it. Sometimes, people will say Advent means waiting for Jesus or waiting on Christmas to arrive. But I think the simplest explanation is that Advent refers to the "between times." Advent marks a time between the beginning and ending of the life of Jesus, now awaiting his birth, and pointing to the end, the Resurrection. Advent is all about time, and just how we ought to live into it. This is time not as we commonly talk about it, dividing passing time into minutes, hours, weeks, and months. No, this is about God's time, of a kind of time unlike ours—our time is defined by measurable limits, God's time by how superabundant and infinite the limits of time are for the Creator. We might say that God's time stretches from before the beginning of time far beyond the limits of cosmic time.

I was thinking about the vast expanse of God's cosmic time when I remembered a story about an undergraduate caught slumbering during a science lecture. The professor was describing the horrible fiery cataclysm coming at the end of the universe. Alarmed by the terrible destruction the professor so vividly described, the undergraduate sat up from his slumbers shocked and surprised. "When?" he shouted in a frightened voice. The professor said, "Likely in ten million years!" To which the undergraduate nodded off, saying, "Oh, okay."

It's important to know (student naps aside!) the real difference between God's abundant time and our limited human time. Here in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, written long, long before the creation of modern cosmology, Peter writes that a day is like a thousand years for God, and that those thousand years are like a day. What's Peter saying? He's contending that the time God holds is so beyond our imagining, no human can conceive it. But here's the next question: why is that important? Because God has and will continue to give all the time that God holds for us to be made one with him. Have you been a sinner? A terrible sinner, like me? Then God has all of God's time to forgive. Have you been filled with sadness and suffering,

with loss and loneliness? God has the time to heal you, restore you and to set you free.

God has an extraordinary way of measuring time compared to us. When we look at time, we think of minutes being lost, days disappearing, our lives growing shorter and shorter. In other words, our lives, our time, very much resembles the seconds disappearing in the pixels of an electronic clock.

God has another way to measure time, so very different from ours that we might not at first understand—God measures time with God's promises. You might think at first, a promise is no way to measure time—how would you know how much time you have lost? And that my friends is precisely the point that Peter is making. God has sent Jesus Christ to us to recover us, to bring us home to the place of healing and wholeness that we have been missing.

To understand this, we need first to understand how different a promise is from every other assurance. We can think of it this way: If I were to tell you that I intend to meet you for coffee this Thursday, then you would likely forgive me if I couldn't or didn't show up. There's some ambiguity to the word "intend." On the other hand, if someone solemnly promises to meet you at a certain time and place, you absolutely expect them to be there. So, here's what we need to know, that God doesn't deal in vague assurances of time, nodding and napping, wondering to God's self if God needs to show up. Instead, God deals in absolute measures of time Peter reports. God deals in promises and if God makes a promise, God will make it happen. All people will be remembered, and as in the case of this letter this morning, all people will be welcomed home to God.

Just think, suddenly God has turned time upside down from our common understanding. Time among we humans is often regarded in the negative but not so with God—as one Christian says, this message of Peter's is not negative but quite the opposite—it's a positive statement that God will use all of God's time (and God we know, can't run out!) to wait for us to live the lives we long to live. We have all the time God can afford—and since all time is God's, God will always provide—to become the kind of people the world needs and for which God has made us. I have an idea: Since it's nearly Christmas, take this with you as a gift, God loves you now and for forever in the future, past the end of time. I solemnly promise you. Amen.