

December 10, 2023 (Advent 2 B)

**2 Peter 3:8-14**

***“Combining Patience with Preparation”***

There are only **15 days** left before Christmas Day. *Are you ready for it?* Some people might hear that and begin to PANIC – *“There’s so much to do and there’s just not enough time!”* The stress can rob a person of his/her peace and joy at this time of year. To them we would encourage patience. Take a breath, spend a little Sabbath time with your Lord. You’ve got a couple of weeks – it’ll all work out just fine. Take it one step at a time here.

That other guy, however, might say, *“15 days – there’s nothing to worry about! I do my shopping with all the other desperate guys on Christmas Eve – I’ll take care of things then.”* Well, to that person we might say, *“You’ve only got a couple of weeks and there’s a lot of things to be done – now is the time to get off your butt and get prepared!”*

Peter is going to help us regain BALANCE here today as we strive to **combine patience with preparation**. He was not talking about Christmas here, but about Jesus’ glorious 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming on the Great Day of Judgment. Some people were freaking out – quitting their jobs / liquidating their assets / thinking He would show up any minute . . . to them both Peter (and Paul in writing to the Thessalonians) encouraged **patience** – take it one step at a time here, the Lord is building His family first. On the other side of the spectrum were those scoffers who thought He was never coming – *“Life just rolls on by – so don’t worry about it. I’m going to live my life my way and forget all about Judgment Day.”* To them the Apostles say WAKE UP – and **get ready / be prepared** – for the Lord is indeed coming at a time when you will not expect Him.

Our text begins here in **2 Peter 3:8 (NIV) 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. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**

Patience is an ESSENTIAL part of God’s saving plans. Verse 15 of this chapter says, *“Our Lord’s patience means salvation.”* The Gospel news of Jesus Christ – the perfect Savior – who lay down His

life as a sacrifice of atonement to cancel out all our guilt so we could have the gift of salvation by faith – THAT saving message is still reaching more lost souls, and (by the power of the Spirit) building up God’s family of believers. That’s why His glorious 2<sup>nd</sup> coming hasn’t taken place yet. He’s not SLOW – He’s PATIENT. Waiting isn’t hard for Him. To Him a thousand years are like a day.

Waiting isn’t hard for HIM – but it’s **hard for us**. And, our **impatience** can easily get us in trouble. Impatience causes problems – especially at this time of year. I think we’ve all lost patience with children / parents / spouses / siblings / relatives – maybe you’ve seen how things can spiral down and get out of control when 1 person loses it . . . and soon it seems everybody has lost patience with everybody else. We might even lose patience with **God** at times. We see the world falling apart around us and wonder what’s taking Him SO LONG? Doesn’t He care about what’s happening and how my life is falling apart here?

Could you imagine how terrifying it would be if God lost patience with us? He would have every right to. What if He yelled at us, *“That’s it! I’m so sick of you people! Quit whining and complaining about every little thing – I’m sick and tired of your lazy, selfish, petty attitudes, your apathy and lack of love and devotion to me and those around you – just get out of my sight!”*

He’d be completely **justified** in losing His patience with us, but thanks to Jesus we’ve been completely **justified**. (Justified here according to the Greek meaning of the word: declared to be innocent / holy / righteous by God Himself.) God poured out His anger on Jesus, and Jesus’ perfection is ours by faith. Repentance is a STATE OF BEING that God brings us into where we acknowledge our guilt and sin and receive Jesus’ forgiveness and perfection. As one person said, *“Justification means it’s just as if I never sinned.”* Because of Christ alone God is PATIENT with us. That inspires us to be patient with others as we patiently wait for Him to build His family before Christ comes again.

God wants that patient attitude balanced with a state of readiness and preparation for His coming again – as we see in the following verses: **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 done 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.**

*Speed its coming??* Hasn't that Day already been set in stone? Well – yes and no. Let's say the End doesn't come in your lifetime, so you will have to experience death. Has that day of your death been set in stone? Well – yes and no – depending upon how you look at it. The Lord knows the exact moment it will come. But, we can *speed its coming* by how we live / what we eat / our bad habits / what foolish risks we take. God knows how it's all going to play out – He's TIMELESS, and He's always watching over us – and at the same time He encourages us to make good decisions and use the time we have wisely.

Likewise when God's people make good decisions and get to work sharing the Gospel – we (somehow / mysteriously) *speed the coming of Jesus' return*. That's an interesting perspective on things, isn't it? God wants us to keep these things in *balance* as we step ever closer to the End – *that Day is coming!*

**12b 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, where righteousness dwells. 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.**

It's an incredible blessing to have patience balanced with preparation as we approach the End. We have a wonderful future waiting for us in Jesus' presence – keeping our eyes focused on that future is priceless when we're faced with struggles and hardships here. God's Word brings things into focus and helps us keep things balanced as we struggle through this difficult life. Unfortunately all too often we (like the people of Peter's day) get that balance all out of whack. They were often unbalanced to the one extreme or the other – and the same is true for us – but God's Word will straighten us out.

I haven't seen anyone in our church quit their job, liquidate all their assets, get rid of all their stuff, drop all the money they got from it in the offering place – then sit on the pew and say, “*Ok Lord – take me home!*” But I have seen people struggling along in nursing homes who just want to leave this world behind. When you see that relative at Christmas I don't expect you to grab him and smack him

and say, “*When are you going to wake up and realize you're a wretched sinner and you need a Savior?! Jesus is the only way for you to be saved and escape the fires of hell – quite avoiding Him!! The End is near!*”

They'd probably check your eggnog for rum if you acted that way. We often tend to be **imbalanced** on the other side of the equation. “*Maybe next year I'll get a better opportunity to talk about Jesus with him. He doesn't like it when I invite him to church, I'll quit asking and hope that maybe one day he'll be interested. Until then, I'll just put it off.*” Spiritually speaking we often get lazy and think we've got all the time in the world. It's time to get PREPARED for Jesus' Coming.

“*Wait a minute – are you saying we're not prepared for Jesus' glorious return?*” No – don't misunderstand me here. The believer with the repentant heart stands in a **state of readiness** – kept in the Faith by the Means of Grace that bring Jesus' forgiveness to us and keep us bonded to Him – like branches to the Vine (John 15).

*So how are we weak in the area of preparation?* Well – think about it this way: If Jesus decided His birthday this year is a good day to return in Judgment – what would you do during these **15 days** that you've been putting off? Have you heard of the Latin phrase: *carpe diem?* *Seize the day!* Take God's encouragement from these verses and **SEIZE THE DAY!** What can you accomplish with the “15 days” or so that you have left? **It's time to get those items done.**

- It's time to get rid of that grudge and that anger, and make up with your loved one.
- It's time to set aside some time / energy / money for helping others hear the Gospel message.
- It's time to get involved with what your congregation is doing to share Jesus with others.
- It's time to apologize and be sorry instead of trying to be right.
- It's time to have a conversation with your relative (the “smacking him around” is optional – use your discretion).
- It's time to focus on what's really important in life.
- ***It's time to live holy and godly loves as we look forward to the Day of God – combining patience with preparation*** – making the most of every opportunity to bring Christ to others, with patience and love, and therefore somehow to help *speed its coming*. *Come Lord Jesus, when the time is right – Amen.*