

We just finished going through Acts, the story of the early church after the resurrection of Jesus. If you recall, one of the first things that happened in Acts was the ascension of Jesus to heaven:

*Acts 1:9-11 - After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. <sup>10</sup> They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup> "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? **This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.**"*

Notice that Jesus, who died, rose again, and ascended to heaven, will one day return the same way he left. This is what is commonly known as the Second Coming. Over these four weeks of Advent, from now until the week before Christmas, I am going to preach a series of sermons on the Second Coming of Jesus. Advent is traditionally a season for both remembering Jesus' first coming and preparing for his second coming. I have historically spent the Advent season preaching on his first coming at Christmas, but this year I thought it would be a good time to look at his second coming.

**One good reason for preaching on this topic is your view of the end impacts how you live today.** Just like the destination to which you are driving determines how and where you drive you're your choice of career determines how you live and study in preparation for that career. Like Stephen Covey said in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, "Begin with the end in mind."

Your view of the end affects how you live today: Whether or not you believe there is anything beyond death. Whether or not you believe you will have to answer to God for the way you live. What you believe eternity will be like. Where you believe eternity is located.

Whether or not you think about it much, your answers affect how you live today. In this series, I hope to clear things up so that you might live as God intends in the light of His ultimate purposes for this world and your life.

**The second coming of Jesus is a topic full of confusion, controversy, and often fear.** There are some Christians – maybe you are one of them – and some authors and theologians who love to speculate on the end times, laying out charts of when the antichrist will come, Armageddon, and when the rapture will happen, and so on. I hate to disappoint you, but that is not my goal with this series. Some of those

issues may come up in the course of these sermons, but dealing with those issues is not my main goal. I'm taking my cue from Paul in Titus 3:9:

**Titus 3:9** - *But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.*

My experience has been that debate about the end times can often turn into foolish controversies and unprofitable quarrels and arguments that often lead to pride, not love or greater devotion to God. And if you are interested in my views on those issues, feel free to ask me another time. I'm going to focus on four essential elements of the second coming of Jesus.

The return of the King  
 The final judgment  
 The new heavens and the new earth  
 The heart of it all

For this morning, I want to read 2 Peter 3:

**2 Peter 3:3-14** - *First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. <sup>4</sup> They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." <sup>5</sup> But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. <sup>6</sup> By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. <sup>7</sup> By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <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. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.*

Jesus will return. But scoffers doubt it. He will return to live with us, to put an end to sin and suffering and death. Heaven and earth will be one. His second coming will be **sudden, unexpected, personal, visible, and bodily.**

**2 Peter 3:10** - *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.*

**Matthew 24:44** - *So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*

**Revelation 1:7** - *Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.*

Many religious leaders over the years have predicted the return of Christ and been wrong about it:

Harold Camping – May 21, 2011

Jehovah's Witnesses – Oct 1, 1914, 1915, 1918, 1920, 1925, 1941, 1975, 1994;

Joseph Smith, founder of Mormon Church in 1835 predicted the world would end before 1891

Ellen White, founder of 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists, predicted 1850

Pat Robertson - 1982

If you think you know when Christ will return, you're automatically wrong. **The first coming was unlike they anticipated; will the second coming be any different?**

Given that he will return, how does Peter say we ought to live today? Three things:

**1) See his delay as a call to repentance**

There are scoffers saying, "Where is he?" The Lord is not slow, he just sees time differently. Why has he not come back yet? We may not understand his timing.

<sup>9</sup> *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.*

We want him to be slow in bringing justice to us, fast in bringing justice to others. He's not saying be patient and get your life together, but repent. Anyone can do that if you're willing to swallow your pride.

But he will come, just as the flood came unexpectedly.

***Psalm 32:1-6** - Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. <sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. <sup>3</sup> When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. <sup>4</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah <sup>5</sup> Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah <sup>6</sup> Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.*

Tomorrow is promised to no one. His patience is giving you opportunity to repent. And do not delay in pleading with others to be reconciled to God.

## 2) Live holy and godly lives, at peace with him, as you await his return

*<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... <sup>14</sup> 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 like a pop quiz: you never know when the quiz will come. So be ready at all times.

***2 Corinthians 5:10** - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

It is called the Day of the Lord, **the Lord's Day**. What does it mean when it is your day? He is the one who will be in the spotlight. It is not about you. He is the main character. You are the supporting actor. The world does not revolve around you, but around Him. Maybe you have been living seeing if God can help you. But that is not reality. He will return as the King.

*1 John 3:2-3 - Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*

### 3) Look forward to the new heavens and new earth

*<sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

**There is a popular saying – live like you were dying.** What if you had one month to live? But the reality is that you will live forever with Him. Live like you will live forever with Him. How does that change how you live?

**It changes what you live for** (your attitude towards your possessions)

*Luke 12:33-34 - Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Why spend on the home you will be leaving? Spend on the one in which you will live forever.

**It changes where we put our hope.** Hope in the world to come – all we are longing for will be ours. The love, the community, the work, the peace, the joy – it will all be ours.

**It changes your attitude towards suffering and death**

*Revelation 21:1-5 - Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." <sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"*

He will make everything right. Live as a foretaste of the new heavens and new earth.

He is coming again. See that as a call to repentance, and a call to share your faith with others. Live holy and godly lives. And live as if you will live forever.