

How far away is Christmas? (13),12, (11) days away? How far away does it feel? For a kid looking forward to Christmas- songs, worship, presents and more, Christmas seems like years away! For the more mature person with a few years under their hat and a bit more responsibility, realizing all that needs to be done before then, and the plans that need to be solidified or maybe cancelled this year, Christmas seems like it will come tomorrow, and there is so much yet to be done! Slow down, time!

A calendar may tell us exactly how many days, a clock the minutes, but how far away something feels is relative. Scoffers criticized the Apostle Peter and other Christians because they kept preparing for the Lord's coming, day after day, year after year, a coming that would happen soon. These mockers said insane things like "God didn't create the world," and that "Jesus isn't coming back." But Peter knew that Jesus keeps his word. Peter also recognized it may feel like a delay to us who struggle and strive to keep vigilant. With God there is only perfect timing. He is never late. Jesus will come at the perfect time. It may seem so long to us who struggle in this sinful world, but his reason is patience. Why?

### **He is not wanting anyone to perish.**

*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. 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. 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. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 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. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."*

In the season of Advent, a word that means "coming," we are looking forward to Jesus coming on the last day and prepare for it by celebrating his first coming as a babe in Bethlehem. The way God wanted preparation for both his first and his last coming is the same – repentance. Pastor Smith defined it last Sunday, Pastor Sutton preached it on Wednesday. Repentance is certainty over our sin, terror over our deserved punishment and then certainty over our forgiveness in the blood of Christ shed to pay for our sin and open heaven to us. Peter prepares us for this daily repentance as we wait.

*"With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 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."* The Lord created the concept of time for us, didn't he? *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.....God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day"* (Genesis 1). Our eternal God created this world. He created the concept of time and how it is measured. Day Four he puts the *Sun, Moon and Stars* in place to help us mark the time, seasons, days. However, He is not bound by our estimations of it or opinions about it. He is eternal with no beginning. He gave a beginning to this world. He gave a beginning to us. He does not want us to perish forever because of the sins we have committed and the sinful nature passed on to us from our foreparents – Adam and Eve in the Fall into sin. Jesus Christ will return in all his glory, soon and very soon, yet God has given us time for a very gracious purpose. The mockers will see the apparent delay as proof "He doesn't exist. Or if he does exist, he's forgotten about you. He isn't coming back. Live for this life, don't waste your time on God." Jesus sees it a different way. God is patient, ***"not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."***

Can the Christian be tempted as he waits? Yes, in two ways. 1) We can be lulled into apathy and laziness because we feel no apparent urgency – like I’ve got a few hours before mom and dad get back, so I’ll play video games, read a book and putz around. I wait to pick up, take out the trash and wash the dishes until the last minute, and then... surprise! “Mom, Dad, I didn’t think you were returning so soon!?!” They reply, “we said it would be 9:00pm.” We say, “It’s 9:00pm already. “I’m so sorry.” But it’s too late. In your life, have you been waiting to spend time in God’s Word, to exercise your faith and your Christian responsibilities and duties, avoiding God’s good commands? Have you been putzing around with everything that distracts, avoiding the one thing needful for you and your family?

2) We forget who God has made us and what we’re here for. Maybe it doesn’t happen overnight. Media and social media display a picture of the perfect life, full, lots of experiences, never a dull moment, ready and willing for everything and anything – the next adventure, but it doesn’t show you what makes you ready for eternity. It only shows you who the world thinks you should be or what your sinful nature thinks you deserve. Jesus gets lost or at least lost sight of, and you are in danger of hell. The face we portray to the world belies the hurt, pain and emptiness inside. Our growing weaker in the faith isn’t always recognized overnight, but often the rude awakening comes when suddenly we look in the mirror and we don’t look much like Jesus, only a bunch of cut out ads pasted over us of who we think we should be. What lies has the world woo-ed you into buying or running after? What weakness and atrophy of soul are you in danger of because “we’ll worry about that later.”?

Make no mistake. Jesus, our God in the flesh, will return to judge all things and to destroy this present world by fire. Stop buying the lies of this world. Wake up from your slumber and the hypnosis of this world, dear Christian. All the marvels of God’s creation we see in this world, all the marvelous deeds of mankind – from the skyscrapers of New York, to the super tall building in Dubai, to Panama Canal, to the telescopes and space station, all if it will be destroyed by fire in an instant. *“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?”*

Peter shakes us bluntly to prepare us - an Advent Blessing for us. *You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming... But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.* Peter says, don’t buy the lies about God not existing or Jesus not returning soon. Remember who you are! - A blood bought child of God. You were purchased at a price. You have been purchased for God from the debt you owed because of your sins by the blood of Christ – given for you. Your sins are completely forgiven and you are freed only through the life, death and resurrection of your Lord Jesus. You are his and on the last day he will bring us all home to him to be done with sin forever, done with the effects of sin, to live in true peace and in his love and light for eternity. Nothing is better than that. Nothing compares with that. So don’t love the world, or be lulled into laxity. Love people enough to share the Word with them. Love God enough to follow in his footsteps and be who he has made you, his child, learning from him and his Word, living for him by serving your neighbor.

*“Loved ones, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”* Be who you are in Christ - Loved by God, at peace with him. You are spotless. You are blameless. Now be who you are. How? Worship often, in this house and in your house. Be who you are in Christ. Gather with your fellow Christians whether digging deeper into God’s love in Bible class here or sharing God’s love at home with your spouse and children with a devotion. Love God. Love his Word. Love his people. Love those who are not God’s people so that they might come to know him. Why? Jesus has brought you to repentance and does so continually. Jesus has made you a witness with his Word and love to the world – coworkers, family, friends – his purpose through you is that others will see and come to repentance. Jesus is coming back soon. Isn’t that exciting? Now he gives us a bit more time here with purpose to live who we are so others will see. Why? **He doesn’t want anyone to perish.** Amen.