

## INI

2 Peter 3,3-14

2<sup>nd</sup> Last Sunday of the Church Year — 15 November 2009

**Greeting:** To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Amen.

We hear a portion of the Epistle lesson, which was read earlier:

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

**So far the reading. Let us pray:** Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

**Introduction:** There is an old joke concerning the difference between how God measures things and how we humans measure things.

A man is speaking with God and asks, “Lord, it is true that with You a thousand years is but a day?”

“Yes ,” replies God, “that’s correct.”

So the man continues, “So I guess it would also be true that with You a million dollars might just be a penny.”

God replies, “Yes, you could look at it that way.”

Now the man gets bolder and asks, “Well, Lord, could You lend

me a penny?”

“Sure,” replies God, “can you just wait until tomorrow?”

The joke, of course, is on the person who is trying to take advantage of God. But the joke underscores a truth, and that truth is that God measures time differently than do we.

In fact, even more important than measuring time, to God time has a purpose. This brings me to this morning’s sermon topic: “**The Purpose Of Time**.” I’ll divide this topic into three parts:

- 1) God Measures Time;**
- 2) Time Enough For Patience;** and,
- 3) Kingdom Time**

**1) God Measures Time.** We all measure time. If we cook, we sometimes set the timer so that we know that after a certain amount of time has elapsed, and at a certain temperature, what we’re cooking should be ready — be it a roast, a turkey, cookies, a casserole, whatever.

But measuring time is one of those things we have to learn.

Little children do not have a good sense of time. If you tell a little child of two or three years of age that Christmas is in about six weeks, they have no concept of how much time that it. They think that Christmas should be tomorrow!

On long car trips, it seems it does not take long for little children to ask, “Are we there yet?” Little children do not have a good concept of time.

In today’s epistle, St. Peter is rebuking scoffers who seemingly had fallen from the faith, but were still hanging around the congregation to

stir up trouble. These scoffers were like little children on a car trip, but with a difference. Instead of asking, “Are we there yet?” they asked, “Where is the promise of His coming?”

These scoffers had seen that some of their friends had died, had fallen asleep, and they had expected that Jesus would have come before that had happened.

From a human point of view, these scoffers were measuring time, but the time they were measuring was between the time Jesus had ascended into heaven and when He was going to return. But because God did not move according to their time table, they began to doubt. In fact, they did more than doubt, they fell into despair, and to cover this up, they began to mock, and to scoff, and to jeer at the very notion that Jesus was coming again.

Here they had fallen into great sin and vice, and Peter describes them in his first epistle as those who “walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority” (1 Peter 2,10). It seems as if they thought that if Jesus were not coming, then it did not matter how they behaved.

Peter, however, instructs his readers and us that the scoffers are false teachers who neither know how God measures time nor that with certainty Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Peter says:

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

God’s way of measuring time is not our way of measuring time. God sits enthroned above in the heavens and by His Word the heavens

were made. He sits and surveys eternity, and He can see both the beginning of all things and the end of all things.

In his comments, Peter is certainly paraphrasing Psalm 90:

For a thousand years in Your sight  
Are like yesterday when it passes by,  
Or as a watch in the night.  
You carry them away like a flood;  
They are like a sleep.  
In the morning they are like grass which grows up;  
In the morning it flourishes and grows up;  
In the evening it is cut down and withers.

The point which both Moses and Peter are making is that compared to God's measurement of time, we are like grass that flourishes in the morning but by evening is cut down and withers. Our life spans are like the flash of a camera or a snap of the fingers.

Now Peter's point here is to compare our limited concept of time with God's measurement of eternity. As a noted Lutheran theologian has said,

God's relation to time must never be confused with our relation to time . . . Peter does not say "A single day IS a thousand years and a thousand years ARE a single day." (Lenski, 1 Peter)

What this means is that evolutionists and their sympathizers are wrong to conclude that each day of creation in Genesis may be taken to be an immeasurable period of time; a day is a day. Also, millennialists are wrong in interpreting Revelation 20 to mean a thousand years.

But in our relation to Christ's coming again, we live in a time of Grace, so that God has:

**2) Time Enough For Patience.** God has time enough for patience to accommodate our brief lives.

God had time enough for patience to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to live among us. And Jesus had time enough for patience to redeem the time allotted to Him on this earth.

Jesus redeemed the time by redeeming us. He did this by living a sinless life and going to the Cross to pay our debt to sin, even the debt the scoffers incurred by mocking Him. And in rising for the dead, Jesus redeemed not only our time on this earth, but also our time to be with God in heaven for eternity.

In redeeming the time, in buying back time from sin, death, and the power of the devil, Jesus promised that one day He would return to redeem the whole of creation.

The redemption of the whole of creation is described in words which speak of burning a melting. This is the same idea of a refining fire.

When metal is heated to a high temperature, it is purified because the dross and impurities rise to the top and are skimmed off and cast out. All that remains is pure metal. This purity is now reshaped into a new heaven and a new earth, the new Jerusalem where God is pleased to dwell with His people forever.

And when the dross is removed, what awaits us? Listen to the words of the apostle John:

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. (Revelation 21, 4ff)

Wow! What a fantastic future. It puts life on this earth into perspective, doesn't it?

And of that day when Jesus is going to come again, no one knows. But God has patience. He has longsuffering, and this patience gives purpose to time itself.

This purpose that God has given to time is stated by Peter:

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

The purpose of time is that God wants all to come to repentance, confess their sins, and trust that Jesus has died and risen for them. And so enjoy the benefits of forgiveness, which gives life in this world and the world to come.

**3) Kingdom Time.** The time that God has redeemed through Jesus is Kingdom Time, time in which we live in God's Kingdom of Grace.

This is the Kingdom in which our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His Holy Word and lead a godly life, here in time and hereafter in eternity.

This is the Kingdom which comes to us because Jesus told His first disciples:

Go therefore and make disciples of every nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things which I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28,19-20)

The Kingdom comes to us because through God's Holy Word, the Holy Spirit has worked faith in our hearts. This Word of forgiveness gives life and salvation to all who believe. This Word of forgiveness is renewed as Jesus shares with us His true Body and Blood in Holy Communion.

In this time of grace, Peter asks, "What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?"

On the one hand, we could all look in the mirror and say, "Well, I guess I could do better." That's a fair enough assessment of all our lives. We could all be kinder, more generous, more upright, more devoted to our God and also to our neighbor — which is anyone besides ourselves.

But "what manner of persons we ought to be" is not a matter of pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. Rather, it is realizing that God in Jesus' Cross has pulled us up out of the depths of sins and spiritual death, so that we might walk in the newness of life He gives us in forgiveness.

We are renewed as we are forgiven.

And when we ponder that Word of forgiveness, we realize that we are walking in Kingdom time, and that God is patient with us each and every day. He is faithful, that as we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive.

This gives us the renewing power of Jesus, to shun the world and its ways — the ways of scoffing, of despair, and even, God forbid, of unbelief.

In faith, on the Last and Great Day, all that we have done in Jesus will stand and the rest will have been burned away. We shall be raised

by the power of Jesus Himself, Who, as He was raised from the dead, so shall raise up all who believe in Him to perfect newness of life forever, world without end.

**Conclusion:** Time in God has a purpose — God is willing to give us and the world time to repent, to believe that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that no one come to God the Father except through Him.

As we go through this life, awaiting the return of our Lord and Savior, we may be like little children on a long trip and ask, “Are we there yet?” Or, “How long, how much father?”

These are human questions to which our God in Christ gives us an answer of comfort. Jesus is with us, forgiving and renewing us. Thus, we are assured that however long or short our trip through this world is, we need not fear nor lose hope. For us and for all who believe, He has prepared that place, where He

... will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. (Revelation 21, 4ff). Amen.

Now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

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