

## Wait for It!

A sermon based on 2 Peter 3:8-14

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Doesn't it drive you insane? I've been just amazed to have seen pictures online of people with trees up, Christmas shopping done, presents wrapped, all under the tree, weeks before Thanksgiving. Are you kidding me?

Kids, doesn't it just drive you insane? Christmas is coming. But you have to wait until you can open your presents. It's not for another 18 days! Do you like waiting to open your presents? When I was growing up, with my dad being a pastor and having multiple services Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, kind of like we do here, we got really hard lessons in patience...couldn't open presents on Xmas Eve, couldn't even do it Christmas morning. We had to wait longer than even after church...we'd have lunch, and then we could finally open our presents. I'm fairly confident that if I had told that to Becky before we even got married, that might have been a deal breaker.

It's hard to wait...and not just for kids, either. Adults, have a winter vacation planned? Going to get out of the snow? Well, you're obviously not gone yet, you have to wait for it. Do you like waiting? And it's a little over 4 months before you get your tax return, and another 6 months after that before you get your PFD's again. But you have to wait for it...

We don't always like waiting. We're not always super patient. That even comes across in our conversations. We don't like waiting until it's our turn to talk, so we sometimes interrupt, or often think about our response while the other person is still speaking.

But God doesn't mind waiting. He even likes it. In spite of the wickedness and evil he sees take place in this world, in spite of the pain he sees us humans inflict on one another, he doesn't end the earth. At least, not yet... He's being patient.

And this morning we hear from the Apostle Peter again as he encourages us to be patient too. "Judgment Day is surely coming!" he reminds us, "But... wait for it...."

Now, I know children can be pests as they impatiently wait for Christmas to come, but today, I want to talk about some different pests...everyone's favorite, the gnat.

Do you know how long a gnat will typically live? A gnat's life span is about 4 months, but an adult only lives about 3-5 days. That means an entire adult gnat's life is over in 72-120 hours. So, maybe he learns to fly at 20 hours, goes to prom at 30, gets married at 45, starts having little gnat babies at 60, and then after a couple of days at most, he dies.

Now, we live 5,000-6,000 times longer than a gnat. If you were to say, "Christmas is coming soon!" to a gnat, what would he think? You call that soon? Two and a half weeks?! That's 3 or 4 generations of gnats!

Okay, so the analogy is a bit goofy. But that's kind of what it must be like for God. "Judgment Day is coming soon! At any time now!" he says in his Word. In Matthew's gospel, when Jesus was talking about signs pointing to the end of the world, he said, "When you see all these things, you know that it is near,

right at the door.” What he meant was that even right now, he’s standing at the gates of heaven, ready to appear in glory at a moment’s notice. But almost 2,000 years have passed. Dozens of generations have passed! Countless numbers of people have sworn, “Any day now, you just wait and see.” And still, Judgment Day hasn’t come.

So, what’s the hold up? I mean, we get impatient and start asking to see the manager if we have to wait three or four minutes for our food to come after ordering at our favorite fast food joint. And so for us, 2000 years and still no return seems like a long time. It seems like God is running extremely late.

But what we might not realize is exactly what Peter talks about here when he says, “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.” What we might not realize is that God doesn’t view time the way that we might. He’s not constrained to our concept of time. He’s in eternity. He sees the beginning. He sees the end. He sees all of it. And so, as far as God is concerned, he’s right on schedule.

Unfortunately, he’s not on our schedule. Last week in Bible Class, where we’ve been studying the book of Philippians, we talked a little bit about something Paul said while he was under house arrest. He wrote about a struggle: “I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.”

Do you get what he was talking about? His question really was, “Would it be better for me to die or to stay alive?” And so the question we asked in class was, “Can it ever be God-pleasing to want to die?” because it sure seems as though that’s what Paul wanted.

But maybe we don’t even need to take it that far. But has there ever been moments where you’ve wished that God would take it all way, where you’ve hoped, either outwardly or inwardly, that Jesus would just come back right now because things are getting out of hand?

Jesus is coming back. But he’s not coming back on your schedule. When you’re hurting and in pain, that can be discouraging. When we go through trials in this life, like job loss, serious medical issues, financial difficulties, relationship struggles, even just the problems that come up day after day, knowing that God’s not here yet can be discouraging. When the specific temptations you’re constantly fighting against seem to be gaining the upper hand and it’s looking like it’s a fight you can’t win, knowing that God’s not here yet to bail you out can be discouraging.

And even more, it can be frustrating. I think every one of us would be lying if we said at one point or another, we weren’t wishing that the end was here. But it’s not. Not yet. So we have to wait for it... That’s the hard part. Because we’re aware of what kind of temptations can come while we wait. Not just frustration with God or discouragement. But doubt...thinking God doesn’t care...he’s apathetic to our cause...he’s powerless to help...doubt that he’s even coming back. The waiting can lead to apathy. “If he’s going to be a while, and it really seems like that’s the case, then why not give in to sin?”

It’s hard to keep waiting and to remain faithful while doing so, but make no mistake. He is coming. Like a thief. Like a fire, as Peter writes. Remember the fires of the past couple of summers to tear through the Interior? Those will be like a matchstick lit and burnt out compared to the fire that is to come when God’s patience finally runs out and when he returns.

Then we won't have the chance to say, "Um, God, it's looking like today's not a good day for me. Maybe come back next Thursday so I can get everything in order?!?" There will be a horrible fate for those who aren't prepared. It will be a day of disaster like we talked about last week, with Jesus coming to rain down eternal destruction and flood the earth in judgment.

God won't be coming back based on our schedule. He will come back right on his schedule. Why hasn't he returned yet? It isn't because God is slow. He's patient. As Peter writes, "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." Did you hear that? "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." God is waiting for more to come to faith that they might be spared of that disaster.

Thank God he's patient. Otherwise, we might not even be here. What if God would have said to Adam and Eve as soon as they ate the forbidden fruit, or to the Israelites whenever they took God's deliverance for-granted, or to you and me every time we sin, "That's it, I'm coming right now, you're sinning"? It would be hell for us.

But God is patient. He loves us. He doesn't want us to perish. So, in his patience, God sent Jesus the first time. And Jesus, in his patient love, he lived a perfect life of love for us. And then, in his patience love, so that we would not perish, Jesus perished for us. He suffered the consequences of eternal death in hell for us. And in his patient love, Jesus rose back to life, to show us there's one more victory we have to look forward to, the final victory when he comes to take us home to heaven.

By the grace of God, he's coming back a second time. And we, we wait for it. But what do we do while we wait?

Let's see what Peter writes, **"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12as 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. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 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."**

While we wait, we live holy lives. If God's being patient, and it's not your time for him to take you home, then you live a holy life. I mean, we look forward to that day, when he will come back. There's a new home for us who are righteous through Jesus. Friends, even right now, look forward to it like you look forward to a holiday or a vacation or a bonus. But this vacation will never end!

But while you wait, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, at peace with him. This doesn't come by your efforts, or by cleaning up your act, but by keeping your trust in Jesus who makes you spotless, blameless, and at peace with him. But this, in turn, will make you want to also be what he's already declared you to be and to strive for spotlessness.

And we wait. But did you also know we have the opportunity to speed things up? How can we do that? Well if God's waiting for more to come to faith, let's share the Gospel that brings more to faith! Jesus even said that the Gospel would go to the ends of the earth. And it has already. But let's keep sharing it!

As we do – God keeps in our faith, and we keep sharing the faith – we’ll be ready as we continue to... wait for it. Then his return won’t be like a thief in the night to us, but more like a father. We won’t be filled with shock and dread. Instead, that day will be like a beloved father who finally comes home from a lengthy business trip, bursting suddenly through the door, arms wide open to his children, pockets bulging with treats. His children’s hearts will be filled not with terror but delight. “Father! You’re finally here!”

John the Baptist prepared the way for our Savior’s first coming. God’s Word and his loving patience have prepared us for the second one. Wait for it! Daddy’s almost here! We’re almost home! Amen.