

Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent, December 9, 2020

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## The Lord Is Not Slow to Fulfill His Promise

2 Peter 3:8–14

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<sup>8</sup>But do not overlook this one fact, 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 to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

<sup>11</sup>Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! <sup>13</sup>But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

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The Lord is *not* slow to fulfill His promise, St. Peter tells us (v 9), but He sure seems slow. We don't like to wait and we're no good at it. "Have it *RIGHT NOW*" is the motto of our age. Want something? There's next-day or same-day delivery. Credit even lets you have it now but pay for it later. Hungry? Take your pick of fast food, find a vending machine, or throw something in an instapot. Forget the slow cooker or the need to plan! Bored or anxious? It's so easy to amuse ourselves to death on any number of devices, by binge watching something, or by falling down internet or social media rabbit holes. Tired, in pain, or just feeling off? No need to wait for time to heal that wound, you can probably find a pill for that.

But, like it or not, "Have it *RIGHT NOW*" isn't God's motto. Your God isn't a vending machine. He's more like a farmer—patiently working with the different seasons until it's time for the harvest. Or like a craftsman—taking time to work with the grain as He shapes and forms things. As Isaiah says, "**We are the clay, and You are our potter; we are all the work of Your hand**" (Is 64:8). And what about the Christian life? The Christian life resembles being in a smoker more than being in an instapot. There are no

hacks or shortcuts for the spiritual life. It takes time for the Word to work on us. It takes time for the Holy Spirit to penetrate us, work through us, season and flavor us the right way. **“For my thoughts aren’t your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD”** (Is 55:8).

That’s where Advent comes in. It reminds us that we are waiting. It also reminds us that waiting isn’t necessarily bad. How different Christmas would be without the slow build up and anticipation of Advent! The disciplines of this season take time and demand that we wait. One candle a week on the Advent wreath. One devotion a day around the table. One window at a time for the calendar. Praying and memorizing Scripture take time and repetition. They can’t be done in a hurry. And, fasting, too, is all about waiting and delaying and retraining our appetites to taste and see that the Lord is good. **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly** (Col 3:16), St. Paul says.

St. Peter describes us Christians as waiting people. The Advent season with its slow roll-out and patient practices helps us look forward to what is coming. And what is that? We are **waiting for the coming of the Day of God** (v 12). We are **waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells** (v 13). Sure, I say it too: We can’t wait! But we are waiting and we must wait. We have no choice. The only question is this: Will we wait patiently or impatiently? Unwillingness to wait with God brings disaster. Every human attempt to make a heaven on earth brings us closer to a living hell.

As Christians, then, we are waiting on God to act. We are waiting for Him to make the move. St. Peter makes clear that the Day is coming. No matter what anyone says, it will come. **“Then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed”** (v 10). What looks to us like slowness is, to God, merely patience. The delay in the Day of the Lord reflects His character. We are hasty people. We rush about. We want to make things happen right now. But God is **“merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness”** (Ex 34:6). As St. Peter says, **“[He] is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance”** (v 9). Toward *you*. He wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. Do you remember how long Noah waited while he built the ark? Probably many decades! Why? Because God is patient. Because of His desire to save.

Waiting, however, does not mean twiddling our thumbs or sitting on our hands. For St. Peter, it means that we are to be people whose lives are marked by **holiness and godliness** (v 11). **Since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace** (v 14). This isn’t about turning back inward on

ourselves. What is it that marks our lives as holy and godly? What makes us without spot or blemish and at peace? It is the sacrifice of Christ! The blood of God's lamb! And this *is* something God gives to us *RIGHT NOW* even while we wait. Behold, this is the body and blood of the One coming again in glory!

Even as we wait for the new heavens and the new earth, we already know what the new creation will be like. It will be like our Lord Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. Death holds no power over Him. There is no sin in Him. Righteousness dwells in Him, even as it will dwell in the new heavens and the new earth to come. And this is the very same Jesus Christ who gives Himself to you tonight, so that as we wait for Him we also wait in Him. The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise, but He is patient, merciful and gracious, giving you and all the repentant His salvation, so that you might live with Him there forever in the home of righteousness.

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The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

*Phil 4:7*

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