

2 Peter 3:8

Second Sunday of Advent Year B

December 6, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

*Introduction: Waiting is not always wasting time.*

On this second Sunday of Advent we consider that waiting is not wasting time. This runs counter to our fast-moving culture. We usually are in a hurry to get things done, and that is not always bad. Such people are often productive, but I was in a meeting recently and someone reminded me that we need to slow down the pace, be quiet and reflect if we want to grow, spiritually. So we try to slow down and reflect that Advent anticipates the birth of Jesus, the moment when the Creator entered creation, and when the temporal and the eternal intersected. Years later, Peter, toward the end of his life, reminded us of the wisdom of waiting on the Lord, and that the eternal and the temporal would intersect again. When it happens, it will happen quickly.

*Set the stage*

Like 2 Timothy, 2 Peter is a letter written by a man who knows that he does not have many days left before entering eternity, so his focus is on essentials. He addresses skeptics that note that Jesus has not returned in a manner of years by writing that our Lord dwells in eternity, not just infinity past and future. He dwells in a perpetual "present" which allows Him to access any moment in time at any time. When He does act, He will act quickly.

*Everything is dependent upon the Lord, and is temporary, even the earth and sky.*

In verse seven Peter wrote, "But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Echoing what is written in Hebrews and other parts of Scripture, the universe, as we understand it, is not only created but is sustained on an ongoing basis by the power of God, and it is established that there will be an end to this, followed by a new heavens and a new earth. Mentioned also in Psalm 90 (verse 4), the idea that everything is temporary, and in fact, will be dispatched quickly once the Lord acts, should color our understanding about what is permanent and what is not. To be invested in this world ultimately is comparable to locking oneself up in a burning house. So what is our response to all this, from the great apostle writing at the end of his days on earth?

*Application: holy conduct and godliness*

The application is in the rest of the chapter, but let me read verse 11; "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought

you to be in holy conduct and godliness,.." The phrase, "holy conduct" is referred as "conversation" in older translations. Peter mentions this in his first epistle (1 Peter 1:15) when he wrote, "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'be holy, for I am holy.'" (this is a quote from Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7) At the root of the word translated, "conduct" contains the prefix for "again" and the verb "to overturn". We focus on eternity and it should cause us to change consistently. So, our growth as Christians involves ongoing change that is the result of an unchanging God. I am reminded of the words from the hymn; "and the things of earth, will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

One example of our response to this is your attendance at worship. The very fact that you think it important enough to take the time makes a statement. So, "conversation" is speech and actions regularly examined and overturned and changed under the scrutiny of an eternity that outlives even the earth and stars. It all rests on the power and timing of God, and only God is eternal. We enjoy eternity with the Lord, but we are dependent upon Him throughout eternity. We do not have eternity within ourselves. It is not within our power alone to be eternal.

### Conclusion

As mentioned before, Advent reminds us that the birth of Jesus comes at an intersection of eternity and the temporal. It is an eternity that is greater than and outlasts even the earth and the skies. In light of eternity we are to change consistently, reviewing our lifestyle, our "conversation" so that our energy is spent growing in the ways of the Holy Spirit and helping others do the same.

