

Sunday, December 6, 2020 – Second Sunday of Advent
“Waiting and Hastening”

2 Peter 3: 8-14

Rev. Derek S. Klemm, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV
Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

I've heard it said before about particular preachers that they are “so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly use.” While calling anyone “of no use” is not good under any circumstances you can get the sentiment, can't you? If you've ever sat through a sermon – and I'm sure it's happened before for you in mine, and wondered, “What in the world is he getting at, what is the point?” then you know what I mean.

That is to say that while there's a lot that preachers are working on and balancing out when they prepare a sermon you sure hope that *something* applied from the text hits the people hearing the message in their lived experience! The text will show us our sin, or the preacher will point to Jesus for hope and comfort, or we'll come away with a new understanding of how God is helping us to love another person. Some will hit more than others.

And yet texts like ours from 2 Peter can be challenging precisely because they concern something deeply heavenly minded and outside our lived experience. None of us has lived through the end of the world. It's my prayer today that you'll feel encouraged by the profound earthly use of this important teaching.

The first thing that might strike you is that this text is foreboding, is it not? The world will end, everything around us will be consumed in fire. The second unsettling thing that may occur is that it appears Peter is advocating escapism. Wait, look forward to what's going to happen when Jesus comes again. One might be tempted to ask, “And what about today?” And it's a fair criticism that many level against the big “C” church – so heavenly minded, so focused on the world to come, thinking forward to when Jesus returns, that we're of no earthly use.

I think of that guy who lives for the weekend. You may know them... in fact, you may know them VERY well! All week long they're just waiting for the end of work or school on Friday, putting up with the week, wishing the hours and days away until they can be free of their obligations. Have you ever told yourself everything will be fine once you “get through this one thing,” or finish this project? We all have moments like that, but if it becomes a lifestyle we're

wishing away the time that we have. It's not a good way to live. Is Peter suggesting we just wish the world away until Jesus comes again?

Ours is a life lived in tension. Theologians call it the now/not yet. Jesus is already resurrected and ruling over all things, including your life because you've been adopted in baptism. And yet there's still sin in the world and so many things are not the way they ought to be. It's right and good that we long and look forward an end to sin, pain, disease and conflict. That longing by its' very nature includes a heavenly mindedness.

Our middle school Confirmation kids just finished their unit on the Lord's Prayer. It happens ever year – I see a couple people get this bug-eyed look of surprise when I teach them that there are two different places in the Lord's Prayer where we're praying for the end of the world! Yes, that same scary sounding day with the creation as we know it being burned away. We pray *for* that? Yes – “Thy kingdom come.” Ultimately, Christ's rule will come in full, the “not yet” will become now, on the day when Jesus returns. “Deliver us from evil,” – this ultimately will happen when God brings us to Himself in heaven.

We look forward with this eagerness – some translations say “hastening” to the return of Jesus because it's everything being put back the way it's supposed to be! What may strike some as escapism is in fact biblical hope – the resurrection of dead bodies put back together with their souls to live eternally and perfectly with God and one another. This heavenly mindedness is of the greatest possible earthly use – it's remaking the world the way it was always supposed to be to begin with, without sin! But don't fall into the trap that talking about the end of the world is impractical heavenly mindedness.

First, it's a direct outgrowth of what Christ has done for you. The forgiveness won through your sins being nailed with Jesus on the cross, the new life you have tied to Jesus' burial and resurrection in your baptism, the strength, help and encouragement to live changed and hope-filled lives for today are all because of Jesus.

And second, now that we are already given these wonderful promises by God, He gives us something to do while we we're waiting and hastening, eagerly expectant of Jesus' return. Peter tells us one of the reasons Jesus hasn't come back yet, something many of us might consider frustratingly slow, is because he would have it that no one perish. There are people

who don't know him yet who will be saved and he's going to give them every last chance to know Him – and He's using you and me to be the ones to share that message! Whenever that time comes according to how God decides it, it'll happen suddenly.

So too, we wait living lives of holiness and godliness, being diligent to be found without spot or blemish and at peace. Vigilance can feel exhausting, but God puts structure and rhythm in place for us while we wait to strengthen us, shore us up and encourage us. One of them is what you're doing right now, gathering in worship around His Word. Another happens when you hear those words of forgiveness of your sins. Still another later today when we receive the Lord's Supper. This is heavenly mindedness with profound earthly use – day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute application of God's timeless, heavenly truths to your guilt and your shame, your relationships and your work, our heart and your attitude. Rather than waiting and wishing our life away on heavenly minded stuff that's of no earthly use God places us here to keep getting filled up with His forgiveness, to love and help each other and to share this Good News with others because he'd have that no one perish! The heavenly purposes drive the earthly playbook, all powered by God's constant showering of forgiveness in our lives each and every day. We need neither to wish our lives away for what is to come or to ignore the end of the world heavenly things that haven't happened yet. We can eagerly look forward while we wait and live to God's plan in the world today. In our lives now and in the age to come, we joyfully, hopefully look to God and say, "Thy kingdom come." The day is coming soon! In Jesus' name, Amen.