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Advent 2 • 2 Peter 3:8–14 • December 7, 2014

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The seven verses just preceding our text describe a cultural milieu that seriously doubts the existence of God or a literal judgment day. This first century attitude fits the current context where “[*many*] see no tangible evidence of the Lord’s second coming and thus doubt its reality. As a result, they see no need for moral restraint because they deem themselves free of accountability, since Christ said the judgment would take place upon his second coming.”¹ Today, the culture that is constantly encouraging people to follow their own desires, cater to their own lusts, and live as though the world will carry on forever (3:4). But, the world will not carry on forever, just as it has not existed from eternity. Just as God created the heavens and the earth at a specific time (3:5) and sent a flood as judgment upon the world in the past (3:6), so God has set an appointed time for the return of Christ and the final judgment (3:7).

Today’s text is not answering the scoffers of verses 1–7, but instructing the faithful regarding the concept of time—human and divine. The faithful are directed to remember how God is eternal and doesn’t fit human categories of time. Verse 8 stresses this: “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”(emphasis added). A human perspective is captive within time and can only encompass a limited number of years; God is eternal with a divine perspective that encompasses all things at once. This difference has implications for how the believer understand God, his promises, and his mission. Any perceived delay resulting in impatience would be from a human point of view; however that same span of time from God’s point of view is undeserved patience “not

wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (3:9). Is that not divine love demonstrated daily, for us who believe and for the salvation of others who have not yet believed?

The first two weeks of Advent combine elements of Christ’s second coming with his first coming in Bethlehem. From a human perspective it is traditionally a time of expectant waiting and preparation for Christmas. But, based on our text, could Advent also be a time to prepare the world for Christ’s second coming? This text enables the preacher to remind the congregation that as believers in Christ, we are already prepared for the end of the world by Christ’s death and resurrection (Titus 3:5–7, Romans 6:3, 5, and Ephesians 2:8–9). Since this is true, then the importance of diligence in living lives of holiness and godliness (3:11) is not to somehow improve upon one’s own salvation; rather, it is for the sake of the scoffers who do not yet believe, the neighbors who have not heard, and for mutual encouragement among the faithful. God spreads his gospel through the lives of his saints on earth, the baptized, to demonstrate His love for the lost: “. . . not wanting that any should perish apart from Christ” (3:9).

The goal of the sermon is not for the hearer to make time for witnessing and outreach as if it is another thing the baptized must do; rather, witnessing and outreach should happen naturally by how Christians live all the time. Scoffers take notice when believers are living differently. When the baptized devote themselves to sacrificial acts of kindness, forgive freely, care for the poor, obey the laws, help the stranger and the co-worker, and generally invest in the lives of those around them—people notice, especially unbelievers. Such holiness and godliness will not go unquestioned in today’s world—and that is a goal God has for his people—to be witness of his gospel in preparing the world for the upcoming advent of Christ.

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