

Title: The Right Side of HIS-Story  
Text: 2 Peter 3:11-13  
Theme: The Day of the Lord  
Series: 2 Peter  
Prop Stmt: Now matters because of then

Read Text:

Several years ago, I was in an elders' meeting when one of the guys looked at his phone and promptly excused himself. A few minutes later another guy did the same, and then another. I checked my phone and saw that Cathi had texted me a video of our neighbors going down our flooded street in innertubes. It was a once in a 100-year rain and the streets were flooded as were thousands of homes. I waded home with water at times coming up to my chest. It was surreal. A few weeks ago, another once in a 100-year rain hit our area. It's been the third one in about 15 years. Once again, several thousand homes were flooded. If you knew that 10" of rain was coming tonight and your street would flood and your basement would flood, would you do anything differently? If you knew and chose not to be ready, you would be a fool. What if you knew that a much greater storm was coming? It is.

In his 2<sup>nd</sup> epistle, Peter warns believers about the rise and influence of false teachers. One of the characteristics of false teachers is how they downplay the reality of the future, particularly the future reality of God's judgment and the end of the world as we know it. The day of the Lord will come and verse 10 says that it will come like a thief. It will come so quickly that in the moment you will not have time to prepare. But it will come, so you must be ready now. That makes sense, doesn't it? False teachers are going to emphasize your best life now because they don't want to talk about standing before God and giving an account of how they have twisted God's Word. But the end will come and here in the final section of Peter's letter he gives a good bit of attention to it. But, this is very important to note. The emphasis is NOT on trying to figure out when Christ will come back. The emphasis is on being ready, meaning living with eternal values right now. The return of Christ, the day of the Lord, or the day of God (as it is called here) demands that you...

**1. Reset your perspective, (11a)**

*Since all these things are thus to be dissolved....*

You know the future, now live like it. Reset your perspective because the end is coming. The dissolution of all things is not an if, it is a when. This world will not go on forever. Your life is short. Your life will come to an end. You need to live with the end in view. Every day you age you are one day closer to the end. The eczema that afflicts you is a reminder that your body has the seeds of decay and death in it. The tremors you feel, the stiffness of joints, the aches, the migraines, the need for glasses, for hearing aids, for dental work, for nerve damage, for joint replacement, for heart issues, etc. are all very obvious reminders that your body will wear down. You are mortal. Accept it. Embrace your mortality by resetting your perspective. In Isaiah

14, the prophet records a taunt against the king of Babylon who though he is the most powerful ruler in the world, will one day die, just like everyone else. The people whom he killed will laugh at him when he joins them in death. Look at you. *"You too have become as weak as we! You have become like us!"* (v.10) In v.11, he is sarcastically welcomed to death with this gruesome greeting, *"maggots are laid as a bed beneath you, and worms are your covers."* What is the point? You do not need to fear him. He will not last. But, you need to be concerned about God. That is Peter's point. The day of the Lord is a fixed certainty. The heavens will pass away with a roar. The heavenly bodies will be burned up. The earth and the works that are done it will be exposed. Romans 14.12 says, *"So then each of us will give an account of himself to God."* Earlier in Romans 2, the Bible says that God will judge *"the secrets of men by Christ Jesus."* SINCE this is going to happen. Since you are going to answer for your life, how does that shape your life now? SINCE this is going to happen, what are you doing that is preparing yourself for it? I will come back to this in the 3rd point.

## **2. Reset your heart, (11b-12)**

Peter asks us a question and then he answers it with authority. He asks us because he wants us to connect the dots, but he wants to make sure that we connect them correctly. In view of the fact that the end is coming, *"what sort of people ought you to be?"* The obvious answer is that if we lived with the end in view then you and I would live lives marked by holiness and godliness. What is it that will be exposed and judged? What is it that will be burned up and destroyed? What is it that will not last? It is the materialism, hedonism, self-worship and self-indulgence that is so pervasive in our world. This is not only wrong, it is futile. As followers of Christ, our lives advertise and point to another world. Our lives are to reflect the time when his kingdom comes and his will is done on earth as it is in heaven. We are to reset our hearts ...

### **A. By Pursuing holiness**

Someone did an analysis of obituaries over the last 50 years (I think it was) and determined that years ago obituaries focused more on the character of the person whereas now, they focus more on the accomplishments. Even in obituaries our focus has shifted more from what kind of a person we are (which would reflect a view toward the future) to what they accomplished (degrees, titles, awards) in this life. Degrees, titles, awards, toys and possessions are all going out to the curb. They will not last. If you know that and really believe that, then holiness and godliness become your passion.

Hebrews 12.14 - *"Strive for peace with everyone, and for holiness without which no one will see the Lord."*

What does that mean? How do you reset your life so that you are focused on holiness and godliness? The first thing I want to do is dispel the lie that holiness is a cross to bear in the sense that pursuing holiness is the pursuit of depression and self-punishment. (1 Peter 3.10-12)

- 1) The pursuit of holiness is the pursuit of joy.

Do you desire to love life? Keep your tongue from evil and from lying. Turn away from evil and do good. Joy is found in a clear conscience. Joy is found in being trusted by others. Joy is found in secure relationships because people know that you love them and do not talk about them behind their back or cheat on them. The pursuit of holiness is the pursuit of joy. In fact...

2) The pursuit of holiness is the pursuit of Christ,

Striving for holiness is pursuing Christlikeness. Do you want to pursue holiness? Pursue Christ. What does that mean? How do you do that? Read the gospels and pay careful attention to the demeanor of Christ. See how deeply he loves. See how patient he is. See how much he prays. See how truthful he is. Ask God to form these and grow these in you. He will. You cannot pursue Christ and hold on to stubbornness, pride and secret sins. What do you need to turn away from? Pursuing Christ means to pursue purity.

3) The pursuit of holiness is the pursuit of the pleasure of God in Christ.

The Father delights in his Son and he delights in those who are in Christ and who delight in Christ as well. We pursue holiness, not as a legal requirement, but as a desire to enjoy Christ. What good is it to have a relationship with someone if you don't enjoy it? Enjoy God's grace by enjoying God. Your pursuit of holiness reflects your treasuring of God and his pleasure in Christ.

#### **B. By anticipating the day of God. (12)**

Waiting means to anticipate. We look forward to the day of the Lord. We long for it and in longing for it, we remain alert. Jesus spoke emphatically to this in Matthew 24.36-44

*"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

In his 1<sup>st</sup> letter Peter wrote, "...be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." This week a grizzly bear wandered into a campsite near a small western town in Montana in the middle of the night. The campers thought the bear was after their food, so they secured their food and went back to sleep. The bear returned about an hour later and killed one of them.

Our lives as believers are to be marked by being on high alert for the attacks of our enemy as well as being on high alert for the return of Christ. They go together. One of the attacks of the enemy is to distract you from the certainty of Christ's return. I need to live today in anticipation of Christ's return. If I am not thinking about that, it is because I am thinking about something else which means that I have allowed lesser things to distract me. So, let me paraphrase, your adversary is prowling around looking for someone that he can distract from what really matters by getting him or her to be infatuated with lesser things. Have you let him be successful with your affections? Have you been asleep? What preoccupies you? Your appearance? Your boyfriend/girlfriend? Your kids/grandkids? Your dog? Your 401k? Your career, reputation? golf game, lawn, car, home, remodeling project? Your ability to manage the expectations and opinions of others? Are those things occupying too much of you? Trainers talk about muscle memory. The same thing is true about your thoughts. Your thoughts gravitate toward the topics that you have given the most amount of attention to. What is that for you? If you are not living in anticipation of the Day of the Lord, lesser things will take over. Anticipating the Day of the Lord will protect you from thinking that your happiness is bound up in any of those. None of those things will satisfy you over the long haul. And when you fail to live in view of the return of Christ, you are tempted to think that they are more valuable than what they are, or that your identity and meaning in life is bound to them.

Peter says that we are wait for and hasten the coming of the day of God. There is a sense in which the holiness and godliness of believers can accelerate the return of Christ. So, on the one hand, the return of Christ is an event established by God and because it is determined by him, it will happen. At the same time, God has fixed this date based in part on his willingness to be influenced by the prayers and longings of his people. For the last 2 weeks I have asked you this question: "If God answered all of your prayers today, would anyone come to faith in Christ?" A related question I need to ask is this: "If God answered all of your prayers today, would Christ return today?" Do you realize that the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last verse in the Bible quotes Jesus who said, "*Surely I am coming soon.*" Then there is this response. "*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*" We need to be faithfully thinking like this and praying for this.

Look at the end of v.12. "*the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!*" That sounds like global warming on steroids, right? Peter repeats what he said in v.10. The heavens as we know them, the earth as we know it is going to be destroyed by fire. If this is all that you know and all that you live for, that is terrifying. But, for the followers of Christ, this is not the end. We do not fear this event. We recognize that this has to happen before God creates a new heaven and a new earth.

### **3. The new heavens and new earth are coming. (13)**

What happened during the flood? The earth was destroyed in a sense. It's not as if the earth ceased to exist. Life on the earth was destroyed. Everything on the earth was affected. Since Peter uses this as an example of God's judgment in this text. I think that is helpful for how we are to understand this. The question is, is God doing to annihilate the earth and the heavens as we know them? Is the earth going to be like the Death Star in Star Wars and explode into

oblivion? Based on the words that Peter uses and other examples, I don't think that is the case. For example, what happened to the body of Jesus when he died? His body was buried. Did his body begin to decompose? However, that was completely reversed by his resurrection at which time Christ received a new body that will never age. Does your body age? Yes. When Christ returns, and our resurrection takes place, we will receive a new body that will never age. The old body will be re-created or re-constituted into a glorious body. (1 Corinthians 15) The resurrection of Christ is the pattern for our resurrection, Christ did not receive a new body in the sense that it was a completely different body. In other words, his old body was not in the grave and he got a brand-new body. His new body was his old body re-created. Since that is the pattern for the believer, I think that this likely what will happen to the heavens and the earth. I think that the fire of God's judgment will dissolve everything in the sense of wiping the slate clean. I do not think that the earth will be blown into oblivion and then God starts over. He will redeem the earth. He will recreate life on this earth and recreate the earth as it should be. This is so helpful for us. On the one hand, your body and this earth are going to deteriorate and die. On the other hand, your body and this earth are going to be resurrected, re-created and reconstituted to reflect the glory of Christ.

*According to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (13)* How does this inform our view of our bodies and this world? So, when Cathi gets frustrated with my choice of donuts over carrots, I can say, that this body is going to die anyway, it really doesn't matter what I eat. To which she can say that your body is a gift to you from God that you are a steward of and that gift is not just a temporary gift. As a believer it is the temple of the Spirit and yes, it is deteriorating, but will be resurrected and you are to live now in view of that day then. How are your choices now reflecting the value that God places upon your body? Realizing that this body is deteriorating and will die protects us from unnecessary despair over its demise. At the same time, realizing that this body will be resurrected motivates us to take good care of our bodies without worshiping them. Dying is a deep sorrow and we are right to mourn and lament. We grieve the loss of what was. But, death does not have the final word. And this corruptible body that dies will one day be raised incorruptible - i.e. incapable of experiencing any corruption.

The same thing can be said about the earth. This earth is going to burn up. Does that mean that I should let my house fall apart, pile junk in my yard, or not wash my clothes? No. The dissolution of the earth protects me from worshiping the earth and placing all of my hope here. At the same time, I can live on this earth now in such a way that how I treat the earth points to the new heavens and the new earth.

This is what the church is called to be and do. The new heavens and the new earth are coming. Righteousness will dwell there perfectly. Our life together now is to be a taste of that life then. Is it nice to take care of what the Lord has given us if you have a house, a car, a garden, etc.? Sure, but it is more important to be holy and godly and share the gospel, so that as many as possible will share in the new heavens and the new earth. There will be plenty of room and plenty of joy to be shared. We are to live lives that adorn the gospel so that we have opportunities to share the gospel.

If you are an unbeliever I can only imagine how you would be tempted to respond to this?

If you profess faith in Christ, but your perspective is owned by this life.

If you are a follower of Christ, can you pray for others?