



Sermon: What Does an Advent Believer Look Like? (Advent 2) - Pastor Todd Goldschmidt
Sunday 10:15 am – December 4th, 2011 – At [Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

2 Peter 3:8-14 - New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.^[a]

¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.^[b] That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

- a. [2 Peter 3:10](#) Some manuscripts *be burned up*
 - b. [2 Peter 3:12](#) Or *as you wait eagerly for the day of God to come*
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What would the word *advent* mean to you in this hypothetical quote from a major corporation's press release: "The advent of our new product line will ensure that we remain a key player in the marketplace for years to come"? It sounds like the word *advent* in this context might mean "arrival" or "unveiling," doesn't it? And it does! The "Advent season" heralds the start of a new Church year. During this season, we anticipate the first coming of the helpless Christ-child at a stable in Bethlehem as well as His second coming on the clouds of heaven with His army of angels to judge the living and the dead. Both comings of Christ are unveilings of a different sort: the first, a revelation of Him as the Savior of the world; the second, as the Judge of all mankind. Advent, then, is a time of repentant reflection & an eager anticipation of our heavenly hope. So,

WHAT DOES AN "ADVENT" BELIEVER LOOK LIKE?

Maybe we should ask a different question first: "What does an *Advent* God look like?" before we try to answer the question of what an *Advent* believer looks like. Peter gives us insight into both. Our text begins, "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord's not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He's patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." Apparently some in Peter's day were already growing impatient with God's patience. They wondered whether He'd ever keep His promise to come again to take them home to heaven. They were tired of the "mockers" who scoffed at their ludicrous hope of a life to come, followed "their own evil desires," and sneered, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4).

Sometimes we get impatient with God's patience too, especially when it comes to the ridicule or rejection we receive from those who think that we're crazy to believe the Bible's claims about the purposes of both advents of the Christ. To trust that He came initially to be our Savior from sin and death is ridiculous! To expect that He'll return on the Last Day to take us home to heaven is even more pathetic. "Live and let live," skeptics cry. "Coexist," the bumper sticker blares in bright blue letters made from the symbols of every major religion. Other things in life frustrate us, too, and can lead us to think that God has forgotten us despite the psalmist's promise the "the LORD will not reject his people . . . he will never forsake his inheritance" (94:14). Lingered illness, chronic pain, agonizing addictions, seemingly never-ending arguments with your spouse, a bond with your child so strained you wonder whether you'll ever feel close again can drive us to despair.



Even the saints in heaven seem frustrated with God’s forbearance when it comes to the timing of His return! In Revelation, John was given a vision in which he “saw under ^(heaven’s) altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained calling out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer.” But how long they wondered? John tells us: “until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed” (6:9-11).

Friends, God’s timetable and ours are often out of sync. To Him, “a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.” We can’t even wrap our head around what that means. There’s one reason, and one reason only, why He is delaying His return according to the Apostle Peter: “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” God “our Savior . . . wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:14). It’s that simple. God is waiting for the full complement of His elect to be brought to faith in Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Then “the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.” At Jesus’ second “advent,” He will come to Judge mankind.

So there you have it: our God is a patient, long-suffering God of full and free forgiveness; a gracious God, who desires the eternal salvation of every sinner. Why wouldn’t He? His only Son gave His life to redeem all mankind from death and the devil—even those who scoff at us and mock us for our misguided beliefs. There’s nothing foolish, though, about trusting that the burden of our guilt has been removed or living with the certain hope of spending eternity in a place where “God will dwell with us,” where “He will wipe every tear from our eyes” and where “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” because “the old order of things has passed away” as John describes heaven in his vision in Revelation. Who wouldn’t want that? We do! So do those we know, love and work with. If you asked them, I bet they’d say they do.

As a rule, folks feel like nothing much changes. Except for new technologies, things sort of plug along the way they always have and seemingly always will. That can be a comforting worldview. Radical change disrupts society’s equilibrium, and nothing would upset man’s apperception more than the arrival of Christ in judgment! Peter demolishes this philosophy by disproving the premise on which it rests. Before our text he writes that such skeptics “deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water, and that “by these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” One day God will roll up the sky and ignite our planet with a fire hot enough to melt the elements that compose it! Paul puts it this way: “While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”



Almost everything you purchase these days has an expiration date—even warranties. So does this planet. But its expiration date isn't printed or posted for people to see. On that Day, "the earth and everything in it will be exposed" for what they are: only temporary. The Advent reality is that the world's days are numbered. Its expiration date is part of the salvation story. Christ's return is promised and certain. Its date was established before the world's creation. When He comes, our wait will be over and we, the redeemed of God, will rejoice at our arrival in the "new heaven and . . . new earth, the home of righteousness"! What a glorious homecoming that'll be!

So, "What does an Advent believer look like?" Peter tells us: "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming . . . (for) in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him." Our lives can serve to attract unbelievers much like bright red sugar water draws hummingbirds to the feeders outside our windows. When they see that our lives are characterized by the "fruit of the Spirit," that "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23) flow from us like living water to thirsty souls, they may get curious about what makes us tick. When they see that we give due diligence to our job-related tasks even when the boss's eye isn't on us, they may wonder what inspires such a faithful work ethic. Then we can introduce them to Jesus and invite them to learn of His love!

Do we always live "holy and godly lives" in view of God's judgment? Hardly! Not a day goes by—who am I kidding?—not an *hour* goes by when I don't do, say or think something that I'm ashamed of. Reliving the events of any given day provides me with plenty of opportunity to repent of my wrongs, confess my sins and failures, review my shortcomings and admit my lack of love toward those the Lord has so graciously put into my life. Ah, how strong my spirit; but, oh, how frail my flesh! With the Apostle Paul I must lament, "What a wretched man I am!" and cry out in near-despair, "Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24). Thank God that He's revealed the only right answer to that anguished question! Paul provides it in the very next verse of his letter to the Romans: "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Through my baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, I have been "clothed with Christ" (Gal. 3:27). In that "washing of water through the word" Christ "cleansed" me of my guilt before God and "made me holy" in His sight! He did the same for you! As baptized believers, Christ "presented us to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" brothers and sisters and co-heirs of heaven with Him! (Eph. 5:25-27).



As those who have been declared “holy and blameless” because of Jesus, we can “look forward to the day of God and speed its coming” through our fervent prayers and our faithful witness. Remember: the reason the Lord is delaying His return is so that the full company of His elect might be gathered into His kingdom by the life-giving, faith-engendering power of His Spirit. “Faith comes from hearing the message” (Rom. 10:17) of God’s sacrificial love in Christ! That’s the means through which He works—along with Baptism and Holy Communion—to bring about the necessary spiritual transformation that Scripture calls being “born again” and that theologians refer to as “regeneration.” The Bible says of all who trust in Jesus: “You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Pet. 1:23).

We are Advent believers. For us there is a very practical side to the advent of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. He is there to convince us that Jesus truly does have “all authority on heaven and earth” (Matt. 28:18), and that as His co-laborers and joint heirs, we are no longer under Satan’s thumb. He’s under ours. We represent the One with all authority, even over the devil and his demons! So onward and upward, fellow soldiers of Christ! Reach out with His redeeming grace until the full number of His saints have been gathered into His kingdom! And then, let the never-ending party of light, love and laughter in our living Lord’s presence above begin! I can’t wait! Amen.