

Two weeks ago at the 9am service while preaching on 1 Thess 5:1-11, and the thought that we don't know when the return of Jesus as King and Judge will be, I mentioned that because it hasn't happened we may be tempted to think it never will. I said that as Kettering Town had never got into the Football league it was easy to think it might never happen but it could! As you can imagine there was a lot of scoffing at the idea of Kettering getting into the football league.

Peter in 2 Peter 3:2 speaks about scoffers and about those who said the return of Jesus in glory would never happen.

In the light of this Peter reaffirms v10 "but the day of the Lord will come" and in answering the scoffers he makes a number of points which I think are relevant for us today.

### **1. God's patience causes the delay v8-10**

As we look at it, it has been 2000 years and he hasn't returned, even British Gas are quicker than that. But the point is and even more so in today's world that we are impatient. We want everything now. We want the same day delivery of things we order on line. We want to speak to someone on the phone now not in ten minutes. Delay and waiting for things is not on our modern agenda. So to say 2000 years later Jesus has not returned we see as "it ain't gonna happen". God's word through Peter gives us a different perspective, "a thousand years are like a day" (v8). So a couple of thousand years is just a couple of days. But why hasn't Jesus returned well as Peter points out not because God is slow to keep a promise. I remember reading a couple of years ago about a young man in the USA who as a child understood his father's desire to own a 1957 Chevy Bel Air and many years later on his father's birthday was able to give him the car, which he'd actually had shut up in a garage for two years waiting for the right day.

Peter says God is not slow rather he is patient. God is patiently waiting. He is waiting to give time for people to hear of his love and to respond. Now this is not the waiting of the parent who counts to three to give the child chance to stop the bad behaviour or be punished. Nor is it the gritting of the teeth and counting to ten of impatience and temper disguised as something else. This is the patience of God which is perhaps best described in the word long suffering. Perhaps you have been down Whitehall or some such place and see the guardsman on his horse. You stand and watch as the tourists swarm round the man and horse having photographs taken patting the horse and all sorts and the man and beast just stand and take it all. That is a little example of long suffering and while it is of course inadequate as we think of God it gives us a glimpse in. God sees the evil and sin of people he hates their sin but in love and understanding he bears it patiently looking to a time when some will realise the error of their ways and repent. That is why Christ has not yet returned in order to give sinful humanity time to come to their senses and repent. In his love God does not wish any to

perish and so time is given. This is summed up in v15, “bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation.”

God is patient. He is giving us time to repent rather than, as some of us saw at 9am last week, bring us to judgement. If you missed the sermon it’s on the website. So if you have yet to come to faith let me encourage you to use that time wisely. Let me encourage you to think about your life, to think about God and his love for you and to get things in order.

What Peter was saying is God is not slow rather he is patient but one day he will keep his promise and Jesus will return.

However we should note how awesome and awful that day will be v10, “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.” I put the two words together awesome and awful. In these last days we have seen the awesome and awful power of flood water as it has swept through towns and villages in Cumbria with devastating effect. Cars swept away, roads and bridges destroyed homes and businesses flooded. It is awesome to see the power of the water and through that we are reminded of the power of God but it is also awful in that the water can destroy people buildings and so on. That day when Christ returns will be awesome in the great display of the power of God but awful in the destruction of the world and of many people.

In the light of this inevitable return Peter asks v11, “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?”

The return of Jesus will bring destruction so how should they and we live as we wait for that day? How can we be prepared for it so that it will not mean destruction but joy as we enter into eternal life?

In answer he gives three things that they and we should be or do.

## **2. the Christian life as we wait v11-13**

### **a. the lives we lead v11b**

so what do you do while you are waiting? I remember once hurting my arm. I did it about tea time and didn’t worry much. During the evening it was giving me a bit of gip so much so that I was struggling to throw well in the Aunt Sally match. That night in bed I felt something was wrong so early next morning I took myself to A&E but knowing I’d have to wait I took coffee and a book with me so I could use the time. Peter doesn’t envisage them just sitting around waiting for Jesus to return. In v14 they are told to make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.” and here in v11 “you ought to live holy and godly lives”.

You ought to live holy and godly lives. Peter was encouraging these Christians to work at living holy lives at making sure their lives were godly.

I went to a restaurant last week and one person I was with asked if she could sit with her back to the restaurant so that she could focus on the people at the table and not be distracted by the other diners and staff moving round. I think part of what Peter meant when he encouraged these readers to live holy and godly lives was to have focus. Jesus will return he is saying and with that focus our lives should be always fitting for him when he returns.

The writer to the Hebrews encouraged his readers to “fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2) that is to be living with our focus on Jesus and ignoring the distractions of life which may take our attention elsewhere and result in our living lives which are not holy.

Friends we know all this. We know God wants us to live holy and godly lives, lives which are focused on him and reflect him to others. You know that this week God longs for your life to reflect his character and deep down many of us here want the same. However we know how often we fall short. So does God but like a loving Father with a child he understands and is patient with us. But he encourages us to keep on going, keep on wanting to live a holy life, keep on seeking to live a holy life. I continue to say that is why I think meeting with other Christians is so important especially on Sunday as we have the opportunity to worship together and come under God’s word because it refreshes our vision that this is what we want and renews our desire to live the life of God. If we are to lead holy lives we need the encouragement of other Christians around us and with us.

Is this your desire deep in your heart to live a holy and godly life? Or have you given up the battle and are happy with living with compromise in your life?

Let’s encourage each other in this and help each other to keep going along the path of faith living holy and godly lives. When we meet as God’s people we should meet as God’s people and so what we talk about should be the things of God. I know we are embarrassed but if we can’t talk about Jesus to others who follow him then how can we talk about him to those who don’t follow him? So after the service talk with people about God, talk about the service the songs and the reading and the sermon. Ask people what they are going to take away with them. Ask people how they are getting on in their walk with Jesus. Ask people what you can pray for them. It is hard walking the way of Jesus in today’s world. It is hard living holy and godly lives and if we are not going to get encouragement in that from each other as we meet together where are we going to get it?

#### **b. the attitude we have v12a**

“as you look forward to the day of God”. The question is do you? Do you look forward to the return of Jesus? Do you even think about it? The point that Peter was making is that this day which he describes as awesome and awful should be at the front not back of our minds even though it seems to be so long in coming. That is why I think this season of Advent is so important, though too often we only think about Jesus’ return on the first Sunday in advent and then switch to Christmas. It is

important that we remind ourselves that this awesome and awful will happen so that our lives are lived in the light of it.

With those floods in Cumbria much attention has again been given to flood defences. I have to say that living in Hartswood I don't give a lot of thought to such things. Can you see the point? If you know it might happen it directs your thinking and acting.

Friends one day Jesus will return it needs to be part of our thinking so that we live our lives accordingly holy and godly.

### **c. what we do v12b**

As we wait for the return of Jesus what should we do? We should live holy and godly lives but also we "speed its coming". But how can we little ole you and me speed the return of Jesus?

It seems impossible doesn't it? Jesus said he didn't know when that day was going to take place. Here in v10 it is described as coming unexpectedly so how can we hasten it?

I wonder what you think you might do to speed the return of Jesus?

Peter here was saying the return of Jesus was delayed to give people time to repent and come to faith.

So if that is the reason for the delay then the way to speed the return of Jesus is to help people come to faith. So are we doing that? Or do we think it doesn't really matter. Going back to the floods in Cumbria, sitting watching it on TV I thought I wouldn't want to have that happen and felt sorry for anyone whose home had been flooded. How much worse these words of destruction here and to think of friends we know who will be caught up in that. What are we doing?

I think we should think pray talk and pray.

We should think about those with whom we have contact who have yet to come to faith. We thought about this as we prepared for discover and thought about the people we are in contact with, not just family and friends but those people whom we meet at the shop, on the street, at the gym or wherever. Their lives are at risk. Then pray for them that God would open their eyes to see Jesus. Pray also that you might have the opportunity to talk with them. It may be to invite them to something, there's the Christmas services – It is not too late to invite someone for tonight's Carol Service. Then in the new year we have a women's breakfast coming up a men's evening and the Alpha course. Or you could just have a coffee or beer with someone and talk about what Jesus means to you. Then having talked pray. Pray that God would lead people to think about him and to search for him. Think pray talk and pray. In this way we are obedient to God's word and play our part in speeding the coming of Jesus.

Friends if we "look forward to the day of God" and believe it will be a day of destruction then we will take seriously that warning and prepare ourselves and others for that day. For ourselves if we are

followers of Jesus then it will mean living those holy and godly lives as we look forward to that day. It will also mean looking to share our faith with others as we seek to speed the coming of that day. If we are not followers then it will be heeding the warning and coming to trust in Jesus before it is too late.

Jesus says ““Yes I am coming soon.” (Rev 22:20)

Amen Come Lord Jesus” – and may he find us ready.