**LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY OF THE LORD**

**(2 Peter 3:1-18)**

**“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…” (vs. 11-12a)**

 Happy Easter! We all know what Easter means. Christ suffered and died on the Cross for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried and raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). We celebrate Jesus’ resurrection! That is Easter! What does it mean to us that Jesus has risen? There are many meanings. Especially, Jesus’ resurrection gives us true hope—the hope of Jesus’ coming back, our own resurrection, and eternal kingdom. When will it happen? Today’s passage is all about it. The title of today’s message is **“Look Forward to the Day of the Lord.”** What do you look forward to? We all look forward to many good things. Students look forward to graduation, jobs, and success in their careers. Many young people look forward to marriage, a house, and children. Middle-aged workers probably look forward to retirement and want to enjoy life after retirement. These are all good hopes. Apostle Peter, however, exhorts us to look forward to a far surpassing and surer hope—the day of the Lord. May God help us to understand the certainty of the day of the Lord and what kind of life we should live while looking forward to Jesus’ Second Coming!

**I. The certainty of Jesus’ Second Coming (vs. 1-10)**

 Look at verse 1. **“Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.”** Apostle Peter wrote two letters, 1st Peter and 2nd Peter. Why? To stimulate his readers to wholesome thinking. Here, **“wholesome thinking”** refers to a pure or sincere mind. Why is wholesome thinking so important? Humans are thinking beings. Our thoughts and mindset determine our ways and direction in life. However, our minds are very vulnerable to the influence of worldly values, ungodly culture, and many misleading thoughts and philosophies. Nowadays, we are bombarded with information through the internet, easily losing discernment and allowing our minds to become corrupted.

 How can we cultivate wholesome thinking? Look at verse 2. **“I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.”** Peter points us to the words of both the Old Testament and the New Testament, which together form the Bible. The Bible reveals God’s grand plan for human salvation through Jesus’ suffering and death, resurrection, and his Second Coming to judge the world. The Bible enlightens our minds to have a right view of the world, history, and the future.

 In verses 3-4, Peter warns us of the threat to wholesome thinking. Let's read verses 3-4: **“Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”** Scoffers are those who deny Jesus’ Lordship and his Second Coming (2:1, 4). Whether they identify themselves as religious people or atheists, they don’t believe in Jesus’ Second Coming and God’s final judgment. They argue that the world has remained the same since its creation. If everything has been going smoothly from the beginning until now, where is the judgment? So they invent all kinds of arguments. But Apostle Peter points out what their real reason is: they want to follow their own evil desires.

 Peter further points out two truths scoffers deliberately forget. Verse 5 reads, **“But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water.”** First, God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing by his word. The scoffers deliberately forget that by God’s word, the heavens came into being and the earth was formed. They deny the truth of creation, the truth of Jesus’ Second Coming, and the truth of judgment. “Only the present matters, just enjoy life,” is their life’s motto. But if there is a beginning, there will surely be an end.

 Secondly, there was God’s judgment by a supernatural flood. Verse 6 says, **“By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.”** In the time of Noah, there were also those who mocked. “Why would there be a flood judgment when the weather is so nice?” However, no matter how much they mocked, judgment came, and Genesis 7:22 says, **“Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died.”** About 71% of the earth’s surface is covered with seas and lakes. The Mariana Trench in the Pacific, the deepest part of the earth’s oceans, is 6.8 miles deep. If the earth’s surface were flat, water would cover the whole earth to a depth of 1.7 miles. The amount of water on the earth and the traces of the global super-flood provide sufficient evidence of God’s judgment by a supernatural flood.

 Verse 7 reads, **“By the same word, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and the destruction of the ungodly.”** Contrary to what scoffers say, the present heavens and earth are preserved for another judgment to come. The final judgment and destruction of the ungodly will be by fire. As God intervened in nature in the past by water, he will intervene once more to bring an end to the present world by fire. However, some raise objections. “Then why hasn’t the Lord’s coming happened immediately? It’s been over 2000 years since Jesus ascended to heaven.” Regarding this, verses 8 and 9 say, **“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 is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”** The Lord’s coming is by no means delayed. It’s just that God’s concept of time differs from the human concept of time. God can judge immediately if he desires. However, God wants no one to perish but everyone to repent and be saved. Therefore, even during Noah’s time, he waited for 120 years. God waits, endures, hoping for one more person to be saved.

 Look at verse 10a. **“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief…”** Whether people acknowledge it or not, Jesus’ Second Coming will surely come to pass like a thief. A thief doesn’t make an appointment. When everyone is relaxed and deeply asleep, they suddenly come. The same applies to the Lord’s coming. When everyone is deeply asleep in sin, he suddenly comes. There are two endings in our lives: one is when the Lord comes to judge the entire world, and the other is when we stand before God after we die. We cannot know the exact timing of the Lord’s coming, just as we cannot know the exact timing of our own deaths. Therefore, we must repent before it’s too late and be ready.

 How terrifying is God’s judgment? Read verse 10b. **“…The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.”** The universe will be dismantled and disappear with a roar. The elements that make up the world will melt and dissolve in fire. Some scientists predict the end of the world by the sun’s explosion, an asteroid's collision, or nuclear war. They say that the nuclear weapons owned by the five NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) countries, such as the United States, China, France, Russia, and the United Kingdom, could destroy the earth more than ten times over.

 On August 6, 1945, an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. The city turned into ashes and 250,000 residents of the city died instantly. But the end will come by a far greater universal catastrophe than these. There were remains after the atomic bomb explosion in 1945. However, on that day of the Lord, everything in this world will melt and be burnt up. Possessions that people value, like beautiful buildiings, houses, deluxe cars, jewelry, computers, and smartphones, will vanish without a trace. All the works done by individuals that are not eternal will be burned up and come to nothing. The day of the Lord will surely come. No one can escape the judgment of the Almighty God. So how then can we be ready, and how should we live our lives?

**II. The attitude of preparation for the Second Coming. (vs. 11-18)**

 Firstly, we must live a holy and godly life. Let’s read verses 11-12: **“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. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.”** The phrase **“live holy and godly lives”** in verse 11 contrasts with verse 3, which speaks of those who live according to their evil desires. Those who deny and mock the Lord’s coming while indulging in sinful desires will surely face judgment. However, those who pursue holiness and godliness will be saved and glorified. Peter reemphasizes living a holy and godly life in verse 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.”**

 How can we live holy and godly lives despite our weaknesses? Nothing valuable in the world, like gold or diamonds, can save us from sin and make us holy. Only the blood of Christ has the power to cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death (Hebrews 9:14). We should come to Jesus daily in repentance to be sprinkled with his blood. Furthermore, a holy and godly life is not attainable through Bible knowledge alone. It comes from a life of following Christ, who walked the path of suffering, death, and resurrection. We must live lives of self-denial and carry our crosses daily (Luke 9:23). We must actively fight against sin without compromise, hating sin and pursuing spiritual things. We must prioritize heavenly things over earthly desires. (Colossians 3:1, 5)

 What are the heavenly things that are eternally valuable, enduring, and rewarding? One of the eternally valuable things is saving lives. We must remember that from Jesus’ birth until his Second Coming, the age of salvation for all peoples of the world has been ongoing (Mark 13:10). For the past 2,000 years, God has worked through the church to save innumerable people. God will continue to work until the full number of his chosen people is saved, not missing anyone.

 Consider the cry of those falling into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. (Revelation 21:8) With this description, the Bible solemnly warns us of the dreadful destiny of those eternally separated from God. Shouldn’t we share God’s concern for people heading toward this horrible fate? In verse 15, Peter reemphasizes God’s heart: **“Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him.”** We must pray for the unsaved, both those we know and those we do not. When God gives us opportunities, we must share the good news with them. Peter tells us not only to look forward to the day of God but also to speed its coming. How can we speed the Lord’s coming? Jesus said, **“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14)** We can actively devote ourselves to the work of God in preaching the Gospel and saving perishing souls until the Gospel is preached in the whole world. The life of saving souls is eternally valuable and enduring. It is the way to help us live holy and godly lives.

 Secondly, we must place our hope in the kingdom of God. Let’s read verse 13: **“But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.”** A new heaven and a new earth are places filled with righteousness. Originally, the world created by God was a righteous kingdom. However, due to the sin of human beings, the world became filled with injustice. A world filled with injustice decays, corrupts, and becomes falsehood through all kinds of sins. Therefore, there is truly no hope in this worldly kingdom. Fundamentally, this is because Satan, the devil, rules this world. No matter how great a leader may emerge to try to build an ideal nation, it won’t work because human nature is fundamentally corrupt. However, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came and shed his blood on the Cross to redeem our sins. When we believe in Jesus Christ, who shed his blood for our sins, we become righteous. Even if we were unjust and vile in the past, when we are in Christ Jesus, we become new creations. **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)**

 However, while we live in this world in our earthly bodies, we are not perfect. Moreover, our world is so contaminated with sin that no matter how much we struggle, we cannot be free from sin. But when the day of the Lord comes, a new heaven and a new earth will come. The sin-filled world will be dissolved in fervent heat and disappear in an instant. And then, a new heaven and a new earth, an incorruptible and undefiled new kingdom, will open up. Revelation 21:1-2 says, **“Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”**

 How beautiful is the bride adorned for her husband? The kingdom of God, the new heaven and the new earth, are always new like a bride. Why is that? Because sin is gone. The devil is thrown into the lake of fire, and there is no longer any temptation of sin (Revelation 20:10). There, Jesus wipes away all our tears, and there is no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. The former things have passed away, and everything becomes new. Entering the place of righteousness, the new heaven, and the new earth, on the day of the Lord’s coming is our true hope. The fame, wealth, honor, popularity, and possessions of this world are not eternal. They will decay, corrupt, dissolve, and disappear someday. What we truly need to hope for and look forward to is the place of righteousness, the new heaven, and the new earth, the kingdom of God. Let’s live in the expectation of the kingdom of God, fixing our eyes on it as our true hope.

 Thirdly, we must grow in the grace of Christ and in the knowledge of him. Let’s read verses 17-18: **“Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”** Apostle Peter warns us to beware of being led astray by the error of the lawless. Lawless false teachers deny the Lordship of Jesus and deny his Second Coming. They try to deceive people as much as they can to lead them away from the gospel. We must be careful not to be led astray from our secure position.

 To do this, we must anchor ourselves in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God flows to each of us from Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection. The love of God is wider than the ocean and higher than the sky. As we grow in the grace of our Savior Jesus, we grow in a deeper love relationship with God, and our inner selves become deeper and more mature. We must also grow in the knowledge of knowing Jesus. Many people have knowledge that earns money and enjoy life. But the knowledge we really need is knowing Jesus. Why? Because everything on this earth will disappear, but Jesus is eternal. The Apostle Paul, therefore, considered all the knowledge he once boasted about as garbage. He wanted to know Christ and become like him because knowing Christ is the most noble and eternal. Because Paul constantly grew in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, he became an example to many as a little Jesus. Not only Paul, but those who grew in the knowledge of Christ have left a great mark on human history. They will shine like the sun in the kingdom of God. Let’s continually study the Bible to know Christ and become like him.

 In conclusion, our Lord will surely come again. On that day, this world will be consumed by fervent fire, and a new heaven and a new earth will come. Let’s put our hope in the kingdom of God and await the day of the Lord with holiness and godliness. Let’s grow in the grace of Christ and in the knowledge of him day by day. With the joy of the true and sure hope in Christ, let’s give ourselves fully to the work of God because we know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).