

**“HOPE IN THE PROMISE”**  
**by Rom A. Pegram (12/8/19)**

Did you hear about the two church members who were discussing the sermon on their way home from church one Sunday morning?

**Gladys and Rhonda walked along the sidewalk after church. They were on their way home, thinking about meals planned for later that afternoon and casually discussing the morning service...**

**Rhonda said to Gladys, "That was a great sermon on patience, wasn't it?"  
Gladys replied, "Yeah, it was ... but he went five minutes [too] long."**

Thank heavens God has a great deal more patience than we do! Some say that Jesus *said* he was coming back ... and hasn't. So, he's either late ... or he's forgotten about us ... or he just doesn't care. Have you ever heard those things? Or have you ever thought those things yourself?

Folks, there is no greater privilege than to lead people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ—to be a part of the process that helps prepare them for eternity! And the Good News today is ... God is giving us time to do just that! That is one of the great promises of scripture ... and we can find HOPE in that promise!

I don't even have to ask, this morning. I've been here long enough to know that many of you are concerned, spiritually speaking, about some of your friends and family members. We know they should be more connected to the Church, but they're not; they choose other things instead. And what is their relationship to God? Is everything OK? And what are they waiting for?

You don't have to raise your hand today ... or even nod. I know many of you are concerned about those you love & care for, so today, I want you to know this: The Apostle Peter covers it all for us in today's scripture lesson. Just listen to *why* Peter says the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming or Advent—a reality we talked about last week—hasn't taken place yet. Just listen (2 Peter 3:8-15a, NLT)...

But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.

<sup>11</sup> Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, <sup>12</sup> looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. <sup>13</sup> But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.

<sup>14</sup> And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight.

<sup>15</sup> And remember, the Lord's patience gives people time to be saved. – 2 Peter 3:8-15 (NLT)

This should all be good news ... and offer HOPE ... especially to those who are somewhat slow to change. *God is patient with us; there's the promise he sends us—* sending us opportunity after opportunity ... in these ways:

**GOD SENDS US OPPORTUNITY AFTER OPPORTUNITY ... TO GET OUR LIVES RIGHT WITH HIM!** Verses 8-9a tell us: “But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day.<sup>9</sup> The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.”

Some of you here today ... have been a part of the Body of Christ (the Church) for a long, long time. But, do you ever feel like there're still a few things *you* need to get done, regarding God? It's the theological idea of 'Sanctification'; I'm sure you've heard this before, but 'sanctification' is the process we go through to become more and more like Christ. For all here today who don't feel like you've been totally *sanctified—made into the image of Christ* (and I hope that's all of us), what are the parts of your life that still need attention, from God's point of view?

In thinking about that, however, we also need to remember this: **NO ONE LOVES US MORE THAN GOD DOES!** Do you remember the story in the Bible about THE FIFTH SPARROW? Jesus is the one who tells the story. He just finished teaching about the realities of the afterlife. And he's letting them know who they really need to fear—not the authorities who can take their physical life (they lived in a very scary time with Rome); rather, they should learn to fear God, who has the power to give & take life and decides where we spend eternity.

So, how did Jesus end this teaching? By reminding everyone just how much God loves them and what God's intentions really are—to save them. Now, you need to know that Jesus, here, is talking about the marketplace of the day. They would buy sparrows for sacrifices. Usually, people would purchase either two or four. The sparrow was of such little value though that, many times, the seller would throw in a fifth to tempt the purchasers to buy from them. Here's what Jesus says (Luke 12:6, NLT):

**“What is the price of five sparrows—two copper coins? Yet God does not forget a single one of them.<sup>7</sup> And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.”**

A commentator once said, “Our true value is God's estimate of our worth, not our peers' estimate.” That's the truth. But sometimes we begin to think ... we are just not important to anyone. Maybe we think our lives just don't matter. But, folks, though our value may not seem high to some, we need reminders that no one loves us more than God does. We matter to God ... forever/eternally!

Folks, God's love is inexhaustible! The promise God sends us today, through Peter, is this: *God will be patient with us!* One day is as a thousand years ... and a

thousand years as one day ... to God. What does that mean? *God gives us opportunity after opportunity after opportunity ... to get our lives right with him.* That's why he's not returned yet. That's why we still wait on his 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming—that 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent. God sends us this promise through Peter ... and gives us HOPE in that promise, too! We have the HOPE that, even if we are slow to change (or those we love are slow to change), someday—hopefully soon—we'll experience the freedom God's always wanted us to have... Here's something else...

**GOD SENDS US OPPORTUNITY AFTER OPPORTUNITY TO HELP OTHERS GET RIGHT WITH GOD!** Verse 9b reminds us: "No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent."

I want you to hear clearly what Peter is saying about God here. God doesn't want anyone to be destroyed—*anyone!* Does that mean that none will be destroyed—spending eternity out of God's presence? No; there are some who are so selfish and so stubborn that they'll *never* do things God's way. But, *THAT'S NOT WHAT GOD WANTS!* It's God's will that all humanity should get into a right relationship with him; God's covenants are all designed for this purpose!

Just as God has patience with us, however ... God will also have patience with others who do not yet know Him. Why? Because, as His word has shown us ... 'he does not want anyone [*anyone!*] to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins.' Because this is God's will, *we too need to be patient* with those who are slow to change in this life ... and we all know someone. Sometimes we get impatient with ... our children ... our siblings ... our friends ... and, sometimes, we get impatient with our parents...

"Man, right here's Jesus! Right here's the way to eternal life! Right here's One who loves you more than any other ever could ... including me! Why don't you get it? Why don't you get it, dear child of mine? Why don't you get it, parent of mine? Why don't you get it, good friend?"

Leonardo da Vinci painted that masterpiece called *The Last Supper*. Of that masterpiece, he said: "When I paused longest, I made the most telling strokes with my brush." Patience, folks, is power in reserve... And what does God's word have to say about patience?

"Take the patience of Job. He had a spiritual strength in reserve which saw him through fiery trials. **Patience is hope biding its time, it is hope in action**, it is like a catalyst in chemistry which starts action in other elements but itself is unaffected. Patience is never something that embalms us; it is that which alerts us to possibilities ahead."

Do you see possibilities in others whom you know and love—possibilities if only Christ was a part (or more a part) of their lives? Don't you think that God sees these possibilities in those same people? And, yet to God, one day is as a thousand years. God is never in a hurry, folks... God's love is patient, in this way (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, NLT):

“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. <sup>6</sup> It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. <sup>7</sup> Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. <sup>8</sup> Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever!”

God sends us opportunity after opportunity—BETWEEN ADVENTS—to get things right ... *before* Jesus comes again. And it's time ... to get things right with God—both ourselves ... and others. So, we've got '*between advent*' opportunities here ... and we have more time than those in the Early Church realized, but *I don't know how much time we have left...*

Do you remember last week? We're always to be ready; *we're to help others be ready, too!* Won't you join me in praying for that? A thousand years is as one day ... to God (in other words, to God, it's only been a couple of days ... since Jesus was here!); there's the promise of scripture... And what a tremendous opportunity that brings us! Let's make the most of it, shall we? Because there's HOPE IN THE PROMISE...