

Sermon Title: “Full Circle”

December 6th, 2020 – 2nd Sunday in Advent

Text: 2 Peter 3:8-14



Theme: In Peter’s Life we see a restoration through Jesus Christ. We see the same things in our own lives.

What’s in it for me?

Sermon Text:

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever given thought to what your last words on this planet should be? What do you want your legacy to be? If you have learned one thing during your life here, what is it?

In our texts for today, we see Isaiah issue a proclamation to prepare for Jesus’ arrival. In Mark, we see John the Baptist echoing that call, but our epistle text is a little different. It deals with how we should be preparing for Jesus’ return. It also gives us a chance to reflect on Peter’s life, and our own.

Our Gospel lesson takes place just before Jesus begins his early ministry. John the Baptist, Jesus’ cousin is preaching repentance and telling people to prepare for Jesus’ Earthly Ministry, which is immanent. He’s wearing clothing made from animal skins, and is somewhat of a celebrity, due to his appearance and mannerisms. He attracts large crowds, some for the entertainment value, some because they truly heed his message. Two of John’s followers are Andrew, Peter’s brother, and John. At some point, they return to fishing on the Sea of Galilee where Jesus will greet them for a second time, and they will abandon their life of fishing to follow him. This is where Peter’s life with Jesus starts, and unlike most of the other Disciples, Peter is married and is over 20 years of age, the age of majority. It would be unusual for someone of his age to begin studying under a Rabbi, but better late, than never.

Our epistle lesson is Peter’s second letter to the Church and is in many ways, his last will and testament. It was written very close to his death in around 68 AD when he was crucified upside down and Paul was beheaded, both by order of Nero. Some scholars do have trouble with this letter because the tone of this letter sounds much different than earlier works attributed to Peter as it doesn’t appear to have that “Galilean Fisherman,” tone to it. It also appears to share a lot of content with Jude. It is probable that Peter used a scribe, and likely a different scribe than earlier works, and that explains the difference in voice. Peter was very close to Mark and was the major source for Mark’s writings. Was Mark the scribe? We don’t know. Peter and Jude also spent a great deal of time together during the

early days of the Jerusalem Church, so it is very possible that they grew very close together, almost like family. As such, it would not be unusual for the two to have a very similar message or communication style.

So, our text today is at the tail end of Peter's final message to the Church. What does he want us to know? Peter wants us to know that Jesus is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. He exists inside and outside of time. John tells us the same thing, but here is Peter's explanation of the unexplainable. We exist in linear time, but Jesus does not. We just don't have the mental capacity to grasp time in the way that God does. We in the English world are at an even further disadvantage than the Greek. Greek has two main words for time "*Kyros*," (At the proper time or season) and "*Kronos*," (Linear time). Which word do you think appears most often in Scripture? That's right *Kyros*. God does things "at the proper time."

Peter is also very concerned about our response to Jesus' free gift of salvation. Since we are all forgiven sinners, how should we be conducting ourselves until Jesus returns at the proper time? Like what happened in Peter, The Holy Spirit calls us to repent of our sins. This is the first step in a saving faith in Christ Jesus. God is very patient with us, and we should do the same with others, but at the same time, we need to have a sense of urgency.

How can we show patience to our neighbor and at the same time show urgency? I know you all have friends and family who are not Christians. I am in the same boat as you. Some of those people may be believers, but think that they can procrastinate, "getting right with God." That is a very dangerous proposition and one that Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls, "Cheap Grace." Yes, we have a God who is willing, ready, and able to forgive us all our sins, but what kind of faith is it that thinks that one can go on sinning and then make up for it at the end? That's not Jesus' intention. And how many times have you known of someone who died suddenly, seemingly in the prime of life? Oops. Didn't see that one coming, did they?

Instead, think of it this way, as many of you are Christmas shopping for your friends and family, do you anticipate the reaction of your loved ones as they unwrap that gift? I for one, can't wait for the look on their faces when they unwrap their rolls of toilet paper. Only in a Covid-19 world, I guess. But seriously, you have a sense of urgency, and yet are patient. You anticipate your loved ones receiving the benefits that your gift brings, and you want them to receive it as soon as possible, but yet you wait for the proper time. Isn't this how God looks at all of us? He wants all of us to be saved through His Son, but at the same time, He is patient. He wants everyone to receive the support for that saving faith we get from the Church, but He understands that some people are going to take a longer journey than

others to get there. Once they have received that blessing, you may hear something to the effect of, “Why did I wait so long?”

When we live a life that reflects the faith we’ve received by Grace it helps guard against the cancer that is sin. Yes, we continue to sin daily, but through the support of our Christian Brothers and Sisters, we understand that we don’t have to “get right with God,” through Jesus, we are already right with God. He loves us and richly blesses us, and He loves doing so. He also wants us and expects us to be a blessing to others. So, when we encounter friends and family who are not believers, should we agree to disagree, or end our relationships with them? By no means. Listen to their concerns. Know that the Holy Spirit may be working through you. I work with a friend who grew up Roman Catholic, but because of his combat experience in Iraq, lost his faith. He has concluded that God doesn’t exist. I have not ended my relationship with him, instead intensified it. Recently, he challenged my faith as fantasy, asking me to prove God exists. In these kind of conversations, you’ll likely only have time for a short answer, not necessarily a long, detailed one, so I gave him the short answer, “It’s mathematically impossible for you to exist by chance, but yet you do,” meaning that if you weren’t created by chance, then some kind of sentient being had to be behind it. He continued to challenge it, but then I told him about my own near-death experience, where I saw the Lord Jesus for myself. His response was, “I guess I can accept that.” I am getting the impression that the Holy Spirit is working on my friend and is trying to bring him home. He is out for a long journey, but like God, we must be patient with our non-believing friends. Have patience and don’t expect a 10-minute conversation will bring someone back from the brink. Sometimes this takes a long time. Be in it for the long haul.

God wants all to be saved through His Son, but like Thomas, my friend, and many others, they want proof. They want to know that faith in Jesus is not in vain. That is the nature of God’s Grace and Mercy to provide it. That proof is out there if one is willing to look at the evidence.

Looking back at Peter’s life, he came so far in his walk with Jesus. He started off as a Galilean fisherman, brash and uneducated, but Peter was authentic. He was honest with himself. When he tried to lie, he failed miserably. Jesus invested in Peter during and after His earthly ministry transforming a simple fisherman to a bold proclaimer of the faith. Peter learned to trust Jesus to go outside his comfort zone, engaging with people he never thought he would, i.e., Gentiles). Yes, Peter messed up from time to time, but he always went back to his strength for recovery and restoration. He traveled all the way to Rome, at the heart of secular power to share the Gospel there. Yes, Peter would suffer a horrific and terrifying death, crucifixion upside down, but his life had come full circle in Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus rose from the dead, Peter knew that so would he. Instead of saying, “I do not know this man,” Peter says,

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. ¹⁵And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved

brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. ¹⁷You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. ¹⁸But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

Various Authors. The Lutheran Study Bible. Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.

Peter had quite a journey during his life. How about you? How are you preparing for Jesus' return? Peter knew that death and suffering were not the end. He knew that Jesus would return and set it all right. So, like Peter, come full circle. Do you live a life of cheap grace, or is does that grace given to you have added value? We add value to God's Grace when we listen to Him, and respond in faith, living the life He would have us live. Jesus is coming at the proper time. What will He find when He comes?

In Jesus name,

Amen.

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Quotations from Scripture come from:

Various Authors. *The Lutheran Study Bible*. Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.