e Day of the Lord is Coming

2 Peter 3:1-18

Key Verse: 3:10a “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.”

Last Monday night I flew back from Montreal after attending East Canada SBC. When I came outside of the airport, I felt like I was in a sauna. It was 92 F even at midnight. We are already accustomed to this hot weather with temperatures over 95-100 F degrees every summer.  We are lucky compared to other cities and countries where hurricanes, floods, and drought frequently occurs. The whole world is suffering from the effects of global warming. Some say that the end of the world has come. As Christians, how do we interpret this sudden change of weather and the frequency of natural disasters? We relate this to the signs of the end of the age. Jesus predicted the signs of the end of the age in Matthew 24-25. He said that at that time there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. (Mt 24:7) He also mentioned several other signs when he comes again. In today’s passage Peter teaches Christians how to prepare for the day of Jesus’ second coming. He teaches us what we must do on the last day.

First, have wholesome thinking and believe His promise. (1-2) Among one of the signs of the end of the age which Jesus predicted in Matthew’s gospel is the appearance of false Messiahs and false prophets. Jesus said, “*Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many.”* (Mt 24:4-5) *“ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people*.” (24:11) I heard that there are more than 50 self-claiming messiahs in Korea. The number increased 20 more than 30 years ago because of inflation. Why do the false messiahs and prophets appear on the last day? Why do they deceive people, especially Christians? This is because many Christians do not stand their faith in the Bible. As a result, they don’t have wholesome thinking to keep their identity. Here wholesome thinking means ‘pure and sincere’ thoughts. As we enjoy whole foods, we must have a wholesome way of thinking. In Philippians 4:8 Paul said, *“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy–think about such things*.” But, their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened when they did not hold the promise of God. Look at verses 1-2. “***Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. 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 wrote the two letters, 1 and 2 Peter, to encourage the Christians to have wholesome thinking and to hold the promise of God. In chapter 1 Peter urged them to have prophetic message and to pay attention to it until the light of Christ shines darkness and until they may see Jesus like the morning star in their hearts. (2 Pe 1:19) Yesterday I saw David Lee who was attending a worship service in Dongkyo UBF through the UBF TV channel. I believe he had a wholesome thinking. If he wanted, he could go to a better college in other cities, but he chose SLU to support God’s ministry and his family. Many high school- graduating travel for their pleasure, but David left for a short-term mission trip to Kazakhstan. Let us pray for him to grow as a man after God’s own heart like David.

What is the promise of God which they must remember and hold? It is the promise of Jesus’ second coming. Look at verses 3-7. “***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.” 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. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. But the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.***”  Jesus promised to come again and judge this world. He repeated this promise to his disciples so that they might believe and prepare for his second coming. But Jesus said that no one knows the day or the hour except the Father in heaven. (Mt 24:36) He will come like a thief, so we must keep watch and pray. But in the last days scoffers nullify this promise and mislead the believers. They claim that Jesus didn’t come yet, so he would not come. Even today many people say that Jesus would not come because he did not come yet, even though he had promised two thousand years ago. F. Nietzsche said that even God is dead. But we must remember that God’s promise is true and Jesus will come again.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth by his words. When God said, “*Let there be light*!” And it was so. Whatever God said, it came to be. The promise of Jesus’ second coming is God’s word. As God created this world by his word, so also he will destroy it by his word. He did it once on Noah's day. At that time people didn’t believe God’s promise that he would judge the world by water. They ate and drank until Noah and his family entered the ark. Then God poured out rain for forty days and nights until all lives on this earth were destroyed by water except for Noah’s family in the ark. Those who despised and didn’t believe God’s word were destroyed by water.

Now this world is reserved for fire. God will judge this world by fire as he did to the city of Sodom and Gomorrah. Some people interpret the judgment of fire as global warming. Global warming gradually and eventually heats the earth until all lives on the earth cannot survive. Others talk about nuclear wars. There are around 12,000 nuclear bombs in the world. When nations use these nuclear weapons against each other, the earth will melt away by heat. Still others talk about the collision of the comet. When a huge comet hits this earth, all lives will die. Historians report the collision of a comet as the cause of the extermination of dinosaurs. Whether it comes with global warming or nuclear wars or the collision of comets, this earth is reserved for fire and that God’s word will come true. Jesus said in Matthew 24:12-13. “*Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.*” Those who have wholesome thinking and believe the promise of God will be saved. Amen!

Second, live holy and godly lives (8-13) There are two main types of time in the New Testament: *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* refers to clock time–time that can be measured–seconds, minutes, hours, years. *Kairos* is a powerful moment, time judged not by its duration, but by its importance and value, often associated with God’s intervention. As God uses the word ‘time’ accordingly, so God counts time differently from we do. In a word the measurement of God’s time is different from ours. Look at verse 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.***” Jesus promised his second coming two thousand years ago. To our measurement, two thousand years are too long to wait. But to God, two thousand years is like only two days. Jesus promised only two days ago. So, one rebellious person jokes, “If a thousand years is like a day to God, a billion dollars will be like a few dollars to him. God! Give me only a few dollars.” God heard his joke and answered him. “Okay, I will give you a few dollars, but wait a minute!” A billion dollars was delivered to him long after he died.

Then, we ask why Jesus does not come even after two thousand years have passed? Did God forget his promise? Not at all! Let us read verse 9. “***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***.” God did not forget his promise. Keeping his promise is not slow, either. He is just patient with us and wants to save more people. God is waiting for the hour that all of us can repent and be saved. It is from his redemptive purpose, not his slowness. Psalm 103:8 says, “*The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.*” God’s heart desire is not to punish the world, but to save the world. John 3:16-17 says, “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him*.”

But we must not test God’s patience. Verse 10 says that the day of the Lord will come like a thief. (10) Jesus said in Matthew 24:36 “*But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*” He continues, “*Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this. If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him*.” (Mt 24:42-44) A thief never notices us before he breaks in. He comes at the time he desires and the hour we do not know. Jesus will come at an hour when we do not expect. He may come when we are driving. He may come when you are sleeping. He may come tonight or tomorrow. He may come when you are not ready. Therefore, we must always keep watch and pray.

Peter continues to instruct us how to live as the waiting people. Look at 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.*** ” As the people waiting for Jesus’ second coming, we must live holy and godly lives. What is living holy and godly lives? We must live differently from the worldly and ungodly people. They live with the value of this world. They live according to their physical desire and worldly value. But we must live with spiritual desire with heavenly value. Our true hope is new heaven and new earth. Our hope is New Jerusalem in the kingdom of heaven. Verse 14 says, “***But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.***” Amen!

Third, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus (14-18) In verse 14 Peter repeats the importance of living holy and godly lives. He said, “***So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him***.” Those who wait for Jesus’ second coming must be prepared to stand before God’s judgment. When we stand before God, we must be found spotless and blameless. Before we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, we must solve all our sin problems which we committed on this earth. We can be spotless and blameless only through the blood of Jesus. 1 John 1:7 says that the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 Jn 1:7) We can wash our sins with nothing but the blood of Jesus. Amen! Look at verses 15-16. “***Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction***.” Indeed, our Lord’s patience means salvation.

Let us read verses 17-18 as a conclusion. “***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***!” Surely Jesus will come again. No one may fall from his or her secure position. We must be faithful for our duty as children of God. Above all we must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. As Peter said in 1:4-7, we must make every effort to participate in the divine nature of Jesus Christ by adding to our faith goodness, and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. Amen! I pray for all of us to meet in heaven when Jesus comes again without missing anyone. Amen!