

Eternal Patience

So....you need to call customer service.

You tap the number ..and wait. Then ...there's this voice. "Thank you for waiting. Your call is important to us." We hear those words and know we're going to be on hold. Sometimes, the robot voice even tells us how long.

Today, while we wait, we have multiple entertainment options at our fingertips. But, waiting is still hard. We wait at airports (security lines, boarding lines); we wait in waiting rooms; we wait in traffic; we wait at the local post office. With a little planning, though, we can make our wait time productive, maybe even fun. Here's a list:

- Strike up a conversation with someone new (a stranger) and learn their story.
- Work through your unread emails. We don't like it! But it's a great way to fill an hour.... or three!

But - - *But what if* the wait time longer -- like, say....., a couple.. thousand years?

That's - the dilemma - the early church faced.. after Jesus' ascension. (Acts 1:1-11)

He promised to return. And many believed...He was at the gate! Remember our scripture last week? But as time passed, and months turned to years, and decades. And as persecution of Christians intensified, the waiting - became the hardest - part - for the church! In fact, some began to question whether Jesus would return at all. (??Throw open arms)

That's the point...of our Word this... morning.

Peter reminds the church: **God ...sees** the saints. And they'd better find a way to be productive...while they wait.

Peter understands waiting... is hard. But what seems like a long, slow wait for Christ's return... is actually... ☺ Actually.... a Gift ...from God.

The Lord is not slow ..or late. But....Gifts..us...this time.... to "get right with God".

....For the "day of the Lord" will arrive like a "thief". Suddenly. By surprise!

*....On that day...all we've done....our every act and every thought.... will be "disclosed" as if **lit.. by fire** (v. 10).*

~ In the interim - - - (even a loooong interim), Peter asks, "*What sort of persons ought you be... in leading lives of holiness and godliness?*" (v. 11).

And he lists five goals....while we wait for the new Advent:
First 1. **celebrate** the first Advent. Peter and others...saw God incarnate. *Heard...* Heaven proclaim, "This is my Son, my Beloved." (1:17).

Second, 2. **grow** in the image of Christ.

Peter urges us to get ready so we may.... "be found by him at peace, without blemish" (v. 14). ..We were meant to be pure...from the beginning, created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). Peter urges us towards goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection, and love (1:5-7). Always love!

Third, 3. **dig deep** into Scriptures. Peter and others *saw - scripture - confirmed* in Jesus. So can we....open the Word.. "*as a lamp shining in the dark ..until the morning star arises in your hearts*" That's 1:19!

Fourth, 4. **pay attention** to what it is... that masters.. you.

Peter criticizes false teachers for promising freedom ..while being "slaves of corruption". - - - - Then he makes this... *poignant* statement: "People are slaves... to whatever masters them." Bob Dylan sang, "It may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna serve somebody."

It's Advent, a time to ponder: what is it....that masters us?

And finally, 5. **use** your time. Wait....actively!

Peter urges us to ^ "*regard - the patience of God....as - salvation*" (v. 15). This time we have now....is a Gift! In this interim, while we wait, we can build up faith. Peter, like Paul and others, spent every waking minute sharing the good news of God's love.

And they did it with a sense of urgency. Because, in a flash, it may be too late.

God.. has given us...time.... to go - ***tell it on the mountain!*** And the waiting room. Or the passenger lounge.

Engage.

Engage others.

Unwrap ..the Gift of Christmas.. and let your love so shine and envelope those around you... that....long lines....become opportunities...to let the Spirit...burst....into a warm glow, a fire....of love.

Peter's last word (and let it be ours): "Always be ready to give an explanation...to anyone who asks you...for a reason for your Hope."

(1 Peter 3:15)

Amen.