

# Christ's Return Anticipated

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good morning, church. The scripture lesson this morning is taken from 2 Peter 3, verses 1-14. This is now the second letter that I am writing to you.

! Beloved, in both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and commandments of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

They will say, where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God.

And that by means of these, the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word, the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

[ 1 : 2 4 ]     But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any perish, that that all should reach repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Since all things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people are you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn.

But according to his promise, we are waiting for the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

Amen. Thank you very much, Michelle. Although the season of Advent ended on the 24th of December, since Advent is about more than just preparing to remember the coming of the Lord, but also to anticipate the return of the Lord at the end of the age, I thought on this final Lord's Day of 2024, it's fitting that we should remind ourselves of this truth, that Christ is coming again.

[ 3 : 3 5 ]     And we need to be reminded because we are people who easily forget. And sometimes when we say that we have not forgotten, our lives sometimes reflect that it seems like we have forgotten.

And this is not unique to us. We see this is as old as some 2,000 years old, where the Apostle Peter is writing to the same audience for the second time and reminding them of this truth of Christ's return.

And so we would do well to remember ourselves and to be reminded of this truth. And we see it throughout the New Testament scriptures, this reminder that Christ is coming again as a divine judge of all people.

So please keep your Bible open to 2 Peter chapter 3 and let me take a moment to pray for us. Lord, thank you for bringing us to this place this morning and even though we made decisions to come, Lord, we know that ultimately you providentially brought us here to experience and hear all that we have experienced and that we have heard and that we will hear even now in the preaching of your word.

Lord, draw near to us. Will you help us to posture our hearts to hear all that you would say to us? And then, Lord, would you help us by your Spirit to respond as we should.

[ 5 : 34 ]     Father, I ask for the help of your Holy Spirit to faithfully bring your word to your people. And Lord, may it result in the glory of your great name.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen. So the Apostle Peter opens this section of his letter, the conclusion of his letter, and he tells his hearers, this is the second time I am writing to you.

And he tells them his aim for doing it, why he is writing to them. He says, I want to stir up your sincere minds by reminding you of the predictions of the prophets and the apostles of the Lord because scoffers are going to come who will deny that there is a coming of the Lord in judgment.

Peter anticipated that there would be those who would arise and challenge the many predictions that are found in Scripture.

That Christ is coming again and in light of this anticipated challenge to this promise, Peter calls God's people to respond in some particular ways.

[ 7 : 05 ]     and this morning I want to consider three of the particular ways that Peter from this passage calls us to respond to the truth that Christ is coming again and to the reality that there will be those who scoff against that truth.

First of all, Peter calls us to guard against scoffers. And how does he tell us to do that? How does he tell us that we are to guard against those who scoff at the idea of the Lord's judgment?

He tells us we are to do it by remembering. We are to do it by bringing to mind the many predictions of the holy prophets and the apostles concerning the coming day of the Lord's judgment.

Look again at how he says this starting in verse 1. This is now the second letter I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord our Savior through your apostles.

Knowing this, first of all, the scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing following their own sinful desires. They will say where is the promise of his coming?

[ 8 : 29 ]     For ever since the fathers fell asleep all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. In verse 2 when Peter refers to the holy prophets, he's referring to the Old Testament prophets and the predictions they made.

and when he refers to the apostles, he's referring to the apostles of Christ, those who bore witness to his resurrection and the predictions they made about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Peter's point in making these two connections, his point is that this truth about Christ's return to judge the world is not something that is novel.

It is not something that is new. He says it's as old as the holy prophets of old. The New Testament apostles have affirmed it, but it goes way back to the holy prophets of old.

So for example, some 600 years before Christ was born, the prophet Ezekiel prophesied these words in Ezekiel 30, verse 3.

[ 9 : 48 ] For the day is near, the day of the Lord is near. It will be a day of clouds, a time of gloom, of doom for the nations. And then about 500 years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Joel prophesied in a very similar way in chapter 2, verse 31.

The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And in the New Testament, it is filled with reminders of these same prophecies of the coming day of the Lord's judgment.

In the Gospels, in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we have the record of the words of Jesus as he stood on the Mount of Olives, which we refer to as the Olivet Discourse, and he talks about his return in judgment.

As a matter of fact, this passage in Joel 2, 31, finds itself in the words of Jesus in the three accounts that we have of the Olivet Discourse from Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

And then we come to the book of the Acts of the Apostles. It opens with the ascension of Jesus back to heaven and the promise of his return.

[ 11 : 14 ] The disciples were gazing in the heavens as Jesus was being lifted up from them and two angels appeared to them. And this is what Luke writes about what those angels said in verse 10.

Acts chapter 1, verses 10 and 11. And while they were gazing into heaven, as he went, as Jesus went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes and said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.

through all the letters of the apostle Paul, again and again, we are reminded of the return of the Lord in judgment of the world.

For example, in 1 Thessalonians 4, 16 to 17, we read, For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

[ 12 : 58 ] Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, so we will always be with the Lord.

And yet, there are people who scoff for these predictions, who scoff for these prophecies, just as the apostle Peter predicted that they would.

And Peter tells us that these scoffers would come in the last days. Now, in Scripture, when we see this term, the last days, the last days represent a long period of time.

It represents the period of time starting with the death and resurrection of Jesus, and ends with the return of Christ to the world. So this whole period is the last days.

Peter wrote around AD 30, thereabout, and Peter was predicting that these scoffers were going to come and challenge this truth that was fresh in the minds of the disciples of his day.

[ 14 : 13 ] And it happened, and it is happening, and it is happening in increasing measure. I think it's fair to say that every year that goes by, the number of scoffers increase because they're thinking in their minds in a particular way, that promise is never going to happen.

And so Peter is helping us to understand this is going to happen, and he is calling us to guard against it.

Notice in verses 5 and 6 that Peter points to the error of the thinking of the scoffers. he says starting in verse 5, for they, this is their error, they deliberately overlooked the fact that the heavens that existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

now hopefully you recognize that Peter is drawing on the Genesis account, the creation account, and he is essentially saying that when God created the world, if you think of the world as round as it is, the world was a watery mass, the earth was a watery mass, the whole thing was just covered in deep water, and then what God did was God spoke and God created in the midst of the water an expanse, so he divided the water up and down and created the heavens and so there was water above the heavens, there is, and then there was still water covering the earth, but not as much because he put some of the water above the expanse, and then out of that still watery earth, the remainder of the water that was on it,

God spoke and commanded all the water to gather in one place, and then he commanded things to grow, vegetation and so forth, so the earth actually began with waters gathered in one place, and then earth in another place, but something happened, and this is what Peter is pointing out that is the flaw in the thinking of the scoffers, something happened, and what happened was judgment, the Bible says that God opened the flood gates of the heavens where all that water was stored up in the heavens and unleashed it on the earth for 40 days, and the flood destroyed everything and everyone on the earth except eight souls who were saved by the grace of God, or the vegetation, or the animals except those that by the grace of God nor brought into the ark, but everything else was destroyed, and why was it destroyed?

[ 17 : 43 ] It was destroyed because of sin, and what Peter is saying is that the scoffers are forgetting this reality that God brought judgment in the past, he brought judgment on the earth, and when they say that the earth remains as it always was, it doesn't remain as it always was, the topography of the earth changed because of this massive flood that came on the earth.

The earth that we live on is a post-flood earth, and so the earth is not as it always was, judgment brought the earth to be what it is today, and Peter says that they are overlooking this fact, overlooking this fact, that the same God who promises that he is going to return in judgment of this world has done it, and though they say this world remains just as it was, no, it's not the same way that it was, it is different because of judgment.

Peter said they deliberately overlook this fact, they deliberately overlook the fact that the earth that now is, is not the earth that was since creation.

And Peter tells us the underlying reason why they scoff at Christ's return and future judgment. He tells us in verse 4, he says they do so because they are following their own sinful desires.

It is convenient to believe that there is no return of Christ, there is no future judgment because that would mean there is no accountability, that would mean we can live as we choose and there is no accountability before our creator.

[ 19 : 51 ] Scoffers reject the idea that one day they will stand before the God of the universe, they will stand before their creator and they will give an account to him as evidence that they don't belong to themselves.

They will give an account to the one who created them. Their sinful desires cause them to deny that truth, to suppress that truth, and to believe a lie that when you're dead, you're done.

that this world is going to continue forever, that people will continue to be born though we die, there will be more people to come and come and this just goes on forever and ever and ever.

And that is what the scoffers say. There is no end to this world, there is no future judgment. And so Peter makes the point in verse 7 where he says the same word of God that created this world is the same word of God that is preserving this world for fire.

The first judgment was by flood, the second judgment would be fire, and Peter says that the same word of God is preserving this world for judgment.

[ 21 : 16 ] and he also says for the destruction of the ungodly. On that final day, not only will the world be burnt by fire and not burnt in terms of disappearing altogether, the fire is one of purification and the Bible tells us that we will inhabit a new heaven and a new earth.

But it's easy to overlook what it also says in verse 7, that it will also be the destruction of the ungodly, and those are sobering words.

And so Peter reminds us, he says to us, he says, guard yourselves against this kind of scoffing. And he tells us again how to do it. We do it by remembering these predictions of the holy prophets, remembering the predictions of the apostles of the Lord.

And it's by remembering the truth that we guard against the lie that there is indeed coming a day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Another way that Peter tells us that we should guard against scoffers who mock and say that the promised day of the Lord's return will never happen because so much time has lapsed since the promise was made.

[ 22 : 58 ] He tells us remember the Lord's timing. And this is my second point. Notice how he says it in verse 8.

But do not overlook this fact. See, the scoffers overlook the fact. He says, but don't you overlook this fact. Don't you overlook the fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

this is not new with Peter. Peter is affirming the witness of scripture, what scripture says about God and how he relates to time.

What Peter says echoes what the psalmist says in Psalm 90 verse 4. For a thousand years in your sight are but yesterday when it is past or as a watch in the night.

A thousand years. It's like a watch in the night, which is like three hours. That's the way time is to God.

[ 24 : 15 ] And Peter's point is that the Lord relates to time differently than we do. And the reason is that the Lord lives in eternity.

We live in time. God does not live in time. He lives outside of time. I heard a pastor say some years ago and it stuck with me. He said eternity is not just a long time.

Eternity is no time at all. Time is not a part of eternity. Eternity has no beginning and has no end.

So time is a foreign thing in eternity. time is a friend to us because we are creatures of time.

God put us in a time space world. And what Peter is doing is Peter is speaking about time, our time, and he is trying to speak about it from the vantage point of the Lord who doesn't know time, who is not bound by time.

[ 25 : 22 ] And so he says from God's vantage point, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day. He's saying vice versa, it's the same thing. And so when we think of what God has done in giving us these promises again and again of a final judgment in the world, Peter says, you think it's a long time, but from God's vantage point, it really is not a long time at all, because God does not live in time as we do.

I mean, if you think about it, for us, a thousand years is a long time. The reality is, a hundred years is a long time for us.

And the truth is that it's highly unlikely any of us will live to be a hundred years. And so we relate to time very differently than God relates to time.

One who exists in eternity, time, from his vantage point, is nothing. A long time for us is a short time for the Lord.

So Peter says, we must remember the Lord's timing when we think about the promised day of the judgment of the Lord.

[ 26 : 57 ] In verse nine, Peter further explains this long period of time between the promise of the Lord's return and its actual fulfillment.

Notice again what he says in verse nine. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish or that all should come to repentance.

First, it's important to understand what Peter is not saying. Peter is not saying that God is delaying the day of judgment, that he is saying, oh, you know, I need to change and give them some more time, and like this is some floating date out there, and God is just pushing it forward and pushing it forward, but he's not saying that at all.

That idea is contrary to Scripture. And the reason we know that Peter is not talking about some floating date is that Scripture tells us it's a fixed date.

Do you know the date of judgment is already fixed? It's already set. this is what Paul said as he was in Athens, in Acts 17, 31, he said, God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by Christ Jesus, whom he raised from the dead, and he said, God has given proof that he is going to do this by raising Jesus from the dead.

[ 28 : 41 ] The day is fixed. The day of judgment, whatever that is, whether it's tomorrow, whether it's later today, whether it's a hundred years from now or a thousand years from now, whatever that date is, it is that date because God fixed it.

Not because he's up in heaven nudging around, pushing the day, forward to make it longer. No, that is already said. And Peter is just saying, this long lapse of time, it's just an expression of the Lord's patience.

It's an expression of the Lord's kindness. And notice how he says it. He says, he is patient toward you.

If you have an English Standard Version Bible, there's a footnote, a footnote number six, and it says, he's patient on your account rather than patient toward you.

He is patient on your account. But the pronouns you and yours do not refer to the whole world, as some people say. Instead, it refers to the recipients of the letter, and this includes, by extension, those of us who belong to Christ.

[ 30 : 10 ] God's patient, shown in the long period between the promise and Christ's actual return and judgment, is an expression of his desire that all of his elect people will come to repentance, and they all will without exception, every one of them.

But in verse 10, Peter affirms, he reaffirms what the scoffers are denying. Notice what he says in verse 10.

He says, but the day of the Lord will come. It will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Peter is saying, despite all the time that has elapsed, despite all the scoffers are saying, the day of the Lord will come. But it's going to come in an unexpected way, the same way that none of us prepares for a thief.

A thief strikes at the most unexpected time. A thief catches us by surprise, generally speaking. He says, that's the way the day of the Lord will come. The day of the Lord will not come by some announcement, but will come suddenly, unexpectedly.

[ 31 : 44 ] and he tells us, the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done in them will be exposed, or they will be laid bare, or they will be made manifest.

And what he means by that is, when he talks about the works, it's the activities and all these things, so they'll be exposed to what they really are.

Not what they appear to be, but what they really are. In this moment of the Lord's return, and the ushering of judgment, everything will be seen for what it truly is.

What is valuable will be seen to be valuable, what is invaluable, or of no value at all, will be seen for that. What is precious will be seen as precious, and what is rubbish will be seen as rubbish.

What is worthy of our time and attention, and thus to set our affections on, will be seen plainly to be worthy of our affections.

[ 33 : 06 ] And what is not will be seen plainly to be what is not worthy of our affections. And brothers and sisters, in light of this, we are to be living and responding in a particular way.

And this is how the apostle Peter concludes this section of his letter. He begins to address the implications. He's basically saying, in light of all these things that are supposed to happen, in light of the Lord's coming, in light of the Lord's judgment, in light of this burning up of everything, purifying everything, and bringing light to cause things to appear as they truly are, to lay them bare.

what kind of people ought you to be? What kind of people are we to be in light of this? And this is the point that he concludes with in verses 11 through 14.

And his point is, we should live holy lives. In light of the Lord's return in judgment, we who belong to Christ, should be about the business of living holy lives before the Lord.

I think on this last day of, this last Lord's Day of 2024, two days before this year, and I want to encourage us to hear this appeal of the apostle Peter in verses 11 to 14 as to how we should live, not just in 2025, but how we should live if we are the people of God who take seriously these words and these promises that started with the Old Testament prophets, prophets, that continued with the apostles of the Lord, that are affirmed again and again for us.

[ 35 : 38 ] Let's hear how we are supposed to be living in light of all of that truth. He begins his appeal in verse 11, and he says, since all these are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire.

He's repeating the promise again, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn.

But according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace.

Brothers and sisters, these concluding words of the apostle Peter, they're calling us to see the world and everything in it for what it truly is.

[ 37 : 07 ] It is fodder for the final fire. That's what it is. It is fodder for the final fire, on the day of judgment. So, we must live faithfully in this world.

And we must do all the things that are required of us in this world, like working and studying. And the Lord brings marriage, getting married, and if he gives children, raising those children, and doing everything that pertains to living responsibly and sensibly in this world.

We must do it in service to Christ, but we must not set our hearts on this world. We must not set our affections on anything in this world because this world, the Bible tells us, is passing away with all of its affections.

things. We must do this as we are looking for the day. And Peter gives the idea that we are so eager to see the day as if we can hasten the day.

No, we can't hasten the day because it's a fixed day. But we can eagerly anticipate that day. We're supposed to live with that kind of awareness.

[ 38 : 32 ] And brothers and sisters, if we truly believe that Christ will return in judgment, it is only logical that we live holy and godly lives. Peter says in verse 14 that we are to be diligent.

We are to be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace. What Peter is saying is we must be diligent to be holy.

we must be diligent to guard our lives from the spots and blemishes of sin in light of our Lord's promised return.

Now notice what Peter is not saying. Peter is not saying that we must be perfect. He's not calling us to perfection. That is an impossibility of scripture.

scripture. Because even when we don't actively sin, we are sinners. And even when we sin and we confess our sins and we repent of our sins, even our prayers of confession and repentance are not perfect before a holy God.

[ 39 : 50 ] And so Peter is not talking to us about coming to some state of perfection. No, what he's talking to us about is living a life that is absent of active intentional sin in our lives.

It's kind of like, you know, if you go in the food store, there's no perfect fruit that you can buy out of the food store. No, no, no fruit is perfect. They're all in some state of decay.

But there are some fruits, they have obvious blemishes and bruises and spots on them and you wouldn't choose them. You choose another one.

It's not perfect, but it just doesn't have those blemishes and those spots. And I believe what Peter is getting at when he talks about these spots and blemishes is these are things in our lives, these are things that are pleasing to the Lord, these are sins that are there and we know that they are there.

And he says be diligent. to rid yourself of those spots and those blemishes. This is a call to actively fight sin.

[ 41 : 05 ] This is a call to be sober about sin, to see sin for what it is. Sin is no friend of ours, brothers and sisters. Sin is not something that we can cozy up in our lives and believe that we will get on well.

We will not get on well. It will destroy us. And so he calls us to be diligent, to be holy, be diligent, to not be engaged in high handed sin.

We know it's sin and we pursue it nonetheless. If it required perfection, none of us would make it.

And this is why the Lord, when he saves us, he imputes the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ in our account. Jesus who came and kept the law perfectly and then went to the cross and died for the sins of sinners like you and me.

God takes his righteousness and he credits that to us because we have none of our own. sin. But then we are called to engage in ongoing fighting of sin, this process of sanctification where over time we become less sinful and more Christ-like.

[ 42 : 34 ] sin. And the idea that Peter is communicating to us is almost that we are doing our best to be diligent, not engaging in sin flippantly and carelessly and sloppily because we want to be pleasing in the Lord's sight when he returns.



sins. And there's some tension in this and here's the tension. The tension is yes, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, his perfect righteousness is credited in our account.

And our acceptance before God is not based on our own merit. But that's no call to be sloppy in how we live our lives.

That is no call to be flippant and careless with sin. Indeed, if Christ is in us, if we belong to Christ, there would be that desire to live a holy life.

And if that desire is not within us, and we profess to know Christ, then we need to do some deep soul searching because the Bible does not know that.

[ 43 : 55 ] What the Bible knows is those who are not perfect, who are trusting in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who are seeking to live more and more like him every single day.

This is what the Apostle Peter is calling us to. He's calling us to live lives, not lives that are perfect, but lives that are not evidently, lives that are not glaringly, lives that are not obviously marked by the spots and blemishes of sin.

Oftentimes, when we talk about living holy lives, many people automatically think about what it means is not committing sexual sin. It certainly means that, but it means so much more than that.

It is a given that we who belong to Christ will not engage in sexual sin. That's a given. We've been memorizing that scripture. We just recited it this morning.

The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. And again, Peter's not talking about those who are perfect.

[ 45 : 15 ] He's talking about those who are not actively engaging in sin. As a matter of fact, in that, the very next verse, verse 11 of 1 Corinthians 6, 9 through 10, the very next verse, what Paul says, is such was some of you, but you were washed.

You were cleansed. You were justified. in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In heaven, there will be former all manner of people, but not those who are actively living immoral lives.

in the world. This holy life that we are being called to, we are being called to be on a path of living close to the Lord and obedience to his word.

And again, we won't do this perfectly. None of us. Our best efforts. We won't do it perfectly. but we need to be doing it truly.

We need to be on a path of living close to the Lord. We need to be on a path of living in obedience to his word. And guess what? This is the normal Christian life.

[ 46 : 47 ] This is the normal Christian life. This is not super spiritual. This is the normal Christian life. Living close to the Lord and seeking to obey his word.

it is desiring to please him in all that we do. We will read his word and obey his word and we will commune with him in prayer and we should have a desire to do that because we belong to him.

And if we live holy lives giving evidence that we truly belong to Christ, we will be at peace. We will be at peace with him when he comes.

And the idea here when Peter says to be found in peace, people are going to be found in one of two states when Christ returns. They will be at peace with him or they will be objects of his wrath.

Only those two categories. you know that the word holy means to be set apart from something to something.

[ 48 : 08 ] That's what holy means. It means to be set apart from something to something. And so there are implications for what holiness should look like in terms of what we are set apart from and what we are set apart to.

God saved us. He translated us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son. He has separated us from the world.

And the world is fallen humanity in organized rebellion, active rebellion against God. That's the world.

We've been saved out of that. We've been brought out of that. We've been separated from that unto Christ. And our lives, brothers and sisters, are to have evidence of this truth.

And so, as I said, there are only two days left in 2024. And as we prepare to leave this year and enter into a new year by the grace of God, I would encourage us to take very seriously these words of the apostle Peter.

[ 49 : 36 ] The Lord is coming again. And he is coming when we don't expect him to come. And we must live lives that are marked by holiness and godliness because it is those lives that reflect the reality that we expect Christ to return again.

And as we live in this world, we see all manner of suffering and sin and really they're designed to cause us to long for the world to come.

They're designed to cause us to long for the day when the Lord will return and he will usher in new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

when I walk into Princess Margaret Hospital and I see so many people suffering, I long for the day when the Lord will return and there will be no more.

when I read about injustice and exploitation and many people who suffer because of it, I long for the day for the Lord to return and usher in a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells and in which he makes all things right.

[ 51 : 08 ] And as we go into the new year, I have a prayer for myself, I have a prayer for you. I pray God will give us a dual burden. First, a burden for ourselves. A burden for ourselves in light of what the Apostle Peter says to us.

Christ is coming again. And we must live holy and godly lives patiently but eagerly waiting for his return.

And that we would do this despite those who scoff and mock. We would be even more diligent to live godly and holy lives in front of them.

Perhaps by doing so, it may cause some of them to rethink the path they're on. And the second burden is I pray that God will give us a burden for others who don't know Christ.

especially those who are near and dear to us who don't know the Lord. And friends, there is no special path to those who are connected to us but don't know the Lord.

[ 52 : 28 ] Peter tells us that when Christ returns, it will mean the destruction of the ungodly. And this will mean those we love who do not know Christ.

And so I pray that God will give us a burden for them in addition to a burden for ourselves, a burden for them. And I pray that that burden, what that burden looks like is not just that we feel sorry for them, but that we will share the gospel with them.

That's our responsibility. God is the one who raises the dead. God is the one who saves sinners. But he has ordained that he will do so through the sharing of the gospel, through the proclamation of the truth, that Jesus is the one through whom salvation is possible.

And so I pray that we will be faithful to share the gospel with them out of a burden for their eternal souls, that their souls may not be lost.

I pray that God will give us such a burden that when we are with them, when we are talking to them, yes, let's have normal conversations with them, but let us not lose sight of their souls. And we ask of the Lord, Lord, help me to be able to shine the light of the gospel into this conversation salvation and to call them to repentance.

[ 54 : 01 ] And certainly that means that we must pray for them. Let's pray. Father, thank you for this age-old promise that the day of the Lord will come, that you will come and you will judge the world in righteousness by the one you have appointed, the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have given everyone proof of this coming judgment by raising him from the dead.

Would you help us who belong to you to live every day anticipating your return?

Help us to live lives of holiness and godliness. so that when Christ returns, we may be among those who are at peace with him, that we will not be those who are the objects of his wrath.

Lord, convict us this morning as only you can. Speak to our hearts. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.