

***“Where Righteousness is at Home” | 2 Peter 3:8-15a, Psalm 85:8-13***  
***Rev. Ellen Dawson | March 17, 2019 | FOX CHAPEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH***

*8 But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.*

*11 Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? 13 But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.*

*14 Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; 15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.*

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*8 Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,  
for he will speak peace to his people,  
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.  
9 Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,  
that his glory may dwell in our land.*

*10 Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;  
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.  
11 Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,  
and righteousness will look down from the sky.  
12 The Lord will give what is good,  
and our land will yield its increase.  
13 Righteousness will go before him,  
and will make a path for his steps.*

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This fall, colleges and high schools all over the country will celebrate Homecoming, an annual and long-standing tradition where alumni go back to their hometowns and college campuses to reunite with classmates, celebrate with family, and demonstrate their school spirit. Originally intended to help the alumni organize class reunions and fill the stands during the rival football games, Homecoming has grown to include parades, pep rallies, concerts, fundraisers, and more. From Fox Chapel High School's tradition of class skits to the University of Arizona's lighting of the "A" on nearby A Mountain, Homecoming is an event that we are all familiar with.

But when we think of homecoming, we can't just limit it to tailgating and the crowning of a school king and queen. Homecoming is more than just going back to one's alma mater. A soldier returning home from deployment -- being joyfully welcomed by family, neighbors, and yes, even their dogs is a homecoming. Homecoming is celebrated in many churches, too, where families are invited to come back to the church where they were baptized, for worship services and potluck dinners.

Jesus, too, will be coming home, as we see in today's scripture passage. Otherwise known as the Second Coming, or the Parousia<sup>1</sup>, Christ's return will be just that, a day when Jesus Christ, who is now seated at the right hand of God, will come back to earth to fulfill the prophecies, defeat evil, and rule forever. That too, is a homecoming.

When will this happen? How? Why? And are we really sure this return of Christ will take place? Well, Peter addresses these questions, along with what we are to do in the meantime, as we wait for the Lord himself to "descend from heaven with a shout."

In this letter, Peter is reminding his readers of the messages in Scripture, making sure to place the messengers of the new covenant on the same level as the messengers of the old covenant. He says remember what the prophets have said - remember what the Patriarchs have taught - remember what Jesus Christ himself explained....we are to remember the promises of God and the Lord's ultimate plan for salvation.

You see, at the time of this writing, Peter was facing his own death, and he wanted to be sure the readers knew and understood not only what they had heard and read about Jesus Christ, but that Peter himself was a witness to God's own revelation from heaven. He writes about the transfiguration - 6 days after Jesus predicts his own death, 6 days after Peter declares that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

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<sup>1</sup> Pronounced puh-roo-zee-uh, -see-uh, pahr-oo-see-uh

In Second Peter 1, verses 16-18 he writes, *“we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.”*

He continues, making the point that the words of the prophets were not empty words, but were God-given visions and promises, some of which had already been fulfilled, and some that have yet to come to fulfillment. The prophets Daniel and Zechariah, even Enoch, the 7th descendant of Adam, prophesied that the Lord will come again “with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones.”<sup>2</sup> And remember that on the island of Patmos, John was given a revelation about Christ’s return.

So, that puts us in this in-between, not-yet time, because this plan for salvation includes waiting...waiting for the judgment, waiting for the return of our King, waiting for all to be made right once again.

What does Peter say we are to do, here...now? He writes, “while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish.” We are to live lives of holiness. We are to walk in the light of God’s promises. We are to be at peace.

To me, this sounds like what we are to revisit every year during the season of Lent. Lent is a time of considering our sins, a time of repentance, and a 40-day journey of drawing closer to the Lord in preparation of what we celebrate on Easter Sunday - the resurrection. Lent, too, is a time of waiting -- waiting with a purpose while we meditate on God’s purpose.

Look at verses 8 and 9 with me again. They say, “But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.”

God’s purpose, as we are taught in today’s passage is also God’s patience, and Peter says “the patience of our Lord” is salvation. Salvation - Life - for all. That will come with the restoration of humanity, and as Peter says, this is “in accordance with his promise,” “we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.”

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<sup>2</sup> Jude 1:14

Righteousness will be at home in the time of Christ's Second Coming. But I want to be sure we don't miss this great tidbit of information -- in the Greek, Peter writes, "where righteousness dwells." The verb here is "to dwell, to inhabit." It's the same verb used in Greek when describing God's presence - dwelling - in the temple.

Why do I point this out here? Well, I want you to listen now to the description of the new heaven and the new earth that we read of in the book of Revelation:

*Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden -- God made his presence known time and time again to the Israelites, God made his dwelling place in the tabernacle on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant.

And, just as the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, Jesus will, once again, dwell with us here, at home.

You see, this is not something we are just to be waiting for. We are to anticipate it with joy. We are to make preparations. Organize parades. Get sign ups going for a world wide potluck. Because this second coming, brothers and sisters, it is a homecoming.

*Before Jesus died, he said to his disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going."<sup>3</sup>*

He is at home in glory with his Father. And yet, Jesus will be returning home to bring the Lord's plan to fruition. For us, this means we wait -- for our own great homecoming in glory when we pass away from this earth. We, as the church, wait for God's plan to be realized, the great homecoming of our Lord that will bring justice, peace, healing, and joy.

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<sup>3</sup> John 14:1-4

Next week, I will be traveling with a group from our church to Guatemala to serve alongside our mission partners in the pueblo of Santa Lucia. At the end of the week, I will be meeting up with my friend Flor de Maria Alvarez, and will travel with her back to the town of Tiquisate where I lived for 9 months during my year of service as a Young Adult Volunteer. It's a homecoming - after 14 years - I am going back to a place I consider home. I am so thrilled. I look forward to the hugs, tears, laughter, reminiscing, and I am sure, Flor's mother Dora will make tamales and rellenitos as part of the celebration.

Any kind of homecoming - whether it's to your hometown, an alma mater or just to a place where you developed lasting friendships - homecoming is a time of reminiscing, celebrating, and returning.

Jesus is waiting for us to come home to him just as we are waiting for Jesus to return to reign on earth. And we are not to be afraid. Our hearts are not to be troubled. Because while we wait, he is preparing a place for us. We, too, are to prepare - to prepare our hearts through repentance, living lives that reflect his love and promises. And one day, in God's perfect timing, we will get to take part in the ultimate reunion, the best-ever parade, an amazing celebration when righteousness will be home.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.