

Some people are really slow to show up when they are supposed to. We all probably know at least one person like this. Growing up this person was Josh. It did not matter what we were going to do. He would never be on time. If it was a party, if it was something for school, even if it was something he planned at his own house, this man would always be late. Often he would be ridiculously late. We started having to lie to him about what time things started just to get him to be on time. But that wouldn't work and we kept having to tell him earlier and earlier. Eventually we would tell him something was happening two hours before in hopes he would only be 30 minutes late.

Sometimes it can feel like Christ is like my friend Josh. He said he would come back and soon. But why is Christ so slow to return? After all, it has been over 2,000 years. That seems pretty late. So we start to doubt if He is coming back at all. The world mocks our faith and belief in this day. But how should we feel about it?

This morning I want us to talk not just about why Jesus will return. I want us to think about why He seems to be taking His time. Because it is not something we should ignore or just wave away. And my hope is that we will recognize His slowness is not a bad things.

I. Christ's slowness to return does not mean He is not coming back (v. 1-7).

He has been slow.

But He has not forgotten.

This is the core reminder we need.

It might be slower than we thought, but it is still happening.

Verse 1, **"This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, believed. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,"**

Peter reminds them of his first letter.

And this is kind of how he sums up the letters.

I get a kick out how different pastors, theologians, or commentators will talk about books of the Bible.

They may have a different idea or every sermon series has its own title.
Or each one will have their own emphasis they see.
Here, Peter tells us what he has been trying to do in the letter.
He is trying to stir up our memory.
He wants us to remember the promises of Christ.

Verse 2, **"that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,"**

The primary prediction we are to remember is the return of Christ.
The promises have been made about the end and restoration of all things.
God promised Eve that her seed would crush the serpent.
Abraham was promised his seed would be greater than the stars.
David was promised that his descendants would rule forever.
Moses was promised his people would live in the promised land forever.
And Jesus promised that He would return again.
And the next time that He comes, all of His promises.
All of those prophecies about the swallowing of death.
How Jesus will feast on the leviathan
About how the enemies and wicked will be judged.
About how life and peace will reign forever more.
Every tear will be wiped from every eye.
Those promises will be fulfilled on that day.

We need to remember those.
This was not a promise made one time.
These are the promises the prophets told us about.
These are the promises Jesus commanded us to look forward to.
These are the promises the apostles, like Peter, have told us about.
God has kept every promise He ever made.
Even those that have taken hundreds of years to come true.

Verse 3, **"knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires."**

One of the signs of the last days is people doubting that these are the last days.

And their scoffing will intensify.

These are people who will mock and laugh.

Who will wonder, why do you believe Jesus will return?

They will be shocked that someone would be so foolish as to believe this.

They will laugh and mock our faith.

And Peter says, this scoffing comes from following their own sin.

They are stuck in their sinful desires.

And this leads them to doubt and forget the promises of GOd.

We even get to hear some of their arguments.

Verse 4, **"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."**

This is their primary complaint.

It is what they will bring up over and over again.

This is one that you have probably heard people say.

Maybe you have even said it yourself.

They wonder why it has been so long.

Surely if Jesus was going to return He would have done so by now.

How can this promise be true?

Look at how long it has been, 2,000 years.

They will say we must have misunderstood or misheard.

We need to see that this complaint.

This objection to our belief is not new.

It was not invented at the enlightenment or after the reformation.,

People were saying this two thousand years ago.

And they are still saying the same thing.

At times people think they are brilliant for arguing with the Bible.

But they are just repeating the same old things people have always said.

They point out that nothing has ever changed.
Ever since the ancient days, like has just continued.
Things may change here and there, but nothing has been restored.
We are not closer to a restoration of Eden.

But this objection is not just forgetting God's promises.
They are forgetting what God has already done.

Verse 5, **"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,"**

They are forgetting who made the world.
The world only carries on as it has, because God formed it.
God created the heavens and the earth.
He formed the land back from the waters.

Verse 6, **"and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished."**

He reminds them that God already destroyed the world once.
God created the whole world.
And then because of its evil and violence.
Because of the great wickedness, God flooded the world.
And everyone perished except those who trusted God and got in the Ark.
Does God not have the ability to do the same thing again?

Verse 7, **"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."**

God has already done it once.
Now He will do it again.
The same word that spoke, "Let there be light."
The same word that spoke "let the rains burst forth"
That voice will speak again.

And there is a fire coming.

The image is that the fire is already light.
It is already burning and raging.
It wants to burn the heavens and the earth.
It wants to consume our world.
And the only reason it does not is because God is holding it back.
Picture a raging wildfire that is only being contained by the hand of God.
God's hand is the only thing holding back this fire.
It is being kept at bay until the day of judgment and destruction.
It will come and burn the wicked and all sin.

We need to acknowledge this.
We need to remember the promises.
Look back to what God has said.
Look back to what God has done.
We need to remember.

And this memory should impact and change how we live.
It is not just meant to be a memory we think back on fondly.
Let me give a small example, sometimes my wife and I look back on
pictures of our kids.
They are still young and small.
But they used to be even smaller.
And every time when I look back over the years of pictures.
I see how they have grown.
I watch videos of their voices and silliness.
It does not just remind me of them.
It reminds me that I love them.
It stirs up more love in my heart and stirs my affections towards them.
Which then makes me want to be a better father.
It makes me have more patience the next time I see them.
It helps me make time to sit on the floor and play.

Remembering the promise of God should also stir us.
It should make us love Christ more.

It should change the way we respond to the next evil.
It should renew our commitment to follow Jesus now.
We need to remember His coming.
And we need to live like we remember.

II. Christ's slowness to return is good news (v. 8-10).

Often we might think of Christ's delayed return.
We worry about it.
We wonder why He does not hurry up.
We see another terror attack.
We see a democracy collapse.
We have to endure more deaths of our loved ones.
And we wonder why Christ makes us wait and suffer so long.
But Christ does not delay to harm us.
He does not wait to make us suffer.
It is not some cosmic joke and He is just hiding in the closet waiting for us to give up.
He waits because He loves us.
And He waits for our own good.

Verse 8, **"Do not overlook this once fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."**

We cannot overlook how limited our perspective is.
Because we only experience and can live in this moment.
Sometimes they last long like when you are in line somewhere.
Or you are waiting for something important.
Sometimes they go quickly like time spent with friends or an afternoon nap.

But God's experience of time is not like ours.
To Him, each day is like a thousand years long and a thousand years is nothing.
What does that mean?
I don't fully know.

Because we cannot know.
We cannot truly understand how God sees.
We cannot think about how God experiences time.
His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts.

I think about my own children's concept of time.
They have their own clock and can kind of read time.
We set a lot of timers so they have some understanding about how long five minutes is.
But often what happens in our house is they tell me they can't find something.
I tell them to go look.
They look for about 30 seconds.
Then they come back and tell me they have looked for a thousand years and can't find it.
Some of that is hyperbole.
But it also probably feels that long to children.

And we laugh because we have a better concept of how long it has actually been.
Here is the reality.
Our own concept of time is infinitely worse than my children's compared to God.
We have no true understanding.

Just think about all that you experience and can see in a few seconds.
You have your senses and what you can taste, touch, see, smell.
God sees and hears everything everywhere every second.
This moment now He can hear every sermon on earth.
He knows the heart beats of every person on the planet.
He knows and cares for the story of each person who is awake.
And while we sleep at night, God is busy watching over the lives of billions of people.

He sees and takes care of stars and planets we have never seen in universes we cannot imagine.

And we dare think He is taking a little long in how His plans affect us. When there are hundreds of millions of people simply in our own country. Whose destinies and lives God is watching over.

Verse 9, **"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."**

God is not slow.

If anything, He is busy.

He is spinning a billion plates and we dare tell Him to hurry up a bit.

But God is not slow.

He is intentionally not coming back yet.

He has not forgotten His promises.

And our concept of what is slow means nothing to God anyway.

But look at why God delays.

He does so because of His patience and because of his love.

He delays to hold back His judgment.

And He does this because His return means judgment.

His return means that people will be punished eternally.

They will be cast into the lake of fire and never return.

God does not want that day to come yet.

He delays.

He appears slow because He is showing more grace.

Every day that Jesus does not return is a struggle for believers and it is a grace towards sinners.

It is another chance for them to repent and find grace.

It is another chance for the scoffers to turn aside from their blindness and embrace Christ.

He delays as long as possible.

He wants everyone to be able to come to Jesus.

Because until that day comes, there is a chance to escape.

Anyone who repents.

Anyone who turns from their sins and gives their life to Christ can be saved.

Then this day will be a day of joy and rejoicing instead of terror.

But this delay is also removing all the excuses.

Each day is another chance to repent.

And each day refused, is another weight and sin that will be judged at the end.

Verse 10, **"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."**

What does it mean it will come like a thief?

We just spent a lot of time talking about the day of the Lord in Joel.

It was in every chapter.

Here we see it again.

Peter refers to the day of Christ's return as the Day of the Lord.

This final day of judgment.

This does not appear to reference a rapture or a secret return of Jesus.

The phrase thief in the night means it is unexpected.

It is always a surprise.

No one ever comes home to find they have been robbed and says, "I knew it!"

Thieves don't give you a heads up on what day they will swing by.

This day also seems to be connected to the judgment of the wicked and the renewal of the world.

The heavens and the earth are dissolving.

They are being recreated and remade.

And all people are exposed and judged.
Every secret word and ever secret deed will be brought into God's light.
And people will have to answer for what they have said and what they have done.
They will all stand before God in judgment.
This all sounds like what happens at the end.
This does not sound like it is split into two.

On this day, everything will be exposed.
All of our works and life will be laid bare.
The question I have is this, what will be exposed in your life?
Will your generosity and kindness be exposed?
Will your goodness in quiet ordinary moments of faithfulness be exposed?
Or will your evil deeds be exposed?
Will you be exposed as someone who only pretended to believe?

If you do not know Jesus.
If you have not put your faith in Him, come!
Do not delay and do not wait any longer.
I don't know about you, but I don't exactly want that day to come right now.
I would like some more time to prepare.

III. Christ's slowness doesn't mean we can't be ready (v. 11-18).

Since this day is coming.
Because this day will expose all of our deeds.
We should live in preparation.
We should be getting ready.
We should act like one day Jesus will appear and show up.

We are getting ready to be in the holiday season.
Many of you might have guests who are coming.
What do you do when you know that they might arrive?
Do you not prepare?

Do you not make sure you have showered that day and smell okay?
Do you not make sure the guest room has clean sheets?
Do you not make sure you have enough food to feed everyone?
Do you you not clean the house?

We do all of these things when we know we have temporary guests we want to please.

How much more should we get ready when Jesus is our Guest.

And His stay will not be temporary.

He will be coming to judge to rule and reign.

Verse 11, **"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in the lives of holiness and godliness."**

We should be living holy lives.

Our lives should be focused on pleasing God.

Don't worry about the things that will dissolve.

This world will fade.

All of the political battles and worries will disappear.

The things we are tempted to care deeply about will dissolve.

What should we be focusing on instead?

Verse 12, **"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!"**

We should be looking and preparing for this coming.

We should look toward the wonder of that day and be ready.

Focus on what matters and on what will last.

Verse 13, **"But according to his promise we are waiting for the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."**

Heaven is temporary.

Our eternal hope as Christians is not going to heaven when we die.

Our hope is in the resurrection that Jesus will bring.

Our hope is in the new heavens and the new earth God will make.
An earth where righteousness reigns and sin is no more.
An earth that will not struggle and fight against us.
An earth no longer with limited resources we fight over.
An earth that no longer seems to have an expiration date.
An earth we no longer have to worry ending.
An earth that will be restored as it was always meant to be.

We don't know what that will look like.
One of the things I like to imagine is that the earth will look much like this one.
But the scars and damage no longer remain.
It will look again how it looked on those first seven days.
And there is one thing I want to see in the new earth.
I want to see the plains.
I want to see them filled with bison and buffalo again.
More than the eye can see rumbling through the plains.
But whatever it will be no one will be disappointed in how it looks.
It will be how it should have been.

Verse 14, **"Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace."**

How should Jesus find us on this day?

We should not be stained by sin.

We should not have blemishes.

And we should be at peace.

He should not return to find His people running around terrified of everything.

He should not return to find us scared and desperate.

He should find at filled with the peace of Christ.

If He came back today, would you have that peace?

Verse 15, **"And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him."**

He quotes and refers to Paul.

And Peter reminds us again to be thankful for God's patience.

His delay allows us time to get ready.

To prepare our souls and clean our hands.

Verse 16, **"as 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,"**

This is a really funny aside.

Sometimes the Bible can be really funny.

Here, Peter is saying that Paul's letters can be hard to understand.

If you have ever read the Bible and not understood something.

Or maybe you have thought things were too hard and you needed help to understand it.

You are in good company.

Peter agrees with you.

He sometimes has a hard time with it as well.

"which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures."

It is not a problem when you cannot understand the Bible.

It is a problem when you try to twist the Bible.

The Bible is hard to understand at points.

There are some places we don't know for sure what God means.

And we have a lot of different ideas and different ideas.

But there is always a limit.

You cannot make the Scriptures say whatever you want.

The Bible has limits.

It cannot mean anything you want.

And there are these people, like the false teachers in chapter 2.

Who take the Bible and twist it.

They make it mean whatever they want it mean.
They change it and twist it.
Heretics always have verses.
But we have to be careful.

Because there is no major doctrine or major teaching of Jesus that is found in the margins.

The main things are the plain things.

Take the return of Jesus we have been talking about.

The details are vague and unclear.

When and exactly what will it look like?

But the main thing we all know and all agree is that Christ will return and this is our blessed hope.

That is plain.

You cannot twist it to mean something else.

They take what is clear and plain and make it mean something different.

They make you think you have to understand some weird background or bizarre practice in order to accept their interpretation.

Let me give you some examples.

Someone will tell you the Bible doesn't actually condemn all sexuality.

It does not mean to single about homosexuality.

It actually only means cult prostitutes or being on the receiving end.

Or they will read the sermon on the mount.

The parts about loving your enemies and turning the other cheek.

Then they will say well that only applies to the new heavens and new earth.

So down here now we can lie and spit on our enemies because the stakes are too high and things are too important.

After all, God could never mean nations are supposed to turn their cheeks that is not strength.

Surely Jesus only meant give to the poor when they deserve it.

Verse 17, **"You therefore, believed, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability."**

We have to be sure we are not carried away by these people.

Don't fall for these lies.

Learning Greek, Hebrew, theology, backgrounds is all incredibly helpful stuff.

But you do not need it in order to understand Jesus.

You do not need it in order to comprehend what God has said.

I don't want to downplay those things because I love them and they are helpful.

But be wary of them when someone is teaching you something new.

Do not lose your stability.

This is a crazy world.

And life is hard.

It will knock you down and try to blow you over.

But you can have stability when we trust in God.

And when we prepare for this day.

So prepare by being stable.

By staying in our ancient faith.

Stay rooted with the great cloud of witnesses and the generations who have gone before.

Verse 18, **"But 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."**

I love this verse.

We are to grow in grace.

The Christian faith is not a moment of decision where we decide to follow Jesus and that it is.

It is an entire life spent growing in our faith.

Growing in the gospel.

Growing in our understanding and knowledge of Jesus.

Growing in our knowledge of the Bible and theology.

Are you growing in these things?

Because if you want to be prepared for the day of Christ, you need to be growing.

Just because you have been a Christian for decades does not mean you are growing.

Just because you are a plant in the ground doesn't mean you are growing.

There are plenty filling up churches whose faith is stagnant.

They believe all the right things, but they are not actively preparing for Jesus.

They are not trying to grow and become more like Jesus.

Are you trying to grow?

Are you more like Jesus this year than you were last year?

Because that process should never be ending.

There are believers who spend their lives in church and never grow.

They just go through the motions and stay the same.

That should not be true of us.

I also love the way Peter ends the letter.

He calls for glory to God from now to the day of eternity.

The day of eternity is coming.

And the sun will never set.

Are you ready?

1. Christ's slowness to return does not mean He is not coming back (v. 1-7). Christ's slowness to return is good news (v. 8-10). Christ's slowness doesn't mean we can't be ready (v. 11-18).
2. Our mission as a church is to be a spiritual greenhouse for church growth. Are you growing in your faith? You may have been in the ground a long time but that does not mean you are growing. You may be growing in knowledge but not grace. Are you growing?