

## *“Waiting for the Fire”*

*2 Peter 3:1-18*

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • March 11, 2018

There's a quote that's become very popular the last few years. You may have heard it. "The two most important days in your life are the day you're born and the day you discover why you were born." It has become the most tweeted thing on Twitter and was really made popular by the prominent theologian and philosopher Steve Harvey, host of TV's *Family Feud*. Harvey's well known for his motivational quotes. For example, he says, "You simply can't go forward and backward at the same time."

Back to the two most important days in your life. Certainly the day you were born was an important day. Most of us wouldn't be here if it weren't for that. But what about the day you discover why you were born? Is there a "why?" Lots of people will try to tell you that there is no cosmic, divine purpose to life. They will say that all life is an accident, that billions of years ago there was a huge explosion and that even though nothing existed before it, out of that explosion came all matter that ever would exist and as it expanded and cooled it formed planets and stars and comets and that by random chance one of those millions of planets formed in precisely the place and way to support life and so some of the cooling rocks came alive and some turned into trees and some into worms and others into dinosaurs and others into humans. And because that's the way it happened life has no real purpose except to have fun and be happy.

The great irony is that if you try to point out to them that there is no place in the natural world where anything like that happens and that sound scientific study shows that all of the universe, from the largest galaxies down to the smallest known particles, shows clear evidence of being intelligently designed, those same people will accuse you of believing in silly myths. And so they create this ridiculous dichotomy between Christianity and science.

A few weeks ago a pastor friend posted a question on Facebook asking other pastors to

share their best evidence for God. My immediate response was DNA. Every living thing contains DNA, which stores all the genetic information for life. DNA functions much like a computer program. Every cell in your body contains this program, which is about 3 billion letters long and is unique to *you*. And just like a computer program can't exist without a programmer, it would be ridiculous to think that DNA could happen by random chance.

Here in Peter's second letter to his "beloved" friends, he reminds them of God's truths and warns them that there will be people who will try to convince them otherwise. In fact in chapter 2, Peter goes on a long tirade against these false teachers and their lifestyles. Here he says, "scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires." Specifically they are denying that Jesus will return. Peter goes on, "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.'" Today they would say something like, "nothing exists that can't be observed and measured by humans. We can't see God and so He must not exist." Their argument is that things will continue in the future as they always have in the past.

Peter says the answer is to know what God's Word says. He says, "remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles." Peter is reminding us to know the overall story of the Bible. One of the amazing things about the Bible, one of the things the Reformers argued was evidence for it being God's Word, is that while 66 books were written by different people over hundreds of years, they tell a cohesive story. The Westminster Confession calls this the "consent of all the parts." Very briefly that story is that God created the world and He made it good. But then sin entered

separating us from God with no way for us to fix it. The answer was for God to come into His creation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, fully human and yet fully God. Jesus is the only person who ever lived a sinless life. He paid what he didn't owe – his life – so that we could receive what we don't deserve – eternal life. Everything is moving toward the day when Jesus returns and destroys all sin and corruption.

Peter then reminds us that God is not slow or delayed in carrying out this final judgment. First, God is outside of the constraints of time. Peter picks up the idea from Psalm 90, saying, "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." One sunny afternoon a man was sitting out in the grass looking at the clouds and thinking about how God sees things. So he asks God, "How LONG is a million years to you?" God answers him, "From my frame of reference it's like a minute." So the man asks, "how much is a million dollars?" and God says, "to me it's like a penny" After a long pause the man says, "Can I have a penny?" After an even longer pause God says, "give me a minute."

When a new movie comes out that you really want to see but you haven't had time to go, you don't want other people to tell you how it ends. When someone does that we call it a spoiler. They've ruined the suspense. And yet if we enjoy the movie we'll watch it over and over again even though we know how it ends. Peter reminds us that we know the beginning of the story, that the world and everything in it was created by God's Word, and we know the end of the story, that the corrupt world is destroyed and replaced with "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." Some people read this and think it's some kind of divine threat. It's not. It's something for us to look forward to. The reason it's taking so long is because God is patient toward us (thank God). He wants all of us to reach repentance, which simply means ordering our lives toward God instead of away from Him.

Here's the main point. Since we know the beginning and the end of the story, what really matters is what we do in between. Jesus could come back at any time. Peter says, "be ready now." You've heard me say before that I think the main reason so many people try to calculate the day Jesus is returning is that they want to be ready. They don't want to miss it. But they don't want to be ready too early. They are having too much fun in their current lifestyle. The consistent message of the Bible is not to delay but be ready for Jesus.

In verse 11 Peter says, "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?" In Matthew 24 Jesus says, "stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Finally, Peter says, "Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of the Lord as salvation." Friends, we are nearing the end of the season of Lent, a time when we focus a little more on our sin and on the answer to our sin, the cross of Jesus. A time when we can say, "thank you God for a little more time." Let me

encourage you to remember the grand narrative of the Bible and to commit to live lives of holiness and godliness. Don't delay. Jesus is coming. "To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity."

*Amen.*