

PEOPLE OF HOPE – Part 3

Hope Shared

Preaching passage: **2 Peter 3:12a**

Subject: What those of like precious faith who are growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ should do since the day of the Lord will come

Complement: look expectantly for and hasten the coming of the day of God.

Exegetical idea: Since the day of God will come, those of like precious faith who are growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ should look expectantly for and hasten the coming of the day of God.

Preaching idea: **God does not want you to keep this hope to yourself. It must be shared.**

Purpose: To encourage my hearers to join the Lord of the harvest in His work while they wait with expectation for His return in glory

Summary paragraph: Since the day of God will come, we should join the Lord of the harvest in His work while we wait with expectation for the return of Jesus in glory.

I'd like to begin our study today with a trivia question. Which fictional detective is famous for saying these words: "Elementary, my dear Watson"? Does anyone know the answer to that question? Sherlock Holmes. When I was a young lad growing up in England, I was always fascinated by the stories about Sherlock Holmes and his lifelong friend, Dr. John Watson. There were 56 stories in the series by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Sherlock Holmes noticed things that other people missed. I learned an important lesson from that fictional detective. We need to pay

attention to the details. That lesson applies not only in detective work, but also to a study of the Word of God.

But did you know that Sherlock Holmes never actually said “Elementary, my dear Watson” in any of the 56 short stories. That’s a myth that developed. In one short story, the Crooked Man, Holmes refers to his lifelong friend as “my dear Watson.” Later in the story, when Watson affirms Holmes for his brilliant powers of deduction, Holmes replies “Elementary!” And somehow, over time, someone put those two comments together and created a comment that is now legendary—Elementary, my dear Watson.

People do the same thing with the Word of God. They cut and paste the Word of God and make the Bible say things that aren’t in the book. That’s why we need to study the Bible for ourselves—not a careless reading, but a careful investigation. We need to pay attention to the details.

In this series on People of Hope, we have been carefully studying the details of the inspired testimony of the apostle Peter in chapter 3 of his second letter to those of like precious faith. We have discovered that our hope concerning the return of Jesus in glory is assured. That hope is not based on our feelings, or the tide of popular opinion, or our mathematical calculations. That hope is based upon Jesus. We believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and when you trust Jesus, you believe His promise.

We have also discovered that since all these things will be dissolved, we ought to live a holy way of life in speech and actions, and have a reverent attitude of

heart and mind. And that holy life and reverent attitude is not found by trying harder or by trying to enforce a list of rules and regulations on those around us. That holy way of life and reverent attitude is found in the context of a personal transforming love relationship with Jesus. He is our hope embraced. When we embrace Jesus and rest in His loving embrace it changes everything.

Now the apostle Peter speaks about Hope Shared. Let's continue our careful investigation of this inspired testimony in 2 Peter 3:12. I'll begin reading with verse 11 to give us a little context. "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God."

Did you notice those two present participles?—looking for and hastening. Both involve continuing, ongoing action as we wait for the coming of the day of God. "Looking for" could be interpreted in a variety of ways. If I was driving through a town looking for a place to live because I'm thinking about possibly relocating to that town in the next year, that would be one kind of looking for. But if I'm a devoted spouse or dedicated parent looking in the airport terminal for a loved one who is returning from a long journey, that would be another kind of looking for. Wouldn't you agree? So what type of "looking for" is implied in 2 Peter 3:12.

Does the verb that Peter uses, translated "looking for," give us any clues? It's the verb προσδοκᾶω. It literally means to look toward, to look with anticipation, to eagerly expect. Let's look at a few Bible passages where the verb προσδοκᾶω is used. Luke 3:15—"Now as the people were in expectation—there is our verb

προσδοκᾶω. That sounds more intense than just a casual looking for, doesn't it?

"Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not..." There was a sense of anticipation, eager expectation. People were looking for the Messiah to come, and some wondered whether John the Baptist might be the fulfillment of their hopes and dreams.

When Herod Antipas imprisoned John the Baptist, John sent a message to Jesus. The story is recorded in Matthew 11:2-3. "..... Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" There's the same verb--προσδοκᾶω. Do we look for another?—not casually, not carelessly, but with anticipation, with expectation. That's the verb found in 2 Peter 3:12—looking for the coming of the day of God, not casually, not carelessly, but with anticipation, with expectation.

Why is it so important to look with anticipation, with expectation for the return of Jesus in glory? Perhaps the answer is found in a parable that Jesus told, recorded in Matthew 24, beginning with verse 45. "....." (45-51)

When you don't look with expectation, when you don't live with anticipation, it's easy to become careless, to live as if Jesus is never coming back. That's why Peter encourages us to be looking for, with anticipation and eager expectation. And the verb is a present active participle, which implies continued, ongoing action.

So how do you maintain that state of expectation, that state of anticipation? The answer is found in our text in 2 Peter 3:12—"looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God." When we join the Lord of the harvest in His work, we remain focused in anticipation and eager expectation.

There have been many heated discussions about whether or not we can hasten the day of God. After all, God's purposes know no haste and no delay (The Desire of Ages, p. 32) God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world. But since God knows what is and what will be, He also knows how our involvement in His harvest work now will affect the final outcome of this great controversy.

We are called to hasten the coming of the day of God. "Hastening" is also a present active participle, implying continuing, ongoing action. There is a work to be done, and that work will not cease until our Lord Jesus returns in glory.

The verb translated "hastening" is σπευδω. It is found in Luke 2. We'll start reading with verse 8. "....." (Luke 2:8-16) Do you sense the earnest desire to meet the Messiah that motivates the shepherds to "make haste"?

The same verb σπευδω is used twice in the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:5-6. "....." Do you notice how earnest desire motivates Zacchaeus to act?

Look with eager expectation and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God. I like that translation, because earnest desire always translates into action. When we are looking with eager expectation and earnest desire for the return of our Lord, we will join the Lord of the harvest in His work.

In a sermon preached on October 11, 1885, Ellen White gave this counsel: "Our work is to seek the closest union with the Son of God, (that's what we were talking about in part 2 of this series), to learn in His school, to become meek and

lowly of heart, to work the works of Christ, advancing His kingdom and hastening His coming” (RH Feb 28, 1888).

That’s what Jesus is talking about in Luke 10, especially verse 2. Jesus says, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” I would love to spend a week with you unpacking the powerful message of Jesus contained in Luke 10. Through that passage God has caught my attention and shown me that He wants me to eagerly expect and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God.

After about 8 years of study, and covert resistance, the Spirit of God convicted me that it was time to write down what I had learned. This little book was finally published in May of last year, and tens of thousands of copies are already in print. The book has been translated into several languages, including Korean, Spanish and Portuguese, and it is currently being translated into Malay, Indonesian, Tagalog, Mandarin, Thai, Norwegian, Italian, to name just a few.

But more exciting than the number of translations are the stories of what God is doing as people are sharing the hope that is ours in Jesus. Since January, thousands of study groups have formed around the world—at last count more than 5,000 study groups. Here’s a testimony that I received this past week from a young family in Wisconsin.

Arnold is a disabled auto mechanic living in Wisconsin. It would be easy for him to sit on the sidelines and let others join the Lord of the harvest in His work. But Peter urges every follower of Jesus to look with expectation and hasten the

coming of the day of God. So Arnold requested a DVD series on The Radical Prayer so that he could lead a study group in his church in central Wisconsin. At first, he was a bit discouraged when only 5 people showed up. But then Arnold remembered the words of Jesus: "The harvest truly is great." Jesus wants us to see the world for His radical perspective. So Arnold didn't give up. He led this small group of 5 through the six-part series on The Radical Prayer.

Do you want to know the rest of the story? One of those attending his study group was an 82 year old who is almost blind. After attending that Radical Prayer study group, Clem started a study group in his independent living facility and he has 6 of the residents attending. Clem has also started a ministry to prison inmates. Clem might now be able to see well, but the Lord has given him spiritual sight! Jesus was right. The harvest truly is great.

Another couple attending Arnold's Radical Prayer study group, Dean and Pam, were also impacted by the teaching of Jesus. Dean is starting a men's study group in their local church. His wife Pam was quite shy and reserved, but in response to the Radical Prayer study group Pam has started a women's study group in their church. She is also in charge of women's ministries. And Arnold, the disabled mechanic, who hadn't preached for years, has preached three times since he led that Radical Prayer study group. He has given the Lord of the harvest permission to throw him out into His harvest and he is looking forward with expectation and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God.

Debbie took a copy of The Radical Prayer DVDs back to her church in Michigan. She started three study groups at different times during the week. Debbie was so impacted by the teaching of Jesus in Luke 10 that she asked the Michigan conference if she could teach a seminar about The Radical Prayer at camp meeting! More than 20 people attended the seminar. You say, That's not very many people. But look what God did through the small group at Arnold's church in Wisconsin.

Their stories have been repeated over and over again in different places around the world. But I also have my own story to share. As I began to pray the radical prayer, giving the Lord of the harvest permission to throw me out into His harvest, I am looking forward with greater expectation and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God. Almost two years ago, almost exactly at the time that I submitted the manuscript for The Radical Prayer, I got a phone call from Mark Finley. Mark asked me if we would like to have a satellite meeting at Forest Lake Church. That's like asking me if I like to take a walk out in the country with my one true love—the answer is YES. Little did I realize it, but God was preparing me for something more. After almost two months of personal mentoring with Mark, God threw me out to Vancouver, WA, to hold a citywide series of meetings. We saw many miracles during those meetings earlier this year, but most of the miracles are yet to come. A leader's kit with all of the sermon manuscripts and PowerPoint slides will be available in a few weeks. A book and audio book will be available by the end of the year. We are praying for 10,000 evangelistic study groups to form.

I recently returned from a missionary tour in southeast Asia. Shortly before I left Orlando, I was impressed to load the entire evangelistic series from Vancouver, WA, onto a brand new 8 GB thumb drive. I had no plans to preach any evangelistic sermons on my trip—only inspirational messages to Christian business leaders and a 3-day preaching workshop for pastors in South Korea. Three days into my trip, two businessmen from Jakarta approached me at an ASI convention in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia. They asked me if I would begin an evangelistic series the following Sunday in Jakarta, in preparation for Mark Finley’s citywide meetings the following week. My first reaction was “You’re talking to the wrong person! You need to talk to a seasoned evangelist like Mark Finley or Ron Halvorsen.” But then I remembered my brand new 8 GB thumb drive, and I realized that the Lord of the harvest had planned everything perfectly. I was blessed to start an evangelistic series in Jakarta two days later! The little church was packed, and I am certain that I was blessed as much or more than any of those who attended the meetings!

As I join the Lord of the harvest in His work, I find myself eagerly expecting and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God. Perhaps that’s why the Lord of the harvest invites us to join Him in His work. He could use angels. He could write His messages in the sky. But our great and awesome God knows that when we join Him in His harvest work, our own hearts are blessed. When we join Him in His work, we look with more eager expectation and earnest desire for the coming of the day of God.

(For GC devotional: I brought a gift for you today. It's an audio book of The Radical Prayer. I listen to that book on my iPod. I want to remember why I'm here. I want you to remember why you are here. We are called to look forward with anticipation and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God. I want to invite you to listen to this message on your iPod or on your CD player as you commute to work. Perhaps you'll decide to hold a Radical Prayer study group in your home, in your local church.

The hope that is ours is not a hope to keep to ourselves. It is a hope to be shared. When we share the hope that we have found in Jesus, we will eagerly expect and earnestly desire in glorious return.