

Be at Peace, for He Is Coming

2 Peter, 3:8—14 (v. 14)

Introduction

Today is the 2nd Sunday in Advent, and the theme for today is peace. One Christmas carol that communicates this well is “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.” Set to music in 1872, it was originally a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “Christmas Bells.” Longfellow wrote this poem on Christmas day 1863, just months after his oldest son, Charles had been severely wounded in the Battle of Mine Run. Two verses, not usually sung, reference the horrors of the Civil War, setting up verse six: *And in despair I bowed my head; “There is no peace on earth,” I said; “For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, good-will to men.”* But verse seven replies: *Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: “God is not dead, nor doth He sleep; The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail, With peace on earth, good-will to men.”* This is especially poignant for us today. The message of Christmas is “peace on earth, good-will to men.” But how do we find that peace in this violent, crazy, fallen world we live in?

Peace Defined

The first thing we must do is define exactly what it is we are trying to get. What is peace? We usually equate peace with tranquility. The Greek word here is *eirene*, and the definition is “peace; by implication, prosperity.” The Hebrew, *shalom*, is the same way. To the Hebrews, peace was more than just tranquility. It meant having a wholeness of life. The peace that Peter is talking about here is having peace with God. This means having a wholeness of life in Jesus Christ because the only way to have peace with God is to have our sins forgiven and have a new life in Him.

God’s Patient Will

So, our goal is peace with God that comes from forgiveness of sins and a new life in Christ. That’s good news because that is what God desires for us. Article XI of the ***Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord*** says: *God does not will sin and has no pleasure in sin, so ... He is not willing that any should perish (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article XI God’s Eternal Foreknowledge and Election ¶181)*. Peter says that’s why the Second Coming of Christ seems to be delayed. God is giving people time to repent.

This World to be Dissolved

Another piece of good news is that this fallen world will be dissolved. Everything that has been tainted by sin and is under the curse will be wiped out. Of course, there is an admonition here as well. Peter says that *since these fallen things are going to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be (v. 11)?* Having wholeness of life means living a *life of godliness and holiness* according to Peter.

New Heavens and Earth

The real good news is that we await a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. This is the land of peace and joy, blessedness, and goodness. This is the paradise we were created to live in.

Diligent Waiting

Last, Peter says that we must be diligent in our waiting. That's because our waiting for the Second Coming isn't like waiting in the doctor's office. We don't just sit around and read last year's magazines. We have a life we are to live. We have responsibilities here and now that must be handled. We have a mission, to tell others about the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. The best way to do that is to stay diligent in the Word.

Waiting in Worship

Another thing we can do to be diligent is to be in worship. Worship is where we come before the throne of God and pay Him homage. Sometimes, it's amazing how lightly we can take something as important as worship. For in worship, we not only hear the Word, but receive the Sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus. This is another way Jesus comes to us. When He does, he forgives our sins and strengthens our faith. We can have peace in His coming, not just at the end of the age, but in this life as well, when we see His Coming in Word and Sacrament.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
