

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
2<sup>nd</sup> to Last Sunday (Trinity 26)  
2 Peter 3:9  
November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012

*“The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”* God, says St. Peter, does not wish any to perish. St. Paul says to Pastor Timothy in a tremendous phrase that God wills all men to be saved (1Timothy 2:4). The Prophet Ezekiel hears God ask, *“Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die and not that he should return from his ways and live?”* Again and again there shines in the Scriptures the glint of light of the larger hope. We are not forbidden to believe that somehow and at some time the God who loves the world will bring us to Himself. Some will believe and be saved. Some will not. Either way, God demonstrates patience.

We call it something else. We call it slowness. God is slow, we think. He is never on time with His work, we think. He doesn't get the job done at the right time, we think. We don't have to rack our brains too long and hard to see that God's timing is off. He's too slow, for those folks who were without power for more than two weeks after Super-storm Sandy ravaged the northeast. He was too late, for our friend who died of cancer. He was too late, for that man on the news who was injured in that terrible car accident. He was too slow and He needs to start getting it right.

And the slowest God has been – is with His promise. The Lord has promised to return. But He hasn't. You know, ever since Jesus ascended into Heaven Christians have been looking up trying to figure out if today is going to be the day the Lord returns. Even at the very day of the Ascension, the disciples were expecting their Lord to come back. They stood there with their heads in the clouds hoping to see His immediate return. And every day after that, the Christians have been talking about it. “Today might be the day,” we have heard. “Today might be the time when Jesus comes back,” others have said. But He hasn't. He's slow.

We call it slowness. We call it bad timing. We call it, “God can't get it right.” We see that God continues to tarry while His faithful suffer. Therefore, some people conclude, either God is not as all powerful as we think He is, or He's not as loving as we think He is. These seem like logical conclusions, but we have missed the mark. God does not lack power or love. God does not have bad timing nor is He slow. What it's called is patience. God is patient and thank God, God is patient.

It says in our text for today from 2 Peter 3:9 that some were calling God slow. Remember, these words were written about thirty five (give or take a couple of years) years after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension into Heaven. They were calling God slow back then and it had only been a few years. Things haven't changed for the world as it continues to grumble. Things haven't changed for us either. We, too, are confused at times with God's “slowness.”

Well, if we are confused, then let's take a moment and talk about God and time. We have those words in the text, *“With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”* These words were given by St. Peter to show us that there are two ways of looking at things: God's way and the way of the world. This life and the life to come are two different kinds. This life is not the same – cannot be the same – as the life to come. In this life we are bound by time. We eat, drink, sleep and our days are measured by minutes, hours, months and years – all in succession. Now when you look at the time to come, you must erase the course of time in this life from your mind. You cannot measure it as this life is measured. In the time to come everything will be one day, one hour and one moment.

That is why before God there is no reckoning of time, before Him a thousand years must be as one day. Therefore, Adam, the first man, is just as close to Him as the man who will be born last before the Last Day. Martin Luther described it this way: God does not see time longitudinally (looking from one end to the far end); He sees it transversely, as if you were looking at a tall tree lying before you on the ground. Then you can see both ends at the same time. In the time-bound lives we live we have no alternative than to see life as one day after the next. We cannot see the far end of time – we can only see this day. But in God’s sight everything is in one heap. What is long (a thousand years) for us is short (one day) for God.

Because we don’t see all of life in one heap like God, we don’t know what kind of things lay before us. God, however, can see those things. He knows. We call God slow because He is not acting according to our will – according to our knowledge of the day that is before us right now. But God acts according to His will with His knowledge of all things at once. We call it slowness. God calls it patience. Thank God, God is patient.

God is patient and we know this by going back to the words of St. Peter, “*not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance,*” back to St. Paul who said God, “*wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*” Or we can listen to Ezekiel who quotes God as saying that He desires even the wicked to come to faith. Sometimes, if not all the time, that sort of thing takes time. God sees it all at once and waits patiently for the wicked. He waits for them because He loves them. He waits because He does not delight in the demise of any of His precious creation. He waits for us – that’s right, you and me – because there might be a time that God can see for us, that would make all the difference in the world for us, or for someone else, that brings about God’s will for the sake salvation. God can see it all at once and while we might call Him slow because of it... He is not slow. He is patient. “*Love is patient,*” says St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. “*God is Love,*” says St. John in 1 John 4.

It took thousands of years from the day of the fall of man in the Garden when the Lord made the promise to give His only begotten Son to redeem the world now filled with sin, to the time when Jesus was born, and then died for the sake of that world. That was not slowness. That was patience. God came at just the right time... His time. And today, He waits patiently as the events of the Gospel still carry forth in this dreaded world we live. He knows what He is doing. He is not slow. He is patient in love. Our human reason will not understand because we cannot see all things at once. All we can know is that God is right on time.

Beloved, God is rarely early in life and He never late. Slowness may be our perception, but it is a misperception. God knows what He is doing. It’s just that sometimes His “hidden will” is really hidden from our eyes. We can’t see it, and we cannot know it. The Lord is in charge and His patience and love has accomplished all that we will ever need. It sent our Savior to the cross and gave us life through death – His death – at just the right time for us. So we are looking forward to the time to come – the time the Lord has promised to us believers, it will come... at just the right time. His loves pours out at just the right time. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.