



JAMESTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

411 Liberty Street, Jamestown, PA 16134

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May 14, 2020

Dear JPC family and friends,

This week as I was preparing the Sunday sermon, I re-read the two New Testament letters written by the Apostle Peter. I keep thinking of how he opens his first letter:

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, writing to God’s chosen people who are exiles scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. God chose you long ago ...”

Peter was writing during one of the periods when the early Church was suffering severe persecution – as indeed, Christians in some parts of the world are suffering today. Those persecuted believers were in dire need of encouragement - and they got it (see 1 Peter 1:3-9). The five Roman provinces mentioned cover almost the same ground as the current nation of Turkey. Because of the vast area involved, the uncertainties of travel and the threat against the people, it’s likely that several copies of the same letter went out. Multiple copies would help ensure that Peter’s message of hope would reach as many believers as possible.

That made me think about our situation today. Every week, we send out this update letter and accompanying worship materials in different ways, so that it can reach as many as possible in our community of faith. It goes to some households via US Postal Service, to others via EMail, and still other people download it through the church web site. In fact, each week many more people view the worship service online than typically joined in our Sunday morning services prior to COVID-19. Praise the Lord that despite our scattered circumstances, we are truly one in hearing the message of hope given to us through Jesus our Savior.

Even though our part of Pennsylvania has moved to “yellow phase,” these are still uniquely challenging times. Please know that the elders, deacons and I are all praying for you. If you are in need of assistance – such as food, medication, or transportation -- please let me or one of the deacons know. I would also ask that you please pray for the session as we meet this Wednesday evening, May 20th. The most important part of that meeting will be conversations about when, and how, we may begin to resume some of our regular services and activities in a safe and responsible way.

May the Lord bless you with grace and peace in abundance, as together we wait in joyful hope for the good future he has in store for all his people.

Pastor Sue

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Thank you to everyone who helped with our chicken BBQ yesterday. As in years past, we were sold out!

We have added Zelle® as a direct payment method for your monthly giving. Search for our account using **jpc16134@gmail.com** (not the Windstream email address) By using Zelle®, the church will receive 100% of your donation.



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“Worshiping Together ... Even While Apart”

Sixth Sunday of Easter – May 17, 2020

Happy Birthday!

05/18 Mike Henegan

05/20 Ed Fry

Pastor Sue Nageotte

05/28 Mary Helen Valesky

05/31 Scott College

Carol Henegan

To prepare our hearts and minds for worship, let us take a few moments in silent prayer.

Call to Worship:

Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth. very moment of every hour of every day, God sustains us by His love. Every moment of every hour of every day, let us praise and glorify God’s name!

***SONG: You Are My All in All** (*words on inside page*)

Call to Confession:

Trusting in God’s love for us in Jesus Christ, let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Unison Prayer of Confession: **Holy Lord, we come before You in need of forgiveness and grace. You know our troubled lives, Lord; You know all the wrong things we have done, and the good we have left undone. We have not always sought to know truth; we have resisted doing Your will; we are quick to make excuses and slow to repent. O God, have mercy on us! Forgive us ... heal us ... and help us to be faithful followers of Christ our Lord; Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon:

Rejoice and be glad, for God’s mercy is great: In Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven and we are set free. The old life is gone; the new life has begun. Thanks be to God!

Prayers of the People and the Lord’s Prayer

Include your prayers of thanksgiving and intercession.

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

The Presentation of our Tithes and Offerings

Tithes and offerings can be either mailed to the church or donated online via the church website.

Prayer of Dedication (in unison):

The earth is Yours, O Lord, and all that is within it. We would have nothing ... we would be nothing ... if it were not for Your gracious provision. Receive our tithes and offerings, our service and devotion as signs of our grateful thanks. In Christ we pray, Amen.

Scripture: 2 Peter 3: 8-15

Message: “In the Meantime”

HYMN: “Christ For the World We Sing” # 686

Benediction

Closing Refrain: God be With You ‘Til We Meet Again

You Are My All in All

You are my strength when I am weak,
You are the treasure that I seek, You are my all in all.
Seeking You as a precious jewel,
Lord to give up I’d be a fool: You are my all in all.

*Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is Your name!
Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is Your name!*

Taking my sin, my cross, my shame,
Rising again I bless Your name: You are my all in all.
When I fall down You pick me up,
When I am dry You fill my cup: You are my all in all.

*Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is Your name!
Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is Your name!*

words & music by Dennis Jernigan
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“In the Meantime”

2 Peter 3:8-15

Today’s Scripture reading deals with a topic we are all very familiar with: waiting. This particular passage is often read during Advent, when our thoughts and energies are focused on the coming celebration of Jesus’s birth. I can remember, as a child, asking my parents over and over again: “When will it be Christmas??” I didn’t even have a good concept of time – how long a week was, or a month -- so to be told that it was “next month” or “two weeks” or even five days, didn’t mean much.

I also had no idea all the work it took to get ready for Christmas. I’m the next-to-youngest child, so I got to stay out of the way while my older siblings helped with the more difficult things -- like putting up the tree and baking all kinds of goodies. And of course, none of us children were involved in those “secret” preparations – the packages that would appear, mysteriously, under the tree. But I knew Christmas was coming ... and I had to *WAIT*.

There was another event our family looked forward to each year. That’s when Grandma & Grandpa Diehl -- my father’s parents – came for a two-week visit. They lived in Greensburg, PA, and every summer they would pack up their car and make the long drive to our house near Lake Michigan. Nowadays, taking freeways, that would be a 9 or 10 hour trip. But that was back in, oh, around 1960. I can’t even say for sure how long it took, but I know they left before daybreak and didn’t get to our place until late evening. We never knew exactly what time they would arrive. When it started to get dark, my oldest brother had the privilege of taking a flashlight down to the end of the driveway to watch for them. That wasn’t as fun as it sounds, because the mosquitoes were terrible! But when Grampa came around the last bend he’d start flashing the headlights and Richard would race back to the house shouting *They’re here!*
They’re here!

Now, imagine what it would have been like if they had written a letter promising to come for a visit *sometime* ... but they didn’t say when. Would we have made the necessary preparations? Would we have kept the house clean? Would the spare bedroom be ready? Would we have extra watermelons in the cooler (Grampa loved watermelon)?

And if enough time went by ...

Could we have started to wonder if they had forgotten and weren’t coming after all?

That is the kind of thing the Apostle Peter was addressing in our reading today. The early Christians believed that Christ was going to return very soon – as in, “any day now.” They were counting on his return, because they knew he would put an end to all the suffering and persecution they were going through. When he came, he would put an end to the evil in this world – would bring true and lasting peace.

Jesus had promised to return and they believed him; so they waited, and waited, and waited. In fact by the time Peter wrote his letter, they had probably been waiting 30 or 40 years. Meanwhile some of their neighbors began to scoff, saying “Where is this “coming” that he promised?” And even some of the believers had begun to get weary of waiting. Could it be that they has misunderstood? What was taking so long?

So Peter told them “*Do not forget this: with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*” (2 Peter 3:8). What he meant is that God doesn’t see time the same way that we do. Think of God’s promise to Abraham – that he would have as many descendants as there were stars in the sky. That *sounded* great, but there was a problem: Abraham and his wife Sarah were both much too old to have children. Genesis 17:17 says Abraham laughed when God told him Sarah was finally going to have a son and Sarah laughed when she heard the news (Gen 18:12). But GOD wasn’t joking. He kept his promise and blessed them with a child - when Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah was 90. And they named the boy Isaac, meaning “He Laughs,” or “Laughter.”

You know we Christians have been waiting for Jesus’ return for 2,000 years. It may feel like it never will happen. But listen to what Peter says: “*The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*” (2 Peter 3:9) The reason Jesus hasn’t come yet, is to allow time for more people to believe in him and be saved! What we might think of as a “delay” is actually more evidence of God’s great kindness and love.

But that doesn’t mean God will hold back his hand of judgment forever. There will come a day when Jesus will return, just as he promised. He will come suddenly, unexpectedly. And on that day, there will be great devastation and destruction, when “*the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.*” Peter doesn’t tell us this to frighten us; rather, so that we will know the reality: when the earth is “laid bare” there will be nothing left we might try to hide behind.

All the material things that are so important to so many people -- cars and houses and nice clothing and electronic gadgets -- all of those will be stripped away. All the human measures of success and status – professional accomplishments and degrees and awards and how many people know our name – those things will mean nothing. We will stand before God with neither prestige nor possessions. “*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?*” asks Peter; and we know the answer, don’t we? We ought to live holy and godly lives as we eagerly look forward to the day of Christ’s return.

The day itself will bring great devastation, but the purpose is not punishment; it is purification. On that day, the “great deceiver of the world” -- Satan – will be thrown down and the world will be cleansed of all evil. Then God will establish “*a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*”

What will that look like? Scripture doesn’t tell us, but it’s going to be amazing. “*No eye has seen, no eye has heard, nor has any heart conceived of what God has prepared for those who love him*” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Think of the most beautiful places on this earth ... multiply that beauty a hundred times ... fill the whole earth with the blazing glory of the divine Presence, and

that might be just the smallest glimpse of what the new creation will be. But we do know it will be the “home of righteousness.” Because God is there and we are with God, we will do the right things at the right time for the right reasons. It will also be a place of complete health and wholeness (Revelation 21:4):

No more pain, no more sorrow, no more suffering;

No cancer, no arthritis, no Alzheimer’s, no heart disease, no viruses

No flood or famine or earthquake or wildfires or tornados;

No political maneuvering or distrust or lies or greed or violence;

No blame or shame or sleepless nights –not for *any reason* at all.

Only unending peace and joy in the presence of our good and gracious King.

Jesus is coming again, my friends. No one knows the day or the hour, but he has given his promise. And this time, when he returns, he will come in glory and power to set all creation right according to God’s perfect will.

And so, confident in his promise, we wait. But in the meantime ... in the meantime, let us make the most of our time of waiting. Let us seek to be Christ’s faithful followers, living godly and holy lives, guided by the Holy Spirit

so we may bring honor to the Lord and blessing to the world,

while we eagerly await the day of Christ’s return.

May it be so, Lord Jesus. May it be so. Amen.