

## Sermon for Advent 2 The Text: 2 Peter 3:8-15

Some people like to predict how the world-as-we-know-it will end! Some people still think it will all end in a mass of mushroom clouds! Thirty years ago scientists were actually worried about a second ice age. Some have said that a killer asteroid will destroy the earth. For many people climate change is a real threat.

The picture that St Peter paints of the end of the world is completely different from any of the standard scenarios. Peter tells us that the end of the world is God's initiative. It won't happen in some terrible accident! It won't be brought about by our own actions! "The day of the Lord" will come and God himself will call stumps! *"The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare...everything will be destroyed in this way."* That day, *"will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat."* (2 Peter 3:10-11)

**This** is how our world will end.

Now I want to look at four possible responses to this truth! Two of them are right responses, and two of them are wrong responses! I'm going to start with a wrong response.

The first wrong response is to be a scoffer.

Don't be a scoffer - "the day of the Lord" is coming! St Peter warns us: *"In the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this coming he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.'"* (2 Peter 3:3-4)

I guess you can see their point! The sun has risen and set over thousands and thousands of times since Jesus died and rose again — surely only a nut could doubt that it will rise again tomorrow. Nevertheless, St Peter insists, it makes perfect sense to believe that the day of the Lord will come. He reminds us that *"long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed."* (2 Peter 3:5)

God was powerful enough to *create* the heavens and the earth. He's powerful enough to destroy them! St Peter also reminds us that God has all but done it before. When Noah was around *"the world of that time was deluged and destroyed."* (2 Peter 3:5).

Everyone on the planet, except for eight people in the ark, got wiped out. God promised not to destroy the world by *flood* ever again. The rainbow is the sign of that promise. But, whenever we see a rainbow, we should also remember that "the day of the Lord" will come, and when it does the world will be destroyed by fire.

I don't think scoffers object because the idea of God ending it all in fire is too incredible! That's no more incredible than the theory of the big bang, or the theory of evolution that says fish turned into humans! I think that scoffers really object because they don't like the idea of being judged! The day of the Lord will be *"the day of judgement"*! (2 Peter 3:7) God is angry about sin and evil, and he is coming to judge everyone and punish the ungodly! Scoff at your own peril!

Now for a healthy response!

The first healthy response is to get right with God before it's too late! *"With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 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."* (2 Peter 3:8-10)

The only thing delaying "the day of the Lord" and the destruction of this world is God's mercy. This world is no less wicked than the world of Noah's day which God destroyed! The holiness of God ought to burn up everything we see in an instant.

So, when we look out of the window in the morning and see that another day has dawned, we shouldn't think, "Yep, everything's going on just as it always has. Jesus is never coming back." We should pray, "Thank you, Lord, for your mercy — another day, another chance for the lost to be found by you!" We shouldn't be complacent! *"The day of the Lord will come **like a thief**."* (2 Peter 3:10)

If we're not confident to face God's judgment on the day of the Lord, then we can't delay. We need to get right with God!

Daily we should confess our sin, our reliance on Christ and take shelter in Him!

Daily we should embrace the forgiveness that Christ has earned by taking all of our ungodliness, all of our sin on Himself, and paying the price on the cross!

Daily we are to trust in Him and the holiness and righteousness that He gives for Jesus' sake - so that when the day of the Lord comes, God's judgment will be that we're holy and guiltless! So, getting right with God before it's too late is right response number one.

Right response number two is to look forward to the day of the Lord!

According to St Peter, for we who believe the day of the Lord is not something to be feared, it's something to look forward to! It won't only be about destruction, it'll be about new creation as well. *"In keeping with God's promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."* (2 Peter 3:13)

Everything will be right and nothing will be wrong! Who doesn't want that? At times when I hear or read the news I get weary of the suffering and sometimes my heart just cries out, "Lord have mercy; take the evil and suffering away!" Isn't that your cry as well?

Well one day that prayer will be answered!

Every pain, every sickness, every loss, every evil, every abuse will be behind us. All the things that mark our lives so deeply now will not even be memories. All we'll know is the limitless joy of knowing the infinite God of love forever! Don't you hunger for that? The day of the Lord will come, and on that day we we'll be going home. Look forward to the day of the Lord!

So the four responses:

One, don't be a scoffer.

Two, get right with God daily.

Three, look forward to that day.

And four - the final response to this truth is a negative one, a wrong response!

It's this: "being a *practical* scoffer."

I don't think that many of us in the church would deny the truth of Jesus' return. We're not like the scoffers I talked about earlier! We believe and say that Jesus will come again. However, many of us, who don't deny the truth with our minds and lips, still deny

the truth in our hearts and lives. Often we don't *live* as if Jesus is coming again. We don't *agree* with the scoffers, but our lives are no *different* from the scoffers. We're practical scoffers! St Peter is clear that the coming of the day of the Lord must change the way we live.

If we believed that civilisation would end in nuclear holocaust, it would change the way we live our lives. We'd stock up food and drink, and build a nuclear bunker in the back yard!

If we believed that global warming would be the end of life as we know it, it would change the way we live our lives. We'd fit low-energy light-bulbs; turn down our heating; walk or ride instead of driving, and so on!

If we believe that the day of the Lord will come, then that should affect our lives as well. If we *talk* about the day of the Lord, yet live as though it will never happen, we mock the promise of God. We're practical scoffers. St Peter asks, "*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?*" (2 Peter 3:11) He answers, "*You ought to live holy and godly lives.*" (2 Peter 3:11)

We are to "*make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.*" (2 Peter 3:14)- If we make *every effort* to be right with God now, then the day of His coming won't be a trauma or a shock - it'll simply be meeting an old friend.

So, in the week ahead, how are we going to avoid being practical scoffers and live as people who take "the day of the Lord" seriously? What, in the week ahead, can you do to show people that you truly believe that this world is only temporary, and that the world to come is what you really treasure?

How are you going to live as a stranger in this world - differently from those around you?

What pet-sin do you need to confess and confront with God's help?

How are you going to *make every effort* to be at peace with God and close to Him?

Who do you need to talk to about Jesus in view of the fact that the day of the Lord will come like a thief?

*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. But the day of the Lord will come!!* (2 Peter 3:9-10)-

AMEN! Come, Lord Jesus, come!