

What Does The Nearness Of The End Teach Us?

Text: 1 Pet 4:7-11

1) Prayer

Suggested Hymns:

2) Love

180, 380, 338, 840, 426

3) Fidelity

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Peter 4:7–11, ⁷ *But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.* ⁸ *And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”*

⁹ *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.* ¹⁰ *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

¹¹ *If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Our text contains a series of admonitions, and all these admonitions are based on an assertion which Peter makes in the words immediately preceding. He says: “⁷ *But the end of all things is at hand.*”

The end of all things. The Bible tells us that this world will not last forever, but that God’s creation will suddenly be destroyed, and that God will make a new heaven and a new earth. As a flash of lightning, as a thief in the night, as a snare, the last day will come upon the inhabitants of the earth, and everything will be burned up. This end of all things is at hand, says Peter. It is not far away. It is to be expected. It may come at any time.

Peter said this over 2,00 years ago, and the end of all things has not come yet. Was Peter mistaken? Has not time shown that unbelievers are right when

they claim that the Apostles also made mistakes? Do they not say the truth when they assert that what the Bible says about the last day and about the end of all things is a fraud, or swindle? No, my friends, Peter surely was not mistaken.

For did Peter or did any other Apostle ever say that the end of all things would surely come while he lived? Did any Apostle set a day or a time for the end of the world? No; Peter remembered well what Jesus said in Mark 13:32, ³² ***“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.***

Peter saw that the time would come when unbelievers would point to the long lapse of time, and say that the end of the world would never come because it has not come yet; and what did he say?

In his Second Epistle he addresses the Christians and says, ³ ***knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,*** ⁴ ***and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”***

⁵ ***For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,*** ⁶ ***by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.*** ⁷ ***But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.***

⁸ ***But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*** ⁹ ***The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.***¹

As with God a thousand years is as one day, does not Peter say correctly that the end of all things is at hand? The right conclusion to be made here is not, that the end will never come because it has not come yet, but the right conclusion is this: If the end was at hand already 2,000 years ago, how much closer at hand it must be now!

Let us consider, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, the question: *What Does The Nearness Of The End Teach Us?* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Nearness Of The End Teaches Us To Pray

The first thing which the nearness of the end enjoins upon us is prayer. The Apostle says, “*therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.*” How can you live in expectation of the coming end if you do not pray? Must not the thought that the Lord may come any moment to call you home by a sudden death, or that He may come in the clouds to judge the living and the dead, induce you to diligence in prayer, and urge you to continue in prayer, and not to let a day in your life pass by in which you did not pour out your soul to God in prayer?

Prayer is the test of our spiritual life. The more we pray, the stronger we will grow in the faith, and the less we pray, the weaker we grow in the faith, and if we cease to pray altogether, if we do not care to pray any more, we show that we are sinking back into spiritual death and losing the faith.

The devil is well aware of the fact that prayer is a bulwark against him, and that he has no power over the Christian as long as the Christian prays. One of his old tricks is to throw all sorts of impediments in the Christian’s way to keep him from praying, and to make him neglectful in prayer; for then he gets a chance at him to draw him away from God, to rob him of the faith, and finally to carry him off into eternal damnation.

Do you pray, my friends? Do you pray in the morning when you rise, and thank God for His merciful protection during the night, and ask Him to be your Guide during the day?

Do you pray before you retire, and thank God for the blessings bestowed on you in the past day, and ask Him to be with you while you sleep?

Do you pray at the table, and thank God for His gifts? Do you pray in secret? Do you confide to your heavenly Father all your troubles and cares, and praise Him?

Fathers and mothers, do you give your children a good example by family prayer, and do you teach your children to pray?

O let us all be more diligent in prayer, so that every day we are prepared to meet God, as if the end of all things would come today.

The hymnist wrote,²

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.

And the Apostle says, ***“Be sober, and watch!”*** Soberness and vigilance are necessary so that we can pray. The drunkard does not pray. He cannot pray even if he would try. The words would be a mockery in his mouth.

And do they ever pray who do not watch for the Lord’s coming, who are indifferent as to the end of all things, who do not have their affection set on those things that are above, who cling to the things of this life, and have no higher aim than to receive their good things in their lifetime? No; they never think of praying, and they cannot pray. The words coming from their lips would not correspond with the thoughts which they have in their hearts; and God does not look to the lips, but to the heart.

Therefore be sober, watch, and pray because the end of all things is near! Jesus says in Luke 21:34–36, ³⁴ ***“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵ For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”***

2. The Nearness Of The End Teaches Us To Love

Next to prayer, the nearness of the end enjoins upon us love. This is the second part of our lesson. The Apostle says, ⁸ ***And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”***

Here the Apostle informs us that the nearness of the end should urge us to fervent love so that with intensity we love one another. There is a great deal of counterfeit love in the world, and often an emotion is called love which upon close investigation proves to be the reverse of love, simple egotism.

To help others, and expect help in return; to do a good deed, and expect a reward; to give great sums for charitable institutions, and expect to be praised — is that love? No; that is egotism in love's guise.

But love, to be worthy of the name, must be fervent and cannot be otherwise. If we want to know what fervent love is, we must look at our Saviour Jesus. What fervent love He has shown to us poor sinners!

It was love for us which led him to leave His heavenly throne and to visit this sin-stricken world. It was love for us which led Him to become a servant of servants. It was love for us which caused Him to bear our griefs and to carry our sorrows, to suffer as no man ever suffered, and to die on the accursed tree. O let us love Him, for He first loved us.³

The hymnist wrote,⁴

May Thy rich grace impart
Strength to my fainting heart,
My zeal inspire;
As Thou hast died for me,
O may my love to Thee
Pure, warm, and changeless be,
A living fire.

And the nearness of the end should urge us to forgiving love, to that love which “*will cover a multitude of sins.*” If there is love in your heart, my friends, can you find pleasure in dragging forth the hidden sins of your brothers and sisters, and exposing them to broad daylight, in recalling those evil things about the neighbour which have been forgotten, and dressing them up anew in their hideousness? No; love will induce you to keep to yourself the evil you know about the neighbour, to admonish him privately, and not to make public his wrongs.

And if talebearers, gossipers, defamers, come to you to run down your neighbour's character, love will induce you to remind them of the Eighth Commandment, and to tell them that they must not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, or defame the neighbour, but defend him, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything.

Love is shown in hospitality also. The Apostle says, “⁹ *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*” In the early times of the Christian Church the Christians were bitterly persecuted. Often they had to flee from their homes, from one town to another, from one country to another, and when they came into a strange place, they would naturally look for their fellow-Christians.

“⁹ *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling*” says the Apostle to the Christians of his day. When those poor unfortunate people come to you who were driven from their homes, receive them as your brothers and sisters in Christ, and do so without grudging, without murmuring, feeding them, and clothing them, and helping them in every way with a willing heart.

And to this day, the nearness of the end, should induce us to show love in hospitality. Do we not often find occasion to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, and, in general, to use hospitality? Remember what Jesus says in Matthew 25:40, “⁴⁰ *Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.*”

And ministering love is required of us. The Apostle says, “¹⁰ *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*” Every Christian has some gift with which God has endowed him, some talent, some faculty, with which he can do service to his fellow-Christians, and do his part and his share in building up the kingdom of God.

Remember that you are, but a steward of that talent which God has entrusted to you. You are not at liberty to do as you please with the faculty with which God has endowed you. You are responsible to your divine Master for the use which you make of your gift.

You are required to minister to others with your gift, to help in the establishment of God’s kingdom, to serve the needs of the Church, to contribute your part to its general welfare.

And must not the thought that the end of all things is near urge you so much more to ministering love? Must you not say: ‘*Who knows how soon the end will come, or how soon I may be called home; therefore I will show myself a good steward of the grace of God; I will do all I can for my Lord; I will work while it is day, before the night comes when no man can work?*’

3. The Nearness Of The End Teaches Us Fidelity.

But there is one more thing which the nearness of the end enjoins upon us, and that is fidelity. Fidelity means being faithful, loyal, and honest. As to fidelity, the Apostle has something to say to the preachers in particular, and to the Christian congregations in general.

To the preachers in particular he says, *"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.* What is the preacher's commission? What must he preach? His utterances must be the oracles of God.

He must stand up before his people as an ambassador of the Most High, and proclaim the message which God has entrusted to him. And what is this message? It is the written Word of God, the Bible.

"Preach the Word!" this is the command which God has given to all who are pastors of Christian congregations, ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. A minister is not permitted to set forth his own thoughts and theories, and to speak in words which men's wisdom teaches. He must take his thoughts from the Bible, and explain Scripture by Scripture, or he forfeits the trust appointed to him, and is no longer worthy to be called a minister of the Gospel.

And what is it that should urge him the more to fidelity, and to carefulness not to deviate from God's Word? It is the nearness of the end. He should say: *My Lord may come any time, and He will not find me unfaithful.*

To the Christian congregations in general the Apostle says, *"If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."*

In a Christian congregation there are many things to be done that the body of Christ may be edified, and different offices are created which are linked together with the ministerial office, but held by members of the congregation.

If you hold any office in the church, says the Apostle, if any function rests upon you which you are expected to fulfil for the benefit of the church, attend to your duty with fidelity, *"do it as with the ability which God supplies."*

Do not carelessly neglect your office and duty, and cast it aside, and resign because you find it too burdensome for you, or because your actions are criticised by others.

Remember that the end of all things is at hand, that the Lord may come at any time, and surely you like to meet your Lord as a faithful servant of His, and to be welcomed by Him and told, ***“Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.”***⁵

Note, then, this is what the nearness of the end teaches us: to pray, love, and to be faithful. May the Lord grant us His grace, so that with us and among us ***in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.***

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 2 Peter 3:3-9

² Hymn 426

³ 1 John 4:19

⁴ Hymn 368 v2

⁵ Matthew 25:23