

LIVING HOPE | LIVE READY - 2 Peter 3

Big Idea: Living hope doesn't just change what we're waiting for. It changes how we live while we wait.

Introduction

There are some things you do differently when you know someone is coming. Growing up, there was a sentence that could completely change the atmosphere of the house: **"We have company coming."** The house could have looked exactly the same for three days and nobody cared. Shoes by the door. Stuff on the couch. Dishes in the sink. But somebody says, **"People are coming over,"** and suddenly everybody sees everything.

"Whose shoes are these?" "Pick that up." "Go clean your room."

And then there's always that one room where you don't actually clean anything—you just throw everything in there, close the door, and pray nobody goes in!

But here's what I've been thinking about: Nothing about the house changed when you heard company was coming. **What changed was your awareness of what was coming.** And because you knew someone was coming, you started living differently before they arrived.

That's a simple picture of a much bigger spiritual truth: **The future has a way of reaching backward and changing the present.**

Church, we've spent this series talking about **Living Hope**. And now Peter ends his final letter by lifting our eyes toward the future. Jesus

Christ is coming again. And Peter's final concern isn't primarily: **Can you figure out when He's coming?**

It's: **What kind of person are you becoming because you know He is?** Let's hear the Word of the Lord together.

Scripture Reading — 2 Peter 3:1-18

Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. ² I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. ³ Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴ They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." ⁵ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. ⁶ By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. ⁷ By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. ⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. ¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. ^[a] That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. ¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward

to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.¹⁵ Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.¹⁷ Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Peter begins: **"Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders..."** Peter isn't trying to give them something new. He's making sure they don't forget what they already know. These believers are living in the tension between **promise and fulfillment.**

Jesus promised He would return. But years passed. Believers died. The church suffered. False teachers appeared. And the world kept going.

Eventually people started asking: **"Where is this 'coming' he promised?"** Peter calls them **scoffers**. But notice verse 3 says they're also **"following their own evil desires."**

Sometimes disbelief isn't purely intellectual. Sometimes I don't want something to be true because, if it's true, **it makes a claim on my life.** If Jesus isn't coming, maybe there is no final accountability. If history isn't going anywhere, maybe I can live however I want. But Peter reminds them that the God who created the world by His Word is the God who has acted in history and the God who will bring history to its appointed end. **History isn't wandering. History has a destination.**

And Peter isn't writing this simply so the church will have the right theology about the future. He's writing because **what we believe about the future should change how we live in the present.** We can believe Jesus is coming and still live as though we have unlimited time.

I'll forgive someday. I'll deal with that sin someday. I'll share Jesus with them someday. I'll surrender someday. But "someday" allows me to agree with God without obeying God. I don't have to tell Him no.

I just keep telling Him: **"Not yet."** And that's exactly what Peter wants to confront.

1 | **DON'T CONFUSE GOD'S PATIENCE WITH HIS ABSENCE**

Look at verses 8–9: **"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."**

The scoffers look at the passing of time and conclude: **God isn't coming.**

Peter looks at the same passing of time and says: **You don't understand God.**

Peter is echoing Psalm 90. God isn't bound by our experience of time. He's not anxiously watching the clock. He's not behind schedule. **God is never late to a promise He made.** Then Peter tells us why we're still waiting: **"Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."**

What the scoffers call **slowness**, Peter calls **mercy**. God's patience isn't evidence that He's forgotten His promise. **God's patience is evidence of His**

heart. Every day Christ has not returned is another day someone can repent.

Another day a prodigal can come home. Another day the Gospel can be preached. Another day **you** can repent.

Think about this: **What if Jesus had returned before you surrendered your life to Him?**

The patience of God isn't an abstract theological idea.

The patience you're tempted to question may be the same patience that made room for your repentance.

But don't misunderstand His patience. God's patience isn't permission to keep sinning. **It's space to repent.** Romans 2:4 says God's kindness is intended to lead us to repentance.

So instead of only looking at this broken world and asking: **“Jesus, why haven't You come yet?”** Maybe we should occasionally look at the people around us and say: **“Maybe this is why.”** Somebody still needs Jesus.

2 | REMEMBER: THE DAY IS COMING

But patience does not mean cancellation.

Verse 10: **“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.”**

Not **might** come. Not **could** come. **WILL** come.

“The day of the Lord” runs throughout Scripture—the decisive intervention of God to judge evil, rescue His people, and establish His righteous rule.

Peter says that day will come **“like a thief.”** Jesus uses the same imagery in Matthew 24. Paul uses it in 1 Thessalonians 5.

The point is unexpectedness. A thief doesn't send you a calendar invitation. And yet Christians have spent two thousand years trying to figure out what Jesus told us we wouldn't know.

Dates. Timelines. Charts. Wars. Political leaders. Signs. Church, biblical prophecy wasn't given to make us better guessers.

It was given to make us more faithful disciples.

The Bible gives us **certainty about Christ's return without giving us certainty about its timing.**

I don't know when Jesus is coming. You don't know. The person on YouTube with the chart doesn't know. But we know **who** is coming. The Jesus who came in humility is coming in glory. The Jesus who carried our sin is coming as King. The Jesus who walked out of the grave is coming to finish what He started. **We're not trusting a timeline. We're trusting a Person.**

3 | LET YOUR FUTURE CHANGE YOUR PRESENT

And that's why verse 11 may contain the most important question in this entire chapter: **“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?”**

Peter doesn't ask: **“Can you identify all the signs?”** He asks: **“What kind of people ought you to be?”** That's the question prophecy is supposed to produce.

- Not merely: **What do I know about the future?**

- But: **Who am I becoming in the present?**
- Peter answers: **"You ought to live holy and godly lives..."**

There it is. Holiness. Holiness isn't religious performance. It isn't pretending to be perfect. Holiness is a life increasingly surrendered to God and increasingly reflecting the character of Jesus.

Holiness is what happens when our future hope begins shaping our present life.

This is why hope and holiness belong together. If Jesus is coming, then how I live matters. How I treat people matters. What I do with my body matters. What I do with my money matters. What I do when nobody is watching matters. My forgiveness matters. My obedience matters. My witness matters.

Remember the house? Someone is coming. And suddenly things you were willing to live with five minutes ago don't belong there anymore.

Some of us have things in our lives we've learned to live with that the Holy Spirit is saying: **That doesn't belong there anymore.** Not because we're terrified Jesus might catch us doing something wrong. **We're not preparing for a stranger. We're preparing for Jesus.**

The One who saved us. The One who forgave us. The One we've prayed to in hospital rooms. The One we've trusted beside graves. The One we've worshiped without seeing.

And one day: **Faith will become sight.** So what kind of person do you want Jesus to find? I want Him to find me faithful.

Loving. Holy. Serving. Forgiving. Telling people about Him.

Not because those things earn His grace. **But because His grace has changed me.**

4 | **DON'T FORGET WHAT WE'RE WAITING FOR**

Verse 13: **“But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.”**

Don't miss where Peter ends. Judgment isn't the destination. **New creation is.** Peter is reaching back to Isaiah's promise of **“new heavens and a new earth.”**

And Revelation 21 shows us where it's all going: God dwelling with His people. Tears wiped away. No more death. No more mourning. No more pain.

Peter calls it a place: **“where righteousness dwells.”** I love that. Righteousness doesn't occasionally visit there. **Righteousness lives there.**

Everything crooked made straight. Everything broken made whole. Everything evil judged. Everything wounded healed. Death defeated. Sin gone. Creation restored.

And at the center of it all: **Jesus.**

We're not waiting for the end of everything. **We're waiting for God to make everything new.**

That's why Christian hope is different from optimism.

Optimism says: **“I think things are going to get better.”**

Christian hope says: **“Even when things don't get better, I know how the story ends.”**

Some prayers aren't answered the way we hoped. Some diagnoses don't change. Some relationships aren't restored. People we love still die. Christian hope doesn't require us to pretend otherwise.

Our hope is bigger: **Jesus Christ has risen. Jesus Christ reigns. Jesus Christ is coming again. Jesus Christ will make all things new.**

Gospel Connection

And here's what makes that hope possible. The Jesus we're waiting for is the Jesus who already came looking for us. We were separated from God by sin. We couldn't make ourselves righteous. So the righteous One stepped into an unrighteous world. Jesus lived the life we couldn't live. At the cross, He took our sin and bore the judgment we deserved.

He died. He was buried. On the third day: **He got up.** And the resurrection isn't only proof that Jesus defeated death.

The resurrection is the beginning of new creation.

Jesus is the firstfruits. What God did in Jesus, He will one day bring to completion in all creation. That's the tension Christians live in. **New creation has already begun—but it isn't finished yet.** Resurrection has broken into history, but death still exists. Christ reigns, but evil still fights.

The Kingdom is here, but we still pray: **"Your kingdom come."** We live between resurrection and restoration. That's Living Hope.

Resurrection behind us. New creation ahead of us. Faithful living right now.

Bottom Line

So Peter asks: **“What kind of people ought you to be?”**

And I think we can summarize his answer in two words: **LIVE READY.**

Not **get ready. Live ready.** “Get ready” is what you do when you think the moment is close. “Live ready” is a way of life. **We don't get ready because we think Jesus might come soon. We live ready because Jesus told us He is coming.**

So here's the Bottom Line: **Don't spend your life trying to figure out when Jesus is coming. Spend your life becoming who you want Him to find when He comes.**

CHALLENGE | LIVE READY

Take out the card you received today.

It says: **Because Jesus is coming, I will _____.**

Before you write anything, ask the Holy Spirit: **“What have I been calling someday that You're calling me to today?”**

STOP. START. REACH.

Maybe there's something you need to **STOP.**

A sin you've tolerated. A habit you've hidden. Something that no longer belongs in the life Jesus is forming in you.

Maybe there's something you need to **START.**

Forgive. Serve. Get baptized. Open the Word again. Pray again. Make the call. Obey what God has already told you.

Or maybe there's someone you need to **REACH**.

A neighbor. A coworker. A son or daughter. A friend. Someone God has given another day to hear about Jesus.

What is the Holy Spirit saying? Now finish the sentence: **Because Jesus is coming, I will _____.**

Invitation / Altar Response

Look at what you wrote. That isn't a promise you're making to me. It's between you and Jesus. And maybe some of you couldn't write anything because you've realized: **I'm not ready**. Hear me. You don't become ready by becoming good enough. **You become ready by belonging to Jesus.**

Jesus died for your sin. Jesus rose from the grave. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Maybe your sentence today is: **"Because Jesus is coming, I will give my life to Him."** And for those who already belong to Jesus, maybe today is a moment of fresh surrender: **Jesus, I don't want to waste the life You've given me.**

No more someday. I want to live ready. If that's you, bring that card with you. We're not collecting it. Hold onto it. Put it somewhere you'll see it this week. And let it remind you:

Jesus is alive. Jesus is coming. LIVE READY.

Church, we've spent this series learning what it means to have **Living Hope**. And this is where I want to leave you:

Our hope isn't alive because our circumstances are good. Our hope isn't alive because the future is predictable. **Our hope is alive because Jesus is alive.** And the Jesus who walked out of the grave is the Jesus who promised He is coming back.

So until He does: Love deeply. Forgive quickly. Repent freely. Serve faithfully. Pursue holiness. Tell people about Jesus. Grow in grace. And don't waste today waiting for someday.

Resurrection behind us. New creation ahead of us. Faithful living right now. Until our King returns... **LIVE READY.**

BLESSING

May the Father, who is patient and desires people to come to repentance, give you His heart for a world that still needs Jesus.

May Jesus Christ, who died, rose, reigns, and is coming again, fill you with a living hope that darkness cannot take away.

And may the Holy Spirit make you holy, courageous, faithful, and ready until the day faith becomes sight.

Go with hope. Go with purpose. And live ready. **Amen.**