

Eternal God, You rule the world from everlasting to everlasting: Speak to our hearts when men faint for fear, and the love of many grows cold, and there is distress of nations upon earth. Keep us resolute and steadfast in the things that cannot be shaken; and make us to lift up our eyes and behold, beyond the things that are seen and temporal, the things that are unseen and eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Parish Prayers, ed. Frank Colquhoun, p. 26)

Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the Coming One will come and will not delay; but My righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

In Christ Jesus, the Coming One, who did come and will come again, dear fellow righteous ones waiting with eager anticipation:

There is probably no other annual season we experience in our culture with as much preparatory anticipation as this time of the year. While we usually have a great anticipation for the dry and warm weather of summer, we still do not do as much in preparation as we do for Christmas. We decorate our homes, we play special music, we plan for gifts, gatherings, and special events. We often take extra days off. We are more likely to be moved to be cheerful and charitable in our anticipation as we greet total strangers in stores, perhaps even on the road.

As a child I remember the build up from Thanksgiving to Christmas as a time that seemed to drag on endlessly. Even though most of our neighbors are oblivious, it is the Church that has created this time of anticipation through its season of Advent. Advent means "coming". The coming of the Lord is what is emphasized among us. But as we learn from our text, no matter the anticipatory fervor, we know based on the past fulfillment of our Lord's coming: **The Coming One Will Come and Will Not Delay.**

I

Our Lord prepares us for His second coming for judgment as we heard in our Gospel lesson. There will be signs in nature and society causing fear and perplexity. Would you not say that these signs are showing themselves to us today? Our Lord calls us to watch for His coming for judgment, but not with fear rather with joy. He

says, when you see these signs, “straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Now you may say, *“I thought our redemption already occurred when Jesus came the first time and went to the cross to redeem us from all our sins?”* True enough. But the winning of our redemption declared so by Jesus’ words from the cross: “It is finished” does not equate to the complete fulfillment. You see we are told elsewhere that our bodies will not be redeemed from this life of sin and death until our Lord returns the second time, on the great day of resurrection.

The signs of which Jesus speaks are signs that show the world and human society are all flawed, flawed because of sin – broken beyond repair. Therefore the world and human society will fall apart giving no hope. But these are signs that Jesus is coming again to rescue us from this world of change and decay and take us to live the full life with Him in heaven for all eternity.

These signs could rattle your faith and cause you who believe in Christ to shrink back and look for other promising rescues in this life. So some turn to politics, thinking that will fix all our woes. Some will turn to new laws as if that will do it. Some will seek after other gods, like money through the lottery or the stock market, herbs and medicines to extend life, drugs and alcohol, which can give temporary “pleasurable” escapes. But the writer of Hebrews says this: “Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.”

What is the will of God? – belief or trust in His Son. This is your confidence, that He has done all to save you and He will return as promised to bring you to be with Him in your heavenly home. It may seem like He is delaying His return, since the signs spoken of by our Lord have been taking place for the last 2,000 years, ever since they were first mentioned. But remember as Moses recounted: *a thousand years in God’s sight are but as yesterday when it is past.*

Our text contains these words from the prophet Isaiah written seven centuries before Christ’s first coming: “Yet a little while, and the Coming One will come and will not delay.” As promised the Lord’s Christ did come and in God’s ordering and timing He did not delay. “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman.”

II

Shrinking back from waiting for the promises of God to be fulfilled means destruction for us. This destruction is not some light

and temporary thing mind you. It is an everlasting destruction, being cut off from the loving presence of God forever.

The history of the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness for forty years is an example for us of such shrinking back from waiting upon the promise of God to be fulfilled. Paul writes about this to the Corinthians: "I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did."

They had every spiritual advantage, witnessing God's gracious working among them delivering them from the Egyptians and other enemies, providing all that they needed, and yet many of them shrunk back from the promises of God. They did not enter the promised land, but met their destruction in the wilderness.

You my fellow redeemed have all the advantages for life eternal. You have been given faith in Christ Jesus, the only Savior of sinners. You have forgiveness of all your sins, life and salvation as certain gifts given to you through Him. He is coming to complete the work He has accomplished for you. He will not delay. All the signs He appointed for you to behold are screaming at you that His promises made 2,000 years ago will all be fulfilled. Do not shrink back because the wait seems to be endless and uncertain.

Let God build up your confidence through the power of His living Word, which has the everlasting reward of grace. The Coming One will come and will not delay. Just as He came when the fullness of time had come at His first coming, so He will come for the second time at just the right time for you and me and His entire Church of believers. In another place our Lord tells us that the wickedness of the world will increase up until the day of His return. He will not leave us His chosen ones one day longer than He deems safe. Watch for the signs of that glorious reappearing and be renewed in your confidence that our Lord will keep all His promises to you. Amen.