



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church  
[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

December 7, 2008  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent  
1 Peter 3:18-22  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Isaiah 40:1-10  
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 14  
Second Lesson: 2 Peter 3:8-14  
Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

**Live for the great unknown**

Treasure God's patience  
Treasure God's promise

A lot of life is unknown, right? We don't know exactly what lies in front of us. Oh sure, you have an idea of what the next week might bring, but exactly how it all unfolds, you don't know for sure. And in light of so much of life being unknown, we do certain things just in case some things might happen, right? Because we don't know exactly when we might be in a car accident, we get in the habit of always putting on a seatbelt, right? Because we don't know when someone might come to break into our car, we lock it and take the keys out when we park at the store. Because we don't know when someone might want to break into our house and take what's ours, we lock our doors. In view of the unknown, we take definite precautions. I think you would agree with that.

As we consider how God has sent forerunners, messengers to tell us about his coming and why he is coming and his forgiveness, our God this morning is telling us to live in view of the great unknown. And the great unknown that you and I just will never know and could never possibly know is exactly when Christ will return or God will call us out of this world to our heavenly home. That is the great unknown. He compares it to, "It's going to come like a thief." You aren't going to know. So the point is to always be prepared.

So how does he tell us this morning to always be prepared? How does he tell us to live in view of this great unknown that's there in our life? He tells us to first of all treasure God's patience. Don't misunderstand it. Don't take it for granted, but treasure God's patience. And then treasure his promise of what he has done for us and what he has in store for us and he says it changes us. It changes how we are going to view the things of this world because we live in view of the next.

Live in view of the great unknown. There is a lot of stuff unknown, right? But sometimes a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, right? You've heard that before. You listen to people talk on the radio when they call into talk shows. People with a little knowledge aren't afraid to spout what little knowledge they have and reveal how much they really don't know, right?

Take sports, maybe you don't like sports but maybe you can relate to this example. Did you ever watch a football game with someone and they have one hand in the Cheetos

bowl and the other hand on their drink, and you can tell which one they let go of more often because you can see the Cheetos stains under their armpit where they scratched themselves last. And as they watch the game, they tell you how much they know about football and how much of an idiot the coach is, right? “How in the world could he call that pass play that only gained three yards when they needed ten for a first down? Obviously he knows nothing. Anyone with half a brain would know better than to do that!” Not observing that the quarterback had to check down three different receivers to get to the three-yard gain, which was better than him just throwing it away; at least he might break a tackle and get a first down. But the Cheetos-gooper wants you to know that anyone should know better than to do something like that.

As the day goes on and you listen to him talk a little more, you become convinced the only thing he has real experience with is that whole half-a-brain comment. You’ve known people like this. Maybe it’s not in football. Maybe it’s in politics. Maybe it’s in how someone else should raise their children or things like that. You’ve heard people talk like this, haven’t you? They know everything there is to know and the point that Peter is getting to here is that in his day, there were these Cheetos-goobers too, only they were talking about God. “You Christians talk about how God is going to come again! Well, he hasn’t come yet! I haven’t seen him coming. Where in the world is he? You Christians are nuts talking about living for God and how he loves you and all this stuff. Where’s this coming? I don’t see it.”

They have a little knowledge of what they can see. So Peter is telling us, “Don’t misunderstand God’s patience. Just because he hasn’t returned yet doesn’t mean he isn’t going to. Just because he is slow in keeping his promise doesn’t mean he won’t keep his promise.” Peter says you have to understand why he is doing what he did. God kind of checks down his receivers, which is us, and he has different people come to us over and over again to bring us his Gospel message, to bring us his Law and his Gospel to lead us to repentance. And if he’s worked that faith in our hearts, then he uses that Gospel to strengthen us so that we can go and share Law and Gospel with others, so that we can go through this person and that person and that person and bring to them the message that prepares them for Jesus’ return. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promises as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

You and I at times like to think we can tell God the best way he should conduct things. But we are focused on just a little bit of everything that God has under his control and under his governess. God is governing things for peoples’ eternal good. You and I don’t always understand that. You and I want to tell God he should be quicker to act here and slower to act there and do this or do that. At times we need to just trust God’s promise.

He will come back. He will take those who belong to him to be with him in heaven. Treasure his patience. Treasure that he doesn’t come back sooner so that you and I have the time to share the Gospel with those whom we love and hold dear. Treasure his patience because there are many who have stood in front of his altar and said, “I’d

rather die than fall away from Christ.” And they have fallen away from Christ. The Lord is patient so that you and I can reach out to them with the Gospel and lead them back to that repentance and that knowledge that the greatest thing that you and I have in this world isn’t anything we possess. It’s our God who has loved us enough to take away our sins, who has loved us enough to forgive us for the times that we think we know better than him. So treasure his patience. Don’t take it for granted. Don’t neglect it.

Then also treasure his promise. His promise is that when Jesus returns, everything will be destroyed. Everything in this world will be gone. Everything will be laid bare. Everything will be destroyed by fire. There will be nothing left. His promise is that for you and I who believe that Jesus lived and died in our place, we have a new heaven and a new earth—the home of righteousness—that will be there for us.

This is a certain promise because the One who made it is the One who stretched his arms out on the cross and took away all of our sins. So we can know it for a certainty that it is true. Since we know this, what does he say we should do? You notice that in view of the promise, the way he tells you and I to treasure this promise is in how we live—live for God, not for ourselves.

Live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. Since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. What makes us spotless, blameless and at peace with him isn’t the fact that we do things for him. We do things for him because he has made us spotless and blameless and at peace with him first. While we were sinners he died for us. He sent the Spirit to us when we were spiritually dead and didn’t want anything to do with him. He made us alive and now in response to him making us alive and this promise of new heavens and a new earth, we live for him. We stay close to his Word and his Sacraments. We grow in our knowledge of him so that we can share the message of the Law and the Gospel with others. We make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace, and that only comes through the Gospel. So God here is telling us, “When you are going to live your life, live it in view of that great unknown, but live it close to me. Don’t wander away. Don’t drift off. Don’t think you can get by on your own.” You and I need God. You and I need his forgiveness, his peace, his promise, his presence. He gives it to us in his Word. He gives us the comfort of knowing that no matter what happens, he loves us and has our best interest at heart.

You and I don’t have to go through life saying, “God I have done all this for you. Now you owe me something.” Because if I want to live that way, then I have to also stand before God and say, “God, you owe me hell because I have failed you in so many ways.” I don’t want to do that. I don’t think you want to either. We live completely under his grace and his love and his mercy. That has taken away our sins. And that’s why we want to stay close to him.

The closer we stay, the more we live for that great unknown. And the more we find joy in doing so.