

Aughnacloy, Ballymagrane, Clogherney & Sixmilecross Presbyterian Churches

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John 14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going."

Dear Friends

As your minister, it is a great privilege that I have in bringing this weekly devotion to you. Our theme for this week is 'The Second Coming of Jesus'. I trust that you are all keeping safe and well. This is a very special Bank Holiday weekend as a celebration of the 75th anniversary of V.E Day 8th May 1945. The ending of the World War 11 with the victory of the Allied powers of Great Britain, some European countries, USA and USSR over mainly Germany joined by Italy, Japan and associated allies. This victory was long awaited for and all nations involved looked forward to the day the end would be announced. Our theme today, also involves the waiting with anticipation for an event which has yet to happen. We wait with expectant hope of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as we reflect on the next portion: **1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11** *Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words. 5:1 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety", destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. 9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

Prayer - O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home. We thank you Lord that we have a past to reflect on and learn from. We thank you Lord for the sacrifice and resilience of those who lived through the war years and the sense of closure and healing jubilation they experienced on VE Day. We pray that our generation would be inspired by this in their ongoing resolve in facing the present pandemic crisis. We pray for those who continue work for peace and freedom throughout the world, that their efforts will bring an end to injustice and oppression. We pray too for ministers of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland who serve as chaplains in the armed services on deployment at home and overseas, that their witness of you will be fruitful and effective in their sphere of service. As we are reminded of the joy VE day brought to our nation, we are prompted to look forward with joy in our hearts to the return of your Son Jesus. Inspire us today by your

word, to trust you with all of our lives for our Salvation purchased for each of us when Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice for our sin. **Amen**

Today as we turn to reflect on the second coming of Jesus, we discover that none of us are very good at waiting. The present pandemic is one example, we are all in 'lock-down' in order that the spread of COVID would slow and be under control. However, as the weeks have past it is becoming more difficult to wait for the easing of restrictions. We know that the time is coming when the restrictions will be eased, but, it is just the when will it happen. We know it is coming, but WHEN??

It is the similar with the return of Jesus. We are to wait patiently upon the Lord to act. He doesn't do things on our time schedule. We must wait for Him to fulfil His promises. The struggle is that we rarely wait for anything, and that spirit and mentality has a direct bearing on how we live out our life before God.

In the lead up to Christmas we sometimes sing the carol 'O come, O come Emmanuel.' We sing third verse; 'O come, O rod of Jesse, free your own from Satan's tyranny; from depths of hell your people save and give the victory over the grave. In this we see the hope in the words we sing in the Christmas season, the eager anticipation that one day God will completely free us from Satan's tyranny?

Today we build a foundation of the Second coming in order that we have a firm anchor as we consider over the next couple of weeks, the Resurrection Hope, The Day of God's Reign and the Time and Season of return.

The second coming of our Lord is not something which can be figured out by following the media reporting of global events, but by the cherished truth of God's word that provides comfort and encouragement for our faith. Paul's concern is not that we will know the times and seasons, but that we know Christ.

The second coming will happen! Paul does not want for us to be confused about the future! God is in control of history, and He is taking it to a specific goal. The great thing is, we know how it will end. In the midst of life's trials and sufferings, we ultimately know what the future holds. It is all part of God's plan.

The second coming gives us Hope, Clarity and Comfort! The basis for our hope is that Jesus died and rose again. Since Jesus died and rose again, and since those who believe upon Christ are in Him, though they die, they will be raised again. The first advent, Christ's life, death and resurrection, provides the basis for our hope of the Second Advent, when we will be raised from the dead.

Verses 14-17 clarify the events that will take place. Paul describes a sequence of events. Christians will die in this life before Jesus returns. Believer who have died will come back with Jesus in the second coming. When He returns, He will raise the dead first. Then those alive will ascend to the Lord. After all of this is accomplished, we will always be with Christ. What wonderful confidence we have in the future, because we know what will take place.

Comfort. Verse 18 brings us comfort in the word 'encourage'. This verse provides strength for our faith and hope. Hope is the basis for encouragement. We all struggle with our faith, with obedience and assurance from time to time. Let's not forget that we have been so influenced by the gospel that we live with a constant sense of Hope. Only the gospel, the 'Good News of Jesus Christ' provides comfort for the living

This passage calls us to be diligent! Paul describes the second coming using two images, a thief and a pregnant Woman. Although a pregnant woman know what is ahead, the actual labour pains are a surprise. The thief is also trying to catch you by surprise.

This is the opposite of unbelievers, who are asleep and are not paying careful attention to their lives.

Salvation is also highlighted. On that day when Jesus returns, we will not receive the wrath of God. Instead Christ has granted us salvation, and that salvation has happened because Jesus Christ died for us.

We conclude with verse 11 and encouragement; Some of the crucial truths of the Christian faith are bound up with the second advent of Christ, comfort, hope, faith, resurrection, encouragement. We are called to wait patiently for the return of Jesus. May we remain patient in our faith awaiting on the promise of God to return and receive His own!

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear, Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. In the hope we have for the future, may we look beyond this world to the world that is to come. Amen.

Prayer - O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come; be our defence while life shall last, and our eternal home! May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest remain and abide with us all, this day and for ever more. Amen.