2 Peter 3:1-18
Feilding Baptist
15.11.26

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

Psalm 111 (NIV – UK)

1 Praise the Lord.
I will extol the Lord with all my heart
in the council of the upright and in the assembly.
2 Great are the works of the Lord;
they are pondered by all who delight in them.
3 Glorious and majestic are his deeds,
and his righteousness endures for ever.
4 He has caused his wonders to be remembered;
the Lord is gracious and compassionate.
5 He provides food for those who fear him;
he remembers his covenant for ever.
6 He has shown his people the power of his works,
giving them the lands of other nations.
7 The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy.
8 They are established for ever and ever,
enacted in faithfulness and uprightness.
9 He provided redemption for his people;
he ordained his covenant for ever –
holy and awesome is his name.
10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
To him belongs eternal praise.

Father, we are here today with all sorts of emotions, elation to depression, so we are grateful for your stability, your faithfulness, your concern for us. Thank you for being with us in the past, now in the present, and for your promise to never leave us in the future. Thank you for all that you have done for us, small coincidences through to sending Jesus to set the earth back on the right path. Thank you for the hope that we have in the future, not only here, but in life to come beyond this life. Thank you for the Holy Spirit, for the gifts that the Spirit provides, and the compassion and comfort that we sense. So I pray that we would sense that this morning as we worship, please warm our hearts, in Jesus' mighty name I pray, Amen.

Message - Images of Jesus

Growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus right now is how we ought to be.

A few weeks ago I walked into the Health Centre, and a young woman loudly exclaimed, "Fancy seeing you here!" How do you respond to that? But my problem was, who was she? It took me until the next day to remember, she was one of our town's leading baristas – the coffee sort. I don't remember faces.

Apple has an app called Reminders, but this is for shopping. They realise that we forget. These problems with our memory is how Peter begins chapter three of his second letter, I am giving you a reminder to remember! That's the NASB translation, and I like it, 'a reminder, to remember.' Like wool on our finger. Sadly other translations have made it more flowery, as you'll see, putting in full stops and other words.

Ah, but remember what?! We are to remember words spoken by the prophets, and the command of Jesus. Not very specific. But as you'll see, there is remembering, and there is forgetting. Let's read the first seven verses, 2 Peter 3;

2 Peter 3 (NIV – UK)
The day of the Lord
1 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 Saviour 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.

Sometimes we actually don't remember, and other times, it's convenient to forget. Like, "I'm sorry officer, what 50km sign?!"

The verse five people deliberately forget the big picture of the Bible, the four acts that take place. And these are very much in Peter's mind. The verse five people like to think that the earth has just bumbled along since creation. There are three other acts in the drama of Scripture;
Firstly there is Creation – in all it's different pieces, with God at each stage declaring it "Good". And so we label that time, that first act, 'Good'.

And the deliberately forgetful people probably at this stage shrug their shoulders, 'Yep, so what?' But it is what happens next that they want to forget. Because by forgetting what comes next, means you can forget God's heart for justice. What happens next is that the world goes from Good, to Bad.

Satan, the devil, invites humans into darkness. And into darkness they willingly step. And evil enters human hearts. The consequences are many, summed up in death, crying, pain. War, theft, lying, any aspect of evil has its source right back to here.

So what did God do? Did God sit back and say, well, I told you so? No, God began to set things right, to restore what had become so wrong. The first way God did this was with water. The earth had come out of water we read in Genesis 1, well, God returned the earth to water, an almighty cleansing, a bath on a worldwide scale.

While faithful Noah and his family were saved, the tainting of the human heart meant that the bad act wasn't over. But God hadn't given up. The next step in the restoration and bringing of justice to the earth was to send Jesus. And this was so significant, it began a new act. And this act is called 'New' in the drama of Scripture.

Jesus brought a new covenant of forgiveness, a new way of thinking, a grace where people could be forgiven before they had a chance to earn their way into God's favour. Jesus, the man who was God, born in Bethlehem in the Christmas event. But Jesus then went to the Cross, at Easter, being killed as the ultimate act of sin, the attempt to kill God.

But Jesus rose from the tomb, breaking the power of death, and giving us hope in life now, and in life to come beyond life here and now. And that time to come is the fourth act, and it's called 'Perfect'.

We are still in the New act. And as we look forward to the fourth act, the Perfect act, we can be paralysed with fear. But there is no need to be. For it's a time when Jesus returns, and the restoration of the earth will be completed. For followers of Jesus, we should find this fourth act motivating, and encouraging, and it should bring us much hope.

For in this act of the drama, everything is put back to the way it was meant to be. The earth will be how God intended it to be at Creation, with no evil, no dying, crying, or pain. The heavens and the earth, and all our history again need cleansing, but this time purification will be by fire, and not water. It will be fantastic! And the mockers and scoffers of verse 3, those who deliberately reject Jesus, will have their eyes opened, as evil is disposed of.

Why has this not happened already? Peter answers this in the next three verses;

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.[a]

Why has the perfect not happened? Because of the patience of God.

Can we predict when the Perfect act will happen? No, as Jesus reminds us, only the Father knows the time for Jesus' return. Peter says it will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. If you're expecting it, then it isn't likely to happen.

Will the heavens and earth be burnt up as is suggested in verse 10? Well, that depends on the translation you are using. The older translations say yes. The newer ones with the benefit of better Greek manuscripts that have been found, note that the last word in verse 10 means found. The NIV says laid bare. Discovered, revealed. Everywhere else in the New Testament (176x) where this Greek word is used, it is translated 'find' or 'found', nearly every time.

For me it links to the matter of justice, where evil will be completely purged. It will be found! And that's mighty comforting when we know when people think they are getting away with things. That God is a righteous judge gives me great comfort. Sometimes things don't go as we plan, the selfishness of people can get in the way, and we feel like we get stomped on. We have a choice, to leave it to God, or fight. Wisdom is needed to know which way to go. This verse is comforting.

The earth will be renewed or restored. All the damage that humanity has wreaked on it, will be reversed.

So as Peter continues, he asks, so 'what kind of people ought you to be?' This is in the mean time. This is before the new heavens and earth, before act four.

Let's finish the chapter;

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.[b] 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 to 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 Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen.

2 Peter 3:10 Some manuscripts be burned up
2 Peter 3:12 Or as you wait eagerly for the day of God to come

How are we to live? With holy and godly lives. Don't take God for granted. Don't think you can forget God when it's convenient. Instead, v14, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with God. We should live a lifestyle that reflects the character of God.

Keep close to Jesus. For it is through His death and resurrection we can be made spotless. Which leads all the way to the last verse, a verse that we must not forget, a verse that we must remember; how are we to be? We are to be growing in grace, and in knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Consider, Peter could have said, growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. Look at the extra words. These words are chosen because they're important. Grow in the grace and knowledge of OUR Lord and Saviour. It's like in the Lord's prayer, Our Father...

Peter adds 'Lord', a reminder that Jesus is our Master, reminding us we're apprentices, that we are images of Jesus. Peter adds 'Saviour', reminding us that it is Jesus who has saved us, not anything we have done. And Peter adds 'Christ', the Messiah, the one who was always going to come, who the prophets expected, who is to come again.

Growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is the phrase, that, I hope, sums up what I've been talking about, preaching about for the last 10 years. We are to be a community, a church, as we are as individuals, that continue to grow in grace, and continue to grow in the knowledge of Jesus. We should never think that we have made it. That would be taking God for granted.

Benediction
Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen.