

If you've been following the essential Jesus you'll notice that the timings have been unusual so far we've had Christmas in August, Easter a few weeks ago.

That's been a good reminder that these events aren't locked in time, snippets to be viewed and put away like a set of holiday photos. It's not so much the time of the events that's important but the events themselves that are important.

Events that have happened are easy to relate to there is cause and affect because **that** has happened we should respond by doing this.

But this week's readings are about the second coming something we don't look at this very often perhaps because its an event that's not yet happened, so we find it hard to put in context and yet it's a really important part of being a Christian, it's an event we are wait to see

so what can we focus on what can we look at to understand how this yet to be event should shape our Christian lives,

We'll look at

1. Don't worry about the when
2. We're waiting so what
3. Enjoy the moment,

Don't worry about when

As people we like to work to a timetable a list of things that need to be done and a time to do them, especially for important things in our lives. It's good to be able to see each of the steps and be able to tick them off so we can get everything ready as the event approaches

But there is no build up no list of things to tick off as we move towards the second coming.

Even in my lifetime we've had a few people say it's time the second coming will be on a specific date others just telling us the world is going to end at a specific time, and we've even had a few people claim to be Christ reborn. They've all got one thing in common they have all been wrong

When will it happen

Well I can tell you this much we just don't know as we hear in these readings

Thessalonians

5 Now, brothers and sisters, 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.

If we knew the exact time how would that help because if we knew we would just put things off till near the time and then we'd leave it too late we'd always be doing the preparation tomorrow and as we know tomorrow never comes

All we know is it's coming we just don't know when and that gives our lives a certain level of wonder and excitement.

So because we don't know when it's going to happen we are freed from the worry of working out the when to concentrate on preparing and living our lives for Christ, free to live in the light

We are freed from that inward looking focus that can so often catch hold of Christians and churches we are free to look outwards to encourage and help each other and everyone in whatever way we can to be ready. We are free to spread the light out into the darkness to reach out and bring others home to the kingdom

The fact we don't know when that should have a positive impact on the way we live our lives we don't know when but we are waiting

And that's the second point to look at today we are waiting

We are waiting (but waiting is a positive thing)

As we hear in the reading from Peter

Not only are we waiting we are looking forward

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

Waiting for a train is an interesting time

Some people prepare well in advance on the platform getting everything ready looking for the signs

- the time
- the announcement
- the general shuffling of other people
- perhaps the noise of a train approaching

And when they see the signs they pack their bags up and move forward expectantly and then they are disappointed as the arrival time comes and goes

(Strange isn't it that arrival time is the one time you can be sure the train won't arrive it may be slightly early or later but it's very rarely actually on time to the second)

As the train arrives others seem to have forgotten what they are on the station for, as the train arrives they rush and panic collecting up all their things which is strange because its arrival was exactly what they had been waiting for, they appeared to be ready but when it came a panic comes over them.

Some are rushing at the last minute to get to the platform

Yet others are just ready waiting quietly and ready to go whenever the train arrives they just calmly walk up and get on. (who are you)

We are waiting, waiting for the second coming we don't know when but we need to make that waiting time a positive time, getting ourselves prepared living in expectation,

As we wait we have 2 options

When we wait we can just sit and do nothing we can talk amongst ourselves we can protect ourselves play it safe and feel comfortable in our bunker in our church hoping that when the time comes we will okay, but that's a negative unhelpful approach and one that will ultimately lead to us being completely unprepared for the moment.

But we have another choice we can make the waiting a positive active experience,

we can reach out and take a mission approach now I don't mean running around saying the end of the world is coming but we can make sure that everyone has the opportunity to hear the good news and to prepare for the second coming.

If we take the first approach we might start out with others seeing Christ's love shining out from us our light might shine brightly but over time locked away in the bunker in the church safe and sound that light will slowly go out and others just won't be able to see the way home.

To prepare well means taking a few risks to ensure that all have the chance to be saved.

We can live our lives as a light to others to show them the way back to the kingdom. If we are prepared then we must also make sure others are ready as well, the job doesn't stop with us, in preparing we must work to leave no one behind

We are people living in the light waiting expectantly but we need to make sure that the light shines out brightly so that others might see our joy and to push back the darkness

Marc Mitscher Aircraft carrier story

That's the challenge are we prepared to take that risk to turn the lights on for everyone to help them find their way home.

That approach at times will mean doing things we don't want using our skills and talents in areas we not used to.

Whilst it's a risk we need to be remember that we who live in the light and enjoy the love Christ are called to serve and that brings to that last point

Enjoy the moment, look forward support and encourage others

The second coming is what we live for, we may not see it in our earthly life time but it's one of the things that should power our lives we should live in excited expectation. But do we?

There was a top footballer who during an interview was asked about how his career suddenly seemed to take off.

Here was a player, who had it all he had the potential the skills, the physique, the speed, the football brain to read the game and anticipate what was going to happen,

On the practice ground he was outstanding he had all the moves and every coach he worked with knew this young man was going to outstanding.

Yet on game day he never quite made it he was just a fraction late, never quite tackled hard enough. The coaches shouted and suggested but it was always the same.

Then he says one coach sat down with me and asked me and we talked

He said we all know how good you are, we've seen what you can do what's stopping you.

Well coach, I said

On the practice ground it's safe everyone's looking out for each other no one's trying to hurt me and I'm not going to let any of you down if I make a mistake

But on match day

I'm scared that my career might end on that day just one tackle is all it takes and my careers over,

I just want to get everything absolutely right so I don't let anyone down I'm scared of letting my teammates down, of letting you down. You know one missed tackle one mistake and it could cost you all the game.

He says for once the coach just listened and then he was quiet for a few moments, before he spoke to me

You love this game right

Yes coach of course that's why I'm here

It's what you've always wanted to do

Yes coach you know it is

Going out on that pitch is what you train so hard for

Yes coach, goes without saying

We'll let me tell you, you're looking at things from the wrong angle.

You're playing each game in fear of what might go wrong fear that we'll be angry and feel let down by a mistake, and that's where you're so wrong. Take a good look around at the staff none of them are perfect None of us is, we all get it wrong; we all know it's never going to be perfect all we ask is that you give it your all and leave everything out there on the field of play.

Yes you're right your career could end any day but that just means you need to enjoy each game as though it's your last saviour every moment of the game, play it for all your worth,

It was at that point he says that my career took off I'd forgotten how much I loved the game the joy it gave me

that coach freed me from the fear, he let me, allow myself to enjoy what I did, yes I made mistakes but from then on I never walked off a pitch wondering if I could have done more.

as people of Christ we need to learn to enjoy the moment we are in free ourselves of that fear of failure to be everything we can be.

As a friend once said to me if your faith doesn't make you happy then there's something wrong

Because we can be so much like that player we enjoy the practice ground here in church in bible study groups, in home groups. It's kind of safe and comfortable and if we make a mistake well no one really minds

But out on the pitch on game day outside of these walls we so often come up short. We can become scared that others won't listen that we will be battered and bruised, laughed at, that we stop just short of being who we can really be.

The lesson we can take away from reading about the second coming is to go out from here free to enjoy every moment we have with Christ

to go out and share that joy with others around us every day, do whatever we can to show others the way to the kingdom, Gods not going to mind if we make a few mistakes he just asks we give are all for the kingdom.

Before we all get worried that we can't do that sort of thing for any number of reasons physical, age or knowledge, take a big breath and relax we don't do it alone we do it with Christ and we do it already nearly every day.

It's not always about the big things it's about giving everything we have which is very different. We do it in ways that perhaps we don't even notice we just need to leave the fear behind

story friends sisters' visit

A new friend of a few days said she was going out one day, and for some reason she asked where she was off to. She was a little hesitant at first, then said she was going to an interdenominational bible fellowship group. She ended up going along with her and it was a great blessing to her over that time. Just from a chance conversation, and her being willing to say she was a Christian.

And it's in the everyday things the small things that make a surprising difference

when will Jesus come again well who knows, but what we do know is we need ready we need to prepare ourselves we need to be ready to help others prepare we need to ready to light up the way home for the lost so when the day comes everyone will be ready.