

1 Peter 4:7-9

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Good morning. Thanks for coming out to worship with us on national Youth Pastors preaching day. Since we don't have a Youth Pastor on staff, they decided to go ahead and let the resident preach. There's really no such thing as Youth Pastors preaching day, but if we look at the traditional church calendar we're still in Christmas time. We've just come out of the season of Advent and we spent the last few weeks remembering God's people's longing for the promised Messiah, the Word made flesh, Christ on the earth as a man. Christ has come and is making all things new! This week, we celebrated Christmas and the perfect gift in Christ's birth. Last Sunday we stood together in awe and worshipped the King worthy of our wonder. Christ came, he died, he rose again, and he ascended to glory! Now we eagerly await his return, his second advent. This morning we're going to look at 1 Peter for some warning and instruction for how we need to think and act as we wait for the return of the King. First let's pray.

End of all things

Peter starts off verse 7 with a pretty bold statement. [7 The end of all things is at hand](#); What does Peter mean by this? Normally when I hear something like this statement I picture a crazy guy on a busy street with a sandwich board sign yelling and warning people to get their acts together or they will get smited. Peter is giving a less angry but similar warning. He wants us to know that the last days are here and warn us that it's not going to be easy. This isn't the first or last time that Peter mentions these last days that we are living in. In chapter 1 Peter says [20 He \(Jesus\) was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you](#). Jesus was manifested in the flesh at his birth which started the last times before he comes again. This is the final stage of God's redemptive plan! It may seem a little weird that we keep talking about last days and how this all applies to us as well and Peter wrote this like 2000 years ago. That's a lot of last days. In [2 Peter 3:3-8](#), Peter talks about the scoffers who will come in the last days, scoffing and asking where the fulfillment of the promise is. Scoffing aside, it's a legitimate question. How does Peter answer it? He makes an interesting point: God is not bound by time as we are. This stands to reason. If a Being that predates time made all things, then time works differently for this Being. Peter says it this way, [with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day](#). It has been 2000 years that the end of all things has been at hand as we await his return, and that is not a problem. God hasn't been waiting around pacing through the courts of heaven for things to get moving with his plan. God transcends time. What does this mean for those to whom Peter is writing? What does this mean

for us? How do we need to live in these last days? 1 Peter 1:6-7 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Peter knows that the last days are going to be tough for God’s people. It brings all kinds of trials and hardships. Why? To purify faith. You don’t know how strong your beliefs really are until they’ve been put through the fire. This means we’re called to live counter-culturally until Christ returns to renew all culture. What should that look like? Peter gives his readers instruction in how to live in this time of trial. 1 Be sober-minded, 2 love one another, 3 show hospitality. 1 Be sober-minded *for the sake of your prayers*, 2 love one another *earnestly*, 3 show hospitality to one another *without grumbling*.

Be sober-minded to pray

First up, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. We’ve seen Peter use this language before in chapter 1 verse 13 **Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** The literal meaning here is to ‘gird up the loins of your mind.’ Super helpful clarification right? The clothes that they wore back in the day had a lot of loose flowing fabric, so before men could do anything that required a little athleticism they would have to gather all the fabric up in front of them, tuck it back between their legs and pull it around and tie it in the front. They basically turned their long dress into a diaper. This made them able to run and move much more freely. So the phrase gird your loins means to prepare for action. Why is Peter telling us to do this to our minds? **7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded.** We’re in the last days and stuff is real. It’s easy to turn on the news or open up facebook and see that the world is pretty chaotic right now. Instead of being fatalistic or worse apathetic and complacent, we are to be ready for action! Instead of distracting ourselves and dulling our senses with Netflix or alcohol, we are to be sober-minded. I’m so inclined and often very quick to unfollow, unfriend, or change the channel to avoid having to see and hear about events and ideas that are upsetting to me. Another episode or beer is pretty tempting when the alternative is considering the reality of the brokenness that is all around us in the chaos of these last days. But that’s not being ready for action. Sober-mindedness helps disconnect us from the power of the world’s lies - the allure of wealth, power, or acceptance, the comforts of mindless entertainment, endless scrolling, and alcohol. Sober-mindedness helps us see and long for something more - something heavenly - something eternal - something of a different kingdom; and at the same time it helps us remember where and when we are so that we can be faithful and effective here and now. Peter knows things are hard, but he’s telling us that we need to stay present and keep our wits about us. Why? For the sake of our prayers. Our first resource for advancing Christ’s kingdom is prayer. This is the third time Peter has given instructions for the benefit of our prayers. In chapter 3:7 he has words for how husbands ought to relate to their

wives that their [“Prayers may not be hindered.”](#) In the next section he speaks to how we ought to treat one another for the Lord’s [“ears attend to the... prayers”](#) of the righteous. Here we need to be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of our prayers. Who are the people in your life that you think of as being prayerful people? My friend Parker is quick to pray. It is his first recourse. He prays hopefully and expectantly with his eyes firmly set on Christ. He is extremely in tune with the needs of those around him. He is aware and alert to what is going on and he prays for others’ needs. Not coincidentally, he is also someone that comes to mind first when I think of self-control and sober-mindedness. He is present and thoughtful and engaged with the people and things around him and this leads him to pray well and to pray often. Prayer matters. We need to remember that this is the last days and life is and will be difficult. If we are in touch with the reality of this present evil age, we will be a praying people. A people that prays hopefully. Prayer is our weapon against evil. We can’t coast through life and into sobriety and faithful prayer. We need to be alert and ready for action. In these last days it will be easy to be tempted by distraction and escape from the difficulties of life, but we can remain hopeful. [1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.](#) We looked at verse 13 of chapter 1 before to tell what it means to be ready for action and sober-minded. When we’re ready for action we can prayerfully hope in Christ and his return, the only hope that we can have through the trials of this life.

Love earnestly

These trying times won’t just make it hard for us to remain ready and focused. [8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.](#) In times of difficulty it’s a lot harder to love one another. Just think about the last week of your life. I’m not saying this was true at our house, but the holidays can be a little stressful and frantic. There tend to be a few more people in the house together all at once. Some things get said, some expectations aren’t met. Being together requires a little extra love. What kind of love are we talking about? Let’s take a look at the famous passage on love aka the wedding passage from [1 Corinthians 13 4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.](#) How accurate is this description of your love for those around over the past week? The last month? The last year? This kind of love bears with one another. Not just loving one another when things are easy or in the honeymoon phases of relationships. Not just when things are new and exciting and you have all of the emotions of love. Grace and I have been married for almost five years, and guess what, despite my best efforts, I forgot to replace the tashbag when I took out the trash yesterday. And that’s something I’m actively seeking to do and grow in loving and serving her well. How many other ways do I daily annoy and even cause harm in my selfishness and sin. But Grace’s love is patient and kind. She bears with me. That’s not to say she doesn’t call me out or

show me I'm wrong, but she keeps on loving me earnestly. As Christians we are called together in Christ's church. We need each other to encourage one another, to help one another, to be watchful and ready for action together, and when we're together, we're going to ruffle some feathers. And we need to keep loving. Our love for one another is continual and earnest. We've got to keep going. It's not just love and forbearance the first time you're buddy breaks a glass at your house, but the fifth and sixth time too. And maybe it's loving in such a way that you go and buy some plastic cups for that guy to use from now on. It's a sacrificial love that's modeled and embodied for us in Christ. So we **keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins**. What's Peter talking about here? "Love covers a multitude of sins?" We've seen this phrase before in James 5, but both are referencing **Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses**. This love doesn't stir up strife. We don't retaliate, we don't get defensive, we don't return evil for evil. When this kind of culture of continual earnest love exists in a community, there exists less sin. We don't return sin in kind. As we point one other to righteousness and, as James says, encourage one another into the covering of Christ, we don't get bitter. We don't let relationships get ruined over petty stuff. We don't get passive aggressive or outright aggressive. We continue to love earnestly for the sake of the gospel and the advancement of God's kingdom through his people. Peter isn't making a statement about God forgiving sins through our ability to love. Nor that we need to be unwise and put up with sin and let others hurt us. We still value and pursue. We don't put up with sin, but we put up with people. We love with forbearance and that helps us get over ourselves when we are sinned against rather than letting the sin bring dissention and disunity. We are in an age of a multitude of sins, and enduring it will require humility. Peter give us a challenge and a clear way to evaluate whether, and how well, we are doing this.

Show hospitality without grumbling

Verse 9 **Show hospitality to one another without grumbling**. Showing hospitality to one another. It seems like this falls under the umbrella of loving earnestly. Peter specifically calls out hospitality here and that's important. Hospitality is necessary for a people who are together. The fact that Peter includes this imperative to show hospitality reinforces the fact that God's people are to live life together. He's not just writing to the hospitality team here on Sundays so they smile more and shake more people's hands on their way in, he's writing to all of us. We need to make one another feel welcome in our lives. What words come to mind when you think of hospitality? Warmth, comfort, generosity? My mom always says that "formality is the enemy of hospitality." There's a familiarity to hospitality that feels safe and known and comfortable. Our homes are not castles to be protected as our sovereign domains; we need to view the spaces of our lives as warm dwelling places for the people God puts around us. I see the Seagos do this incredibly well as they host our City Group. Every Wednesday we all stream in and start rummaging through their kitchen. Our group runs late and even when we end on time their kids are up past their bed-time. We break their stuff and track dirt into their house. And still

every week they welcome us with a smile. They don't grumble or make us feel bad for being there. They do invite us to help them clean up and put the furniture back, and their home feels safe and open to us. I was talking to Austin a few weeks ago and he offhandedly said that a hospitable person is someone that is happy to be taken from. That is a kind of generosity that is hard to imagine without a little grumbling. All of us have served, or given to, or hosted others and done so with mutterings under our breath, or resentment in our hearts. Keeping track of how many times we've sacrificed for them and not the other way around. It's hard to love and give cheerfully. But when we love earnestly and from the overflowing of love that Christ has poured out on us, we can do it and do it well. Christ is both our perfect example and the power from which we can be hospitable.

When I think of earnest love and hospitality, I think of my brother Trevor. He met his wife Alice at St Andrews University in Scotland. They got married and graduated undergrad in the same weekend and then moved to Sweden where Alice is from. Trevor spent the next several months of his life dedicating himself to mastery of the Swedish language. He did so, not from a love of Germanic languages, but out of love for his wife. She and her family all speak English, but he sacrificed time and energy to make them feel known and loved and to invite them into his family and into his life. We don't all have to learn a language or move to another country, but when was the last time you invited someone into your home. Perhaps recently, but Peter offers a chance to evaluate the hospitality in our hearts. What are the spaces, or times, or parts of your life that are off-limits to others. How do you feel when people encroach on them? Who is a person in your city group or at the office that is really hard for you to love earnestly. What would it look like for you to be happy for them to take things from you, to welcome them into your life generously, cheerfully, and sacrificially. That's what Peter is telling his readers to be, so that in an age of chaos, we are a united people and a safe place for another through the trials that will come.

Christmas is here. Jesus was manifested in the flesh at his birth which started the last times before he comes again. We're in the second act of God's redemptive plan and it's a chaotic and trying time. Prepare your minds for action to pray. It's our greatest tool and weapon against evil. Love one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. We need each other. Welcome one another generously without complaining or resentment. Let us be the church to one another and see God's kingdom made known. Prepare the way for Christ's return. We await it eagerly. Let's pray.