

In Light of That Day, I Will Live This Day Loving My Brothers & Sisters!

1 Peter 4:7-11 (text)

28 February 2021, Reformed Church of Wainuiomata 10:30 am
(Put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)

Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Our text says that the end of all things – the end of all history – is near!

Do you believe that?

I mean, how many people still believe that – even in the church!?

Be honest! Do you think Christ's return is near? Do you hope for it? Do you long for it?

Do you live in light of it?

You see, the return of the Lord has almost become an embarrassment for Christians – or a point of non-interest?

Why?

Well, because, throughout the centuries, many a professing Christian has done what our Lord said we should NOT do, i.e., to try and work out the exact date of His return!¹

And so, it has happened countless times that some or other self-proclaimed prophet said that Christ would return on this or that date. And, such “prophets” had worked up their congregations so that they all were sitting in eager expectation for the Lord's return! Yet, He did not come!

Not only did such prophets do damage to the faith of their congregation members, but they made Christianity (and Christ!!) the laughing stock of the world!

And so, that's one reason why the world may snigger when anyone says, “The end of all things is near!”

Another reason is: people have become modern. You see, just in our lifetime, science & technology have progressed at an unbelievable pace. Through iPads, smartphones, and social media, people now have the world at their fingertips. So, in general, people think, “Oh haven't we become smart in our times?”

But they forget. Is it true that, simply because we have made great *technological* progress, we have also made great progress in *life*! (e.g., spiritually and in our relationships)? Hardly!²

¹ Cf. Mt 24:36, ***But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only*** (ESV). Related to this, also cf. Acts 1:7 ***He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority*** (ESV).

² I mean, think with me:

- Is life really better relationally? Are friendships more solid? Are marriages better?
- And is life better morally? Do people behave with more honesty and integrity? Is there less drinking, less cheating? Is the crime rate less than in earlier decades? Do we now have fewer policemen/women on the beat? Do we have fewer & smaller prisons?

And the Bible's teaching about the end of the world? Well, as in Noah's days, that rolls like water from a duck's back!

Yet, the end of the world (with judgement & salvation) is a very prominent teaching in the Bible (Cf. e.g., Mt 24:3ff; Mk 13:3ff; Rv 6:12ff.)!

Besides, think with me: Is it not so that the One who once created the universe, is also the One who has through all ages been busying Himself with the upkeep of this universe? And is He not also the One who intervened cataclysmically (in mind-bending way) when He raised His Son from the dead?

So, the question is: In light of *that* day, how do you/I live *this* day?

Yes, I understand that, on the last day, it is not as if your/my good works will have earned for us entrance into heaven, for the Bible is clear: it is by *grace* we have been saved, *not of works*...³

Yet, true faith is not unaccompanied by good works. So, our works will not count nothing on that Day, because our Lord Himself has said as much as: that, on top of your salvation by grace, He will still *judge everyone according to what he/she has done!*⁴

So, on that final day, do you & I want to be in total shock & embarrassment and say, “Mountains, fall upon us!”?

No!

Well, that’s why our text’s main message is: In light of that Day, here are four ways in which every Christian congregation should live:

- Pray (for one another)
- Love (one another)
- Hospitality (Show Hospitality to one another)
- Gifts (Share Your Gifts with one another)

Pray (Pray for One Another)

What is the first evidence of my love for my brothers & sisters (for my church family)?

It’s the fact that I will *pray* for them!⁵

And how will I be able to pray for them?

Well, v.7 says that I should be clear-minded and sober.

What?

Why?

Well, remember that many of Peter’s first readers had just come out of paganism. And, a few verses back (4:3), Peter had just reminded them how, before they received Christ, they had spent enough time in drinking parties and drunkenness.⁶

So, here’s a question: What could prevent this same Almighty One from intervening again at the end of time by closing world history?

After all, is it not true (have we not all observed it) that, in this world, everything that has a start also has a finish – everything that has a beginning also has an end?

And God’s Word promises us that, one day, all things will at once come to an end – at which time the Sovereign Lord of all (the Judge of heaven & earth) will reward everyone according to what he/she has done!

³ Cf. Eph 2:8-9 ***For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.***

⁴ Mt 16:27 ***For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done*** (NIV 1984). Also cf. Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12; See Acts 10:42; 1 Cor. 3:8

⁵ Granted, v.7 does not say that this prayer is focused on my brothers & sisters in Christ (and not so much for outsiders), but, gauging by the following few verses (especially v.8,9,10) in which Peter focuses on the Christians’ love, hospitality and gifts for *one another* (εις εαυτους and εις αλληλους), it is clear that the Christians’ prayers (mentioned in v.7) are also meant to focus on one another. It’s not that Peter does not want us to pray also for unbelievers! No, it’s just that in most of chapters 2 and 3, Peter has already shown us how we should live and pray for unbelievers. But now he wants to emphasise our focus on our fellow brothers & sisters in Christ!

Also cf. “But what kind of prayers? The context may well suggest that prayers in the church meeting are particularly in his mind, since the next few verses are all concerned with the congregation and its activities and relationships” (Marshall, I. H. (1991). [1 Peter](#) (1 Pe 4:8). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press).

⁶ 1 Pt 4:3, ***For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry*** (NIV84).

Now, Peter says, “If you want to pray for your brothers & sisters in your church, you can’t be drunk. You’ve got to have a clear mind!”

Perhaps someone will say, “But, Pastor, none of us ever gets drunk!” “So, this message is not for us!”

Well, if that is so, then praise God!

However, although I hope none of our prayer lives are hindered by insobriety, do we not often find that, due to a busy schedule & stress and the things we load ourselves with, we are not “clear-minded,”⁷ i.e., not in the *headspace* to bring a brother/sister in prayer before the Lord? – that we’re just overwhelmed by the cares of life & work....?

But Peter says as much as, “Keep mentally & spiritually alert so that you can have an effective prayer life!”⁸

And does not Paul say the same in Eph 6:18, “***And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints***”⁹

Question: If you & I had known that the end of the world would come at midnight tonight, would not that knowledge have driven us on our knees in prayer for all our church family? Yes, would not that knowledge have energised your/my prayers and led them to focus especially and effectively on our loved ones? And would not the same thing have happened if you had known that, at midnight tonight, a brother/sister in the church would die in an accident and meet the Lord? Yes, would you then not have spent most of the hours leading up to that time in prayer for that brother/sister?

Well, so far regarding being alert enough to pray for one another!

But in light of that day, what is the *second* thing our text says a congregation will do for one another?

Well, v.8 says they will...

Love One Another

My brother & sister, is it hard for you to show love to everyone in our church family? Do differences of personality bother you? Do some members’ quirks, idiosyncrasies and habits hinder you from even just talking to them?

Well, I love how one author has described the typical congregation. Says he...

“There in your local church is Ann, who doesn’t know much about hygiene and is frankly “smelly.”

Bill wears you out with incessant talking.

Cathy is unspiritual.

⁷ This is the way the NIV (1984) has translated the first of two near-synonyms in our text – the Greek word *sōphronēsate* (σωφρονήσατε) which is an Aorist Imperative Active 2nd Person Plural of the verb *sōphronēō* (σωφρονέω), **to be prudent, with focus on self-control, be reasonable, sensible, serious, keep one’s head.** But used in 1 Pt 4:7 in conjunction with a verb form of *nēphō* (νήφω) (**‘be sober’ i.e., be free from every form of mental and spiritual ‘drunkenness’**), *sōphronēsate* may, in this verse, well have the meaning of *clear-mindedness* (the way the NIV84 has rendered it). (Also cf. Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). [A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature](#) (3rd ed., p. 672, 986). Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

⁸ My adaptation of McKnight, S. (1996). [1 Peter](#) (p. 236). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Eph 6:18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan (Emphasis mine).

Also cf. Col 4:2, “***Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful***” (NIV1984).

*Don doesn't get along with Evelyn.
 Fred treats his wife badly.
 Gene is a gauche¹⁰ (awkward) teen-ager, never knowing how to act with
 courtesy and discretion.
 Hilary often grumbles.
 Irene has a different set of interests and values (she can't come to the
 Tuesday-evening prayer meeting because it clashes with the local Amnesty
 International group).
 And so on it goes.
 There is Charles, to be sure, who is really quite saintly but rather drab (dull)
 as a person.
 None of them is very easy to love at full stretch.
 (There is also, of course, myself, and I figure in other people's lists of difficult
 people for similar reasons.)"¹¹*

See? The typical congregation!!

Question: What will it take to reach out to such “quirky” and strange people?

Here's the answer: Love! Self-sacrificial love – love born out of absolute awe of our Heavenly Father's much greater love for you & me!

And will not a congregation's love for one another be overtly seen & felt if they had known that, tonight, our Lord would return – or that, tonight, God will call a brother/sister home?

See why, in the Holy Spirit, Peter says, “...**keep fervent in your love for one another**...”? *Keep on having this persevering love*¹² – this devoted love; this constant love!¹³ (It's hard work!)

And look, is not this love born out of our Lord Jesus' love? I mean, did He not say (in Jn 13:34), “**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.**”³⁵ *By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*”¹⁴

My brother & sister, what will you & I see if we really have this love for everyone in this church family?

Well, we will see this truth: that (as v. 8 says), “...**love covers a multitude of sins!**”

What does this mean?

Well, it means much the same as 1 Cor 13:5, “**Love...keeps no record of wrongs!**”¹⁵

¹⁰ Pronounced [gəʊf]

¹¹ My slight adaptation of Marshall, I. H. (1991). *1 Peter* (1 Pe 4:7–10). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

¹² This is a more literal translation of the Greek words of v.8

¹³ I believe that the words *persevering*, *devoted* and *constant* (rather than the NASB's *fervent*) are accurate renditions of the Greek word *ektenē* (ἐκτενής) “...**pert. to being persevering, with implication that one does not waver in one's display of interest or devotion, eager, earnest**, comp. ἐκτενεστερος (IGR IV, 293 II, 38) **Ac 12:5** v.l. ἐκτενή τὴν δέησιν ποιῆσθαι *make earnest supplication* 1 Cl 59:2 (UPZ 110, 46 [164 b.c.] τὴν ἐκτενεστάτην ποιήσασθαι πρόνοιαν). ἐκτενή ὑπὸ πάντων προσευχῶν γενέσθαι AcPI Ha 6, 6f. τὴν ἀγάπην ἐκτενή ἔχειν *keep affection constant* **1 Pt 4:8.** ...” (Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 310). Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

¹⁴ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. (1984). (Jn 13:34–35). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹⁵ 1 Cor 13:4-5, **Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs** (NIV 1984; emphasis mine).

Well, so far regarding love for one another!
And, seeing that the end of all things is near, what is the *third* thing our text says a congregation will do for one another?
Well, v.9 says they will...

Show Hospitality to one another

Children, do you sometimes complain & grumble when mum & dad say, “Hi kids, tonight a minister and elder are coming to eat at our place and stay with us for the night!” “So, please come vacuum the lounge, tidy the kitchen, clean the bathroom, and help mum prepare a nice meal!”?

Do you then *complain*?

The word in v 9 means “to make an utterance in a low tone of voice as you grumble behind someone’s back.”¹⁶

That’s exactly what I once did when I was 12 and, one night after dinner, my dad said, “Pieter, it’s your turn to wash the dishes!” I waited until I thought my dad was far down the hallway, then I moaned & muttered to my older sister, “I’m sick & tired of this!” “Every time I hear I have to do the dishes, I get such a sick feeling down my throat!” Well, my dad heard my muttering, and it was only my sister’s giggles that defused the situation, or else I would have been in big trouble that night!

So, do you moan & grumble when it’s your turn to show hospitality?

Well, did you know that the Christians in the early church just had to be hospitable? Why?

Well, because mostly they did not have their own church buildings. So, instead, it happened that they came together in the house of one of the church members.

Now, just think with me: If no one in the church was willing to put up his hand and said, “Hi dear church family, you are all welcome to come to my house next Sunday!” then how would they have met together for worship!?

But the situation was even tougher than that! You see, hospitality in those days did not just mean that you offer a room! No, it also involved a meal! And, even if every congregation member brought some food from home, the host family would still have had to provide some plates & cutlery.

What’s more, Sunday worship would have taken most of the day! Thus, the host’s hospitality was usually quite stretched-out!

And how about hospitality to visiting pastors?

Well, in those days, pastors were travelling long distances! They were not wealthy! And inns (hotels) were not as many (and not as acceptable) as now!¹⁷ And so, every time Paul

Also cf. Marshall (ibid), “What Peter says here is closer to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:5: “Love ... keeps no record of wrongs.” It does not treasure up the memory of wrongs committed or offenses, but releases them and does not hold them against the person. (Of course, there is an important sense in which wrongs and failures have to be remembered. It would be irresponsible to assign a post in the church requiring dependability to somebody who had a record of being unreliable. To that extent we cannot ignore character flaws, but that is a different matter from our personal relationships in which we are to be accepting of other people despite their weaknesses and shortcomings.)”.

¹⁶ In Greek, the noun *gonggysmos* (γογγυσμός) means an “**utterance made in a low tone of voice** (the context indicates whether the utterance is one of discontent or satisfaction), **behind-the-scenes talk**. —Negative aspect: *complaint, displeasure, expressed in murmuring...*” (Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). [A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature](#) (3rd ed., p. 204). Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

¹⁷ Cf. Marshall (ibid)

or Peter or Silas, Titus, Apollos or Timothy arrived in town, someone in the congregation would have to put up his/her hand! And that's why (from his prison) Paul wrote to Philemon, "...**Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.**"¹⁸

And just imagine what it was like to host the Apostle Paul! Would not the host have to have been energetic enough to sustain lengthy conversations in theology and on updates on brothers & sisters of other far-off churches?

But, the Bible says, "**Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.**"¹⁹

My brother & sister, granted, not all of us are all of the time in a position to show hospitality, but what a joy it will be if the Lord whom we love so much returned next weekend and you/I knew we have shown hospitality to one of His loved ones – yes, to a brother/sister – and the Lord said, "**For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,**"²⁰ and, "...**whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.**"²¹

Hospitality!

Well, here is the last point in the sermon...

Gifts (Share Your Gifts with one another)

Over the last forty years of my life (in which Annette & I have been in six different congregations) I have heard one constant thing from members who announced that they wanted to leave the church and go to another church/denomination. This is what I have heard: "We are leaving, because we feel we were not getting much here!"

But here's the question to such people: Have you forgotten what our Lord Jesus has said? "**It is more blessed to give than to receive!**"²²

Have you forgotten the words of stanza 3 of Sing-to-the-Lord 502, "...*It is ... in giving to all people, we receive...*"?

See? Spiritual growth & spiritual blessings come when we give!

And, in v.10, Peter (just like Paul),²³ says that each one of us (each church member) has received a gift – for what purpose? Well, to serve one another!

Here is how Paul says it (in Rm 12:6-8)...

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying (Today, we will call it preaching), let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it

¹⁸ [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Phm 22). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹⁹ [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Heb 13:2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

²⁰ [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Mt 25:35). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

²¹ [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Mt 25:40). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

²² Cf. Acts 20:35 in which the Apostle Paul is quoting Christ. Paul says, "**In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'**" (NIV 1984).

²³ Cf. Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-31

*is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*²⁴

Well, these are the gifts listed by Paul. But, in our text, Peter mentions just two:

- the gift of using your *mouth* – Peter calls it “speaking,” i.e., the gift to comfort or encourage a brother or sister with words from Scripture; and...
- the gift of using your *hands* – Peter calls it “serving,” i.e., serving in any capacity within the church!

Now, whatever your & my gifts are (whether it is in using your *mouth* or in using your *hands*), the point Peter is making (in v. 11) is that each of us will use our gift in a way that will reflect our gift’s divine origin & purpose!

In other words, we will use our gifts in a humble, sincere and unselfish way; we will use our gifts on God’s terms and for His glory! In using our gift, we will take the backseat and let Christ have the front seat (as Rev Goris said at my installation in this congregation)!

Question: What will be the result if every member in our church family will use his/her gift (whether it’s a gift of the mouth or of the hands) in such an unselfish and God-glorifying manner?

Well, will that not instil courage & trust in a fellow brother/sister – trust to come seek our help whether it be practical help (of the *hands*) or whether it be counselling help (of the *mouth*)?

Of course, it will!

Now, with that in mind, let me ask you a question which one of our elders often asks of those who are about to profess their faith in this church – and it’s a question relating to the gift of the *mouth*, yes particularly the gift of counselling. Here’s his very valid question: “Look, we call one another ‘Brother’ and ‘Sister’ in this church, which assumes a relationship of love and trust!” “So, tell me: if, one day, you find yourself between a rock and a hard place (and you’re at a deep low), is there anyone in this church – anyone who employs his/her gift of speaking (of counselling) in such humility & God-glorifying manner that you will feel comfortable enough to go and entrust yourself to that person – yes, to confide in that person?” “Could you already now, before you are in that deeply low space, identify such a godly man/woman whose counsel you would gladly seek?” “Could you?”

You know, as I was writing this sermon on Friday afternoon, and without trying too hard, I was able to, off the cuff and within one minute, list more than twenty-five individuals (about ten couples) in this church whom I will gladly go to for advice/counselling on a difficult issue of life if I found myself in such a situation!

And then there’s the monthly Saturday morning men’s breakfast, which we had again yesterday! O, how blessed & encouraged we were when we older & younger men sat around the table and, in great trust, share how we, with our varied God-given gifts, have processed some difficulties of life! What a blessing these men’s breakfasts are!

After all, God’s Word exhorts congregation members to counsel & encourage one another!²⁵

²⁴ [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Ro 12:6–8). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

²⁵ Cf. e.g., Tit 2:1-10 **You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. ² Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.**

We want to conclude...

My brother & sister, in light of that Day (a day which date & hour you & I don't know, but a day that is sure to come), why will you & I not live this day...

- Praying for one another?
- Loving one another?
- Showing hospitality to one another?
- Sharing our gifts with one another?

God give us strength!

AMEN (2,788 words excluding footnotes)

³ Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴ Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

⁶ Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. ⁷ In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness ⁸ and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

⁹ Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, ¹⁰ and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive (NIV1984).