

“The End of Times is near”
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Readings:

1 Peter 4:7-11

INTRODUCTION

- By celebrating Communion we are celebrating a time that is not temporal, but eternal.
- In communion, past, present and future merge.
 - Past:
 - Christ's work in the past is not temporally conditioned to the past, as it is present.
 - It does not mean that Jesus is dying again, but rather that the effectiveness of his death is real at all times.
 - Present:
 - We are also celebrating the present by participating in the Communion, as we are united as one Body.
 - This Body is also not conditioned by time, as it is formed:
- for us, who are gathered here;

- by so many other members spread throughout the earth;
- by those who came before us;
- for those who will yet believe.
 - Future:
 - And, by eating bread and drinking wine we are announcing the future return of Christ.
 - Communion is the banquet of grace that announces the restoration of all creation, for which we wait and hope.
- We have a habit of talking about the work of Christ and about being part of the Body of Christ.
 - But we don't always talk about the future, the things we hope for, or how to prepare for that future.
- We as Christians believe and wait for the end of times.
 - We await the return of Christ.
 - We await the restoration of all creation.
 - We await the resurrection.
- We don't know how this will all play out.
- We don't know when that will be.

- But we know, from the Bible, how we should prepare for the end times.
- Since biblical times, Christians have thought about the end times.
- It is important to look in the Bible at what the Christian's procedure is before the end of times.

1 – PRUDENCE AND VIGILANCE

- The Primitive Church lived on the verge of the end times.
- They believed that the second coming of Christ would happen at that time.
- This helps us understand that vitality and detachment from all things, such as material goods in the Book of Acts,
 - After all, the world was close to the end.
- Some people lived in a utopian way, they were dreamers, who forgot about the present reality, as their whole life was focused on the future.
 - They did not look at the pain, suffering and needs that the present presented, as their eyes were fixed only on the future.
- That's why the text we read guides us:
 - be serious;
 - discipline yourselves.
 - for the sake of your prayers.

- These two guidelines come from Greek words that indicate the need for self-control, with regard to drunkenness, anger, and anything else that can turn us into what we should not be.
- And the genuineness of our prayers needs it
- To prepare for the end of times we must be serious and discipline ourselves for the sake of our prayers.
- The next guidelines that we will find will show us that, if we await the second coming of Christ, we must live increasingly committed to the present.
- A Brazilian Presbyterian minister, Hernandes Dias Lopes, says something that I find very interesting about this:
 - We must be part of the Welcoming Committee for the second return of Christ.
 - But sometimes Christianity wanted to be part of the Planning Committee for Jesus' return.
 - The members of the Planning Committee for Jesus' return are so busy trying to figure out the date and read the signs that they forget to live out the things the text will say next.

- But the opposite also happens, because sometimes we are so attached to the present that we no longer have faith in the redeeming future.
- Being prudent and vigilant, translated from Greek, means being moderate and discerning, so that nothing harms our ability to see and think clearly.
- We must not live inattentive to reality, as our prayers come from reality.
 - We need to live aware in prayer, participating in the reality around us and in the reality of the Body of Christ around the world.
 - If one part of the Body suffers, the whole body suffers together.

2 – ABOVE ALL, LOVE

- Peter's letter tells us about the motivation to live in the present time, being serious and disciplining ourselves.
 - The motivation is love.
 - “Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins” (4:8)

- Anyone who follows Christ must pay attention to some things:
 - love is the main mark of a Christian.
 - love is the main biblical teaching.
 - love is the main commandment.
 - love is God himself
 - and love is what God gives to us
 - and expects from us.
- We do not know when the end of times will come true, but we know that we must live in love until the end of times.
- In Greek the word used to describe “constantly” (ektenes) means that this love must be without measure, deep, without failing in love, without lacking love
- Christian love demands everything a person can give: mentally, spiritually, and physically.
- This is the main “secret” to preparing for the end of times: loving deeply.
- 2 years ago, I was running an online Bible study for my church in Brazil.
 - Talking about the possible topics for an upcoming study, someone said:
 - we want to study something deep, we want solid food.

- The person was making reference to the biblical text from Hebrews that says:
 - (HB 5:13-14) for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.
- And then they expressed what they meant by solid food: Bible study on abortion, on LGBTQUIA+, on death.
- All of these topics are important to be discussed in the light of faith. We studied all these subjects last year.
- But then I said that solid food is not made for these matters.
 - Solid food is love.
- Love is what brings us closer to God himself, who is love.
- Being grown up in faith is not being able to discuss controversial issues or have difficult questions.
 - Being mature in faith means learning to love as God loves, without reservation.

- Which is one main challenge for Christ followers,
 - That is, the main challenge for us.
- And the text also says that love “covers a multitude of sins”.
- Wasn't it like that with us?
 - God's love covered our many sins. (To cover means to erase).
 - Proverbs 10:12 says: “Hatred provokes quarrels, but love forgives all offenses.”
- God loved us when we were sinners and that set us free.
- When we love people while they are still sinners, it can also set them free, because being in touch with love is being in touch with God himself.
- This does not mean that we will be complicit in sin. Love does not collude with sin.
 - Sin is always something bad.
 - To sin is to go against God.
- But dealing with sin does not mean exposing each other's sins to public judgment.
 - Treating sin is not about making the sinner feel embarrassed in front of human beings,

- but rather about being exposed to God's unconditional love..

3 – BE HOSPITAL AND SHARE GIFTS

- To live prepared for the end of times, the text recommends that we be hospitable and that our gifts be used in favor of one another.
- Being hospitable was different from what we understand today.
 - We are hospitable to people we know: family, friends, or even friends of friends.
 - They were hospitable to unfamiliar people.
- This hosting could be:
 - hosting missionaries;
 - hosting to share the Gospel with someone;
 - They also hosted Christians fleeing persecution.
 - hosted foreigners.
- There were no sanctuaries.
 - Communion between people took place within their own homes.
- Today we can and must continue using our home as an environment for sharing the Gospel

with people who have not yet given themselves to Christ; but we also have this space.

- We can and should invite people to come to what is also our home, a place of communion.
 - Once I invited my professor from drama school to go to worship with me at my church.
 - He was not a Christian.
 - One of the things that touched him most about worship was the moment in which we shared peace.
 - In Brazil we do this by hugging each other.
 - At that moment, my teacher said that he had never felt that communion anywhere else.
- And it is like this, in this communion, that each person shares what they have.
- God has given us gifts to serve one another, so that no one lacks anything.
- What I lack may be what you have in abundance; What I have in abundance could be what you lack.
 - If we share what we have, no one lacks anything.

- Serving is committing to people.
 - It's about creating bonds with brothers and sisters so that we can help each other.
- There is no communion in a church without serving each other.
- If we live in isolation and are not willing to serve each other, we become a sick church, because we become sick.
- Christians live to serve, just as Christ came to serve.
- None of us is superior to the other, we all find ourselves in the same place:
 - We are stewards of the gifts that God has given us.
- This Friday, we will have the World Day of Prayer.
 - We will host brothers and sisters from around the world joining in their prayers, in their struggles and in their joys.
- We are serving our neighbors around the world by sharing our gift of time and our faith.

CONCLUSION

- What Peter teaches us is that:

- To live with the end of times approaching, even if we don't know "when" this "proximity" is, we must:
 - live aware that the end will come, but not hallucinating;
 - we must continue serving God with intensity, which means:
 - living in communion with the Body of Christ,
 - And sharing our gifts.
- And the goal of all this is for God to be glorified and not ourselves.
- That when we participate in Communion we express our faith that we believe, hope and have confidence in the return of Jesus.
- Let's do this until he comes back.
- Amen.