

### **ARE WE THERE YET?**

Lori and I were on one of those long, family road trips with our three young children. We were all tired, but our little girl, Kiersten, had had enough.

- *“Dad, are we there yet?” “No, not yet, honey. It’s a long trip.”*
- You know how it goes; every a few minutes we repeated the litany.
  - *“Daddy, are we there yet?” “No, honey, not yet.”*
- The litany, too, became tiring. I thought I had a clever way to stop it,
  - *“Kiersten, please stop asking. We’re not going to get there until it’s dark.”*
- After some moments of peaceful silence, not to be outsmarted, that little pleading voice from the back seat came again, *“Daddy, is it dark yet?”*

Ever had one of those long, hard-to-sleep nights?

- You’ve had a hard day and you just want it over with. You escape to bed. You toss and turn and finally drift off. Suddenly some anxious thought jars you awake. You look at the clock; it’s not even midnight.
  - *It’s not even tomorrow yet! Will this day never end?*
- A voice from somewhere comes,
  - *“No, child, not yet. It’s going to be long dark trip before we’re there.”*
- You call out again in the darkness, *“Is it light yet?”*

That’s how we’re all feeling now in the pandemic; we’re longing for the dawn of a new day

**I know** the COVID19 already has been so long, but we’re not there yet.

**I know** the news is filled with stories of people exuberant and experimenting with reopening. But that might be more like getting out of the car and running off some steam before the long trip continues. The public health experts say we’re not there yet.

- Hold on to hope. We will get there, just not yet.

You know, that feeling in your gut you might have right now, that mix of longing and hope, not just longing – but loss and disappointment and maybe some fear and helplessness, as well – all that one side and an aching hope for new day on the other? Yah, that feeling!

- That’s what the New Testament is talking about when it talks about our hope in Jesus Christ.
- Things in the world aren’t right; but Jesus the savior can set them right. That’s the kind of longing hope we have in Jesus.
- That’s the feeling all those early Christians had as they prayed for Jesus to return and fix things here.
- The earliest Christian liturgical prayer we know of is so simple yet so deep, *“Marantha,” “Come, Lord Jesus.”*

Many of us Christians today have lost touch with this hope in Christ's return to fix this world. It's been overshadowed by that other hope we have for Jesus to bring us into heaven.

- Don't get me wrong. Sure, the foundation of Christian hope is Christ's resurrection from the dead and our resurrection to follow.
- But you know what? What many of those early Christians really hoped for was that Jesus would return so quickly, they could skip right over the dying part themselves and go directly into God's perfect kingdom.
- It's an understandable expectation when you hear Jesus' words such as in Mark 9:1, "*And Jesus said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.'*"

Let's back up and take another run at this Christian hope we have in Christ's Return:

- What is your present hope in this time of Pandemic?
  - I'm guessing your hope is not to die but to keep on living.
  - I'm guessing your hope is not to escape the COVID crisis by dying and going to heaven now, but that a savior would come in the form of treatment and vaccine, and this savior would rescue us so we would keep on living.
  - Our present hope is for a healed world.
- A healed world has always been the Christian hope.
  - Our hope and expectation is that the Savior, Jesus Christ, would bring this healing.
  - The true healing we long for begins with a spiritual healing, the healing of the viral RNA of sin that has infected and hijacked the cellular DNA of our fallen world.
- Yes, our is also a heavenly hope, but it's a heavenly hope that starts sneaking into our world already, God's kingdom breaking in already now.

That "are we there yet" feeling of longing you have in your gut these days, try applying that feeling to a prayer like this, "*Come, Lord Jesus, and heal our world with God's perfect kingdom.*"

Today is the last Sunday in the season of Easter.

- After his resurrection, Jesus was present on earth in a unique "resurrected-body" way frequently appearing to his followers.
- It was not until 40 days after Easter that Jesus ascended to heaven. Ascension Day always happens on a Thursday.
- Listen to how the expectation of Jesus' return is woven right into the event of the Ascension. The heavenly messenger said the to the disciples in Acts 1:11, "*This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.*"

The day of Jesus' return is coming. We're not there yet. But our hope and expectation carry us forward through the present darkness toward the new day that will be coming.

Amen.