

Speaking to the soul



Time on Earth

The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other.

1 Peter 4:7-8

The idea of the world coming to an end is a challenging thought, but Peter wasn't in any sense threatening his readers. The New Testament writers all spoke of this as the climax and fulfilment of God's purposes. They felt the end of the world was something that everyone should look forward to with great excitement. The last days began with the coming of Jesus into the world and will come to an end with his return.

Whether Jesus returns to this earth within the next week or in a thousand years the time is limited, and Peter was concerned that this should focus his readers' minds. There was no time to lose. The challenge that he posed in the first century applies equally to us today as we anticipate the return of Christ: that believers should be both earnest and disciplined in their prayers. I'm sure we all know how incredibly easy it is to wander in our prayers. There are many ways in which we can help ourselves in this. Some people find it helpful to write down their prayers, or to follow a definite routine of prayers. I don't think it matters how we pray, but it is vital that we ensure that our prayers have a well-guarded place in our lives and that they keep us on our spiritual toes.

The second challenge Peter issues is to show deep love for each other. In our prayers we draw close to God who is love, and so the inevitable result of spending time in his presence is that we will want to love others more. We will be looking for practical ways of showing his love, and one of those ways that was vital in the early Church was through hospitality. Peter encouraged them to open their homes to one another day by day so as to give practical support and help to one another. And, in days before church buildings,

he was looking to them to open their homes so that they could worship together.

The fact that Christ might return at any moment should be a constant encouragement to us all to be both more prayerful and loving.

QUESTION

How do you respond to the fact that the end of the world might come at any moment?

PRAYER

Lord God, help me to use my limited time here on earth wisely and well. Amen

Photograph - Belfast Cathedral Lenten Communion bourse

