In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My opening text is from our Epistle Lesson, and so this is from Second Peter Chapter 3. It is a verse that speaks of time:

8But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (2 Peter 3:8, RSV)

Let me begin this sermon with a lovely quote from one of the early church Fathers. His name was Eusebius of Emesa, and his words go this way:

Scripture says that human life is short and full of trouble, but you belong to the unseen and eternal one.2

Indeed Scripture does say that human life is short and full of trouble. Listen to Psalm 90, for example:

The years of our life are threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. (Psalm 90:10, RSV)

Seventy or eighty years, the Psalm says, with trouble enough, and then we fly away. But dear Eusebius of old reminds us that when we fly away, we fly into the arms of the eternal One:

Scripture says that human life is short and full of trouble, but you belong to the unseen and eternal one. (my emphasis)

You, beloved, belong to the eternal one. Take stock of yourself, grab yourself by the arm and think of yourself: you belong to the eternal one! And to this eternal One, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The structure of this sermon then, is easy enough. Our text has two parts. Let us enjoy each one: First, with the Lord one day is as a thousand years. And second, with the Lord, a thousand years is as one day. Let’s begin with the first part — that wonderful multiplication of time: With the Lord one day is as a thousand years!

This means that the Lord has plenty of time for you today. If no one else on the planet should have time for you today, still the Lord does! The Maker of heaven and earth has plenty of time for you today—even a thousand years of time to watch over you, to think about you, and to arrange things for your ultimate blessing.

We ourselves cannot be so attentive to the ebb and flow of our life today as the Lord is. We work our way through each of our days, one at a time, often too rushed to think much about what we are doing and about the springs of our motivations. But the Lord has plenty of time to study these things in us. If we should commit some sin today, we ourselves might overlook it because we are used to it and it hardly registers as a sin anymore for us. But our Maker has plenty of time to note the virtue and the vice of this day. He calls them as he sees them. He notes the truth of our daily deeds, whether they are good or whether they are bad. And he does not forget. He studies us today for a thousand years, and that is plenty of time for him to note the character of our lives day by day.

Not only this, the Lord has plenty of time to notice not only the good we do this day, or fail to do this day, but also the things we suffer this day. No one else knows us so well as our Maker does. No one else has the knowledge of our souls, no one else has the wisdom of judgment, and no one else has the time to get to know us day by day. The Lord has time. The Lord has a thousand years to study us today! That insult you received, that disappointment you suffered on the job, that rudeness on the subway, that frightening news from the physician, that rough conversation in the family... all these sorrows and setbacks in your life are observed by the God who made you and suffered for you and means to bring you home to heaven someday. The Lord has plenty of time to specialize in you! He has a thousand years, day by day, and he is smart and he is good!

Now, here comes a glorious idea, in my opinion: The fact that with the Lord a day is as a thousand years means that the Lord has plenty of time today to fix things so that the coming of his kingdom remains on track. The tyrant oppresses his people, and somehow imagines that what he does shall last forever. In fact what he does begins to decay the instant he does it because the Lord has plenty of time to align reality so that the wickedness of the tyrant, and the cruel fist of the abusive husband, and the iniquity of the
unjust politician, and all such troubles on earth are undone by the Lord who has plenty of time to observe and to correct sin on this earth. Why, each day he has a thousand years to put things right. And anything any one does on this earth that is unworthy of standing in the kingdom is simply wasted time, wasted years, a wasted life!

So that is the first part of our text: with the Lord a day is as a thousand years. Time is a precious possession for each of us. Our time is limited. Threescore and ten years or even fourscore years is not a whole lot of time. We pack as much in as we can in the brief time granted us. But the Lord has plenty of time. He is plenty of time to set right the things of today and every day.

The other point: With the Lord a thousand years is as a single day. This point seems to have meant much to St. Peter as he comforted his people. "Beloved," he calls them:

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (2 Peter 3:8, RSV)

This fisherman who gave away his heart so easily to Jesus also gives away his heart to his church. He calls his people "beloved." They mean much to him. He wants to encourage them, lest their faith should be rocked by the delay in the return of Jesus in power and glory. The early Christians had reason to believe that Jesus would return again soon. It was thought that Jesus would return within a generation. Those early Christians certainly felt that they needed Jesus to return quickly. They had been praying as Jesus had taught them: "... thy kingdom come." They yearned for that kingdom to come. Their pastor, St. Peter, was getting older. All of the apostles were getting older—either that or they had already died. The times felt urgent to the people. St. Peter feared that their faith would be harmed by the delay in the return of Jesus.

And so Peter taught his people that the Lord measures things differently from us. If you or I forget to do something today, we might not remember it tomorrow. It might be lost in our forgetfulness. But with the Lord the passing of time cannot diminish his intense involvement with each moment of time. A thousand years could pass, two thousand years could pass, ten thousand years could pass, and the Lord’s concern for any single day and for any person of that day remains absolutely fresh and beautiful. Ten thousand years could pass since St. Peter tried to comfort his people. Millennia might roll on. And yet the concerns of St. Peter’s people remain as fresh on the heart of the Lord as if he had learned of them just that morning. For a thousand years are as a single day to the Lord. Many years have passed since the resurrection of Jesus, but the Lord has not forgotten the hopes and fears and needs of his people at any single day along life's path. Time sails quickly onwards, but the
passing of time does no harm to our Lord’s concern for the events of today or at any day in all of history. Everything remains alive in the heart of the Lord and he means to save us.

For you and me, the world might forget the wrong we suffered thirty years ago. But for our God those thirty years are as nothing. For him what happened to us thirty years ago is still alive and intense as if it happened just this morning. Even a thousand years is as a single day to our Lord.

We are speaking of the triune God. We are speaking of a God who is entirely involved in human history. God the Father brought us and the whole world into being when he said the mighty words, “Let there be.” God the Son so loved what his Father had brought into being that he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, was made man, suffered and died that we might live and reality not dissolve into nothing. And God the Holy Spirit so loved what the Father had brought into being, and for which the Son was willing to die, that he - the Spirit - works continually to make sure that this work of creation and redemption are not in vain. It is the Spirit who uses the thousand years he has available for each single day to work on that day, to mend it, and to pull it along toward the kingdom of God. All three persons of the holy Trinity embrace this world and all its history. And they do not mean to lose you!

And so old Eusebius is right:

Scripture says that human life is short and full of trouble, but you belong to the unseen and eternal one.³

To this unseen and eternal one, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be the glory, through all the ages, now and forever, Amen!