

"Children of Light" - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Last week, we learned that the Thessalonians didn't have a complete understanding of Jesus' return, and it caused some difficulty, but that doesn't mean that they knew nothing about the Parousia. They knew Jesus was coming back and it was the foundation of their blessed hope.

It should be the foundation of our hope too. Jesus is coming back and this time, it will not be as a suffering servant, but as a conquering King.

"Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Jude 1:14-15)

We need to be ready!

The only way you can be ready is to put your faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ. You cannot be justified on your own. We are all sinners who fall so far short of God's righteous requirements. But God loves you anyway. That's why He sent Jesus to die in your place. That's why Jesus was raised from the dead, so that you can have a living relationship with Him and all you have to do is believe accept His precious gift by faith alone. When you do, you become children of light.

The Bible draws a sharp contrast between children of darkness and children of light. Children of darkness are captives of Satan. They are imprisoned by their sin and sadly, they are willing prisoners.

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. (John 3:19-20)

In our natural state, we were all willing prisoners of our sin. But when the light of Jesus comes, there is a rebirth, a restoration, and we are set free. I pray that everyone here has moved from darkness to light.

Jesus is the light of the world. He told us as much.

*Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."
(John 8:12)*

When Jesus returns, the children of light will have a profoundly different experience than those who chose to remain in darkness. The children of darkness will cry out in anguish:

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! (Revelation 6:15-16)

In contrast, for the children of light ...

*They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.
(Revelation 22:4-5)*

Oh Lord, let us be children of light! And as we complete our sojourn on this earth, let us act the part! Let us live in a way that is appropriate for children of light.

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2)

The Thessalonians knew that Jesus' return would be sudden. It would be unexpected. They had received that instruction before, probably from Paul, but Paul reminds them anyway. We humans are inherently forgetful, so we need these reminders.

Now, those of you who have taken Bibliology and How to Study the Bible will recognize this as a simile. Paul is comparing, or illustrating Jesus' second coming to a thief, who always comes unexpectedly. Peter uses the same illustration in 2 Peter 3:10. And so does Jesus.

*Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, **I will come upon you as a thief**, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. (Revelation 3:3)*

*"Behold, **I am coming as a thief**. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." (Revelation 16:15)*

Paul could not tell the Thessalonians when Jesus was going to come again. Nobody will be able to tell you exactly when Jesus will come again. If anyone gives you a day or an hour, don't listen to them, because Jesus said:

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. (Matthew 24:36)

The meaning is clear: when Jesus comes back, it will be a sudden, unexpected coming. And by the way, those who don't believe will actually be thinking things are going pretty well.

For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

It will be a sudden, and completely unexpected coming for those who don't expect it. The world in general will be consumed with eating and drinking, buying and selling, building and planting, marrying and giving into marriage, playing video games and watching sports on TV, completely focused on living as well as they possibly can right now. There's nothing inherently wrong with any of those activities. A Christian is permitted to do that stuff, but a Christian's focus must not be on that stuff. We are to live God-centered lives, not self-centered lives. And if you are placing your dreams of security in the activities of this life now, on your retirement account, on your savings, your job or the stuff you own, you are going to be horribly disappointed. You are acting foolishly.

We who are called by the name of Christ should be expecting Jesus at any moment. We should be conducting our lives as if we expect Jesus to show up right away, perhaps this week, perhaps this afternoon.

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. (1 Thessalonians 5:4)

You have inside information. This Bible is the revelation of Almighty God. He has told you ahead of time what He is going to do. He just hasn't told you when. So although Jesus' will be sudden, it must not be a surprise to you.

You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. (1 Thessalonians 5:5)

Paul is using “light” and “day” as metaphors for knowledge, metaphors for wisdom. We’ve been given the inside scoop. You say you believe in Jesus, but do you believe Jesus? If you believe Jesus, it will impact the way you live. If you believe Jesus is coming again and that it could happen at any moment, then you will want to be found doing the Master’s work.

Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. (1 Thessalonians 5:6)

To watch for Jesus is to look forward to His return. To be sober is the Greek word *nēphō* (*νήφω*), which means to abstain from wine. Don’t read too much into this; Paul is using the term metaphorically. (Remember, he told Timothy to drink wine for the sake of his stomach.) What he means is that we are to keep our wits about us. We are not to fall asleep and say ...

"Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:4)

Just because Jesus didn’t come back today, it doesn’t mean He won’t come back tomorrow!

For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. (1 Thessalonians 5:7)

Please understand that Paul continues to speak metaphorically. He is not saying we should never sleep. He is saying that we need to be aware of our situation. Those who act as if Jesus is never coming back, Those who ignore the reality of the coming judgement, those who refuse to recognize the light of the world are going to spend eternity separated from God, tormented forever in hell.

Don’t be obsessed with when Jesus is coming back. Don’t be obsessed with the exact order of events. Study it, just don’t dwell too much on it because the thing that is truly important is whether or not you are ready.

Pack your spiritual bags! Be ever prepared! Don’t be like the foolish virgins in Jesus’ parable who didn’t have enough oil for their lamps. (Matthew 25:1-13) (We’re going to look at that parable tonight; you ought to come back.)

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. (1 Thessalonians 5:8)

How often does scripture give us that triad of Christian characteristics? Faith, hope and love, how often do they appear together?

*And now abide **faith, hope, love**, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)*

*For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the **hope** of righteousness by **faith**. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through **love**. (Galatians 5:5-6)*

*... remembering without ceasing your work of **faith**, labor of **love**, and patience of **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, (1 Thessalonians 1:3)*

*who through Him **believe** in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your **faith** and **hope** are in God. (1 Peter 1:21)*

Faith, hope and love work together in every Christian. You cannot be a Christian without faith. It is by faith alone in Jesus Christ that you are saved, and your faith is a gift granted to you by a gracious God. (Ephesians 2:8) When you truly believe in the finished work of Jesus, it gives you hope, hope that your sins have been forgiven, hope that you have been adopted into the family of God, hope that you are destined for an eternity of bliss in the presence of Christ, hope that you will share in His inheritance – the kingdom of God. And this is not a furtive, wishful hope. This is confident assurance. This is trust in the promises of God. And when you trust in the promises of God, it sets you free to love. You know Jesus has your back so you can extend His grace to others. You can become His hands and feet as He serves those who need it most. You can become God-centered and other-centered. You can be obedient to the command of scripture we find in Philippians:

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

Faith, hope and love working together. We are to keep our wits about us, being sober-minded. We are to cultivate our faith. Remember the source of our hope, and exercise the love of God in all that we do.

Jesus is coming back to judge the world, but if you are found in Christ, you need not worry. He's already suffered the wrath you deserve.

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10)

Free from the Law, oh happy condition!
Jesus has bled, and there is remission;
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
Grace has redeemed us once for all.

Are you trusting Jesus for your salvation? Then you don't need to fear death and you don't need to fear Jesus' return. There are many who need to be afraid. There will be many who cry out to the rocks and mountains begging to be covered, buried so they will not have to face Jesus' holy judgment. But not you. You are going to live together with Him, forever and He is going to wipe every tear from your eye!

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

That's why we have the Church. That's why we have this local body of believers right here in Coram. We need to encourage one another. As the world around us swirls into greater and greater depravity, we need to hang together. We need to build each other up in the Lord. (That's what edify means, by the way – to build up.)

We are children of light. Jesus is the Light. Walk in the Light! Live in the awesome presence of our precious Lord!