

11/13/11

**THE PRAYER OF THE DAY** Almighty and ever-living God, You have given Your children all we need to live and serve you. Strengthen us to trust your love and to serve you with all the gifts with which you have blessed us; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**THE EPISTLE LESSON** 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

*(We are children of light, who build each other up.)*

**1** Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, **2** for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **3** While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. **4** But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. **5** You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. **6** So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. **7** For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. **8** But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

**9** For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. **10** He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. **11** Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

**THE GOSPEL LESSON** Matthew 25:14-30

*(Jesus calls his followers to be prepared for His return with a Parable)*

**14** "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. **15** To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. **16** The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. **17** So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. **18** But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

**19** "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. **20** The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' **21** "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' **22** "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' **23** "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

**24** "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. **25** So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

**26** "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? **27** Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. **28** "'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.

**29** For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. **30** And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

**THE SERMON - Preparing for the INEVITABLE**

INTRO - In February of 2000 I got sick. At first I thought it was a fever, I started shaking uncontrollably and was cold. But the shaking did not stop so my wife took me to the hospital, and it turned out to be something called diverticulitis. After talking to doctors and trying different things, it turned out I needed surgery. I was in the hospital 6 days and had a large part of my colon removed.

Can you remember being ill? Perhaps you had a cold or the flu. Or maybe heart trouble or cancer. I talk about illness because, though we don't know what or when, it is something that will happen to all of us. At some time, in some way, we know we'll be unhealthy and need medical care. It is not fun. Being sick can be very serious and life threatening, or just make us feel bad for a little while. But we know that illness of some kind will come along to all of us.

I. Paul is talking about the coming judgement at the end of the world as something that we know is going to come.

A. Paul tells the Christians in the city of Thessalonica **1 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.**

B. Paul is reminding the people of Thessalonica that Jesus is coming again.

1. Jesus will come and judge the world. This world will be destroyed.
2. It is sort of like getting sick. The end of the world is not a surprise for Christians. We don't know where or when, but we know it is coming.

II. So, when I got ill, it is a good thing I already had a doctor, and it is a good thing I had insurance. I did not know I was going to get ill, or had started to become ill. But, when I got ill I was able to go to a doctor, actually to a number of doctors. When I got ill I was able to have surgery and I have been healthy for almost 12 years now. I was prepared.

A. God is speaking through Paul to call people to be prepared for when Jesus will come.

1. Listen to what He says.
2. **8 But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. 9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.**

3. Christians who know Jesus is coming live lives like they know our Lord is coming.

4. Christians who know Jesus is coming live that show our faith and prepare us for Jesus coming, lives of self-control, lives of love and faith and hope.

B. But, while some are prepared, not everyone is. Unfortunately, not everyone has medical insurance, or a doctor. What do you do when you are sick and don't have a doctor, and don't have insurance or enough money to pay for care

1. Unfortunately, not everyone is prepared for Jesus' coming. Not everyone believes in Jesus or knows he is coming.
2. **the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.**

III. All this is one reason God has given us a church to help prepare us for Jesus' coming. God

has given us the church also so we can help each other be ready for the last day which we know is coming.

My son is in college. He knows he will have tests or examinations which he must pass to pass his course. Now regular studying helps. Studying specifically for the exams helps too. But, what often really helps is when student get together in a study group and help each other. That can help them to be prepared for the exams they know are coming.

A. God calls us to encourage one another in preparation for the last day.

1. **our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.**
2. The Church exists so we can encourage one another and build each other up. We encourage each other in worship. We encourage each other with acts of love. We help each other in faith.
3. This helps us to face the every day trials of life.
4. This helps us to be ready when Jesus calls.

B. But mostly what encourages us is Jesus.

1. **our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.**
2. When we are in Jesus, we are ready because **he died so that we may live with Him.**

C. That is what happened here today in our baptism, actually is happening twice.

1. Baptism is one of the ways that first Jesus comes to us, and calls us, and makes us His own.
2. Baptism is a way we cling to Jesus and His love, His dying, His rising. Listen to Romans 6. **3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**
3. Because we are baptized God saves us, and helps us to live a new life, to live in preparation in this life for when Jesus will come again.

CONCLUSION - Have you been to the doctor lately? Whether we know it or not there is a sickness we all face. It is sin, which leads to death and judgement. But there is an eternal solution. **our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.** He is coming again as Judge. We want to be ready. We prepare ourselves when we know He has died and risen for us, and called us as His own, so that we trust Him, and live for Him.