

11/9/11

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 "Living With the End in Mind" Matthew 25

INTRO - We recently took our son to college. He packed clothes and other items for his journey. Now we stopped in Seattle on the way there, but he is staying in Montana. Where do you think he prepared for the most? Montana! He

will be spending 9 months in Montana, and maybe a few hours in Seattle. He prepared with an eye for Montana.

Jesus is talking to the people of His day in the last week of his life. So, he is telling them important information that he will not be able to tell them again. The important message that Jesus is sharing in His last week before His death is, "eternity lasts longer. Live with an eye on eternity."

I. Today's Gospel from Matthew 25 is actually the 6th of 7 different stories or short illustrations in this section that talk about the end times.

A. Because people will spend more time in eternity than on this earth Jesus calls for preparation.

1. In the verse right before this reading, Jesus says, 25: 13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

2. In Matthew 24:24, Jesus summarizes the point of these 7 stories, Jesus says "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

B. What is the trouble if someone doesn't know of coming trouble and is not prepared for it?

Do you remember December 26, 2004? A earthquake caused a Tsunami in the Indian Ocean, that when all the rubble was cleared took over 250,000 lives. If the people had known of the coming Tsunami it might have been easy to have moved inland a mile or so to higher ground. But they weren't prepared, and the lack of preparation was disaster.

1. Do you see the man in this parable who was unprepared. It is not pleasant to think about, but the words of the master are, **30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'**

2. That is not the result for the other two, but it is for this man.

II. In our lesson Jesus tells in another story what it means to be prepared.

A. We can actually learn more from the man who was not prepared, the third man who hid his coin in the ground.

1. What was it he said? **'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.'**

2. The wicked servant was different from the other two in that he did not trust his master for good, but expected bad.

3. He lacked trust or faith.

B. The other two servants showed what happens when someone trusts their master and Lord, they put their faith into action. They put their faith to work.

1. You see, when people trust the Lord, they do the work of the Lord. They bear fruit in God's kingdom.

2. This is not what saves them, but putting their faith into action a natural reaction when someone loves and trusts God.

C. So preparation is actually believing in and trusting God, and then living that faith every day.

III. My son was going to Montana. Our goal is heaven. How do we pack, or how do we prepare for our ultimate goal.

A. Our faith is so important it best not be taken for granted.

1. Actually, faith is a mystery, a gift from God, something the Holy Spirit works in us. But, he has worked that faith in each of us.

2. Since God creates faith by His Word, we read, mark, and study the word of God regularly.

3. Since God creates and strengthen faith by the sacraments, we use the sacraments and remember God's love in them regularly.

4. Since God builds the church for love and good works in worship, in order to take our faith seriously God's people worship regularly.

5. These may sound like old fashioned, even boring ideas. But this is God's plan for feeding our faith that is so important we want to work to keep trusting God.

B. Perhaps the exciting part comes from putting our faith to work.

1. Many Christians went to Indonesia to help with the Tsunami relief. There are even stories of Muslims being touched by the love of Jesus. How about overseas relief work for you?

2. Each year hundreds of people go to the bush in Alaska and bear fruit for God's Kingdom as they work with the Alaska Mission for Christ, telling others about Jesus. Maybe the AMC is a way you can exercise your faith.

3. Some donate offerings so others can work. Not only can you do that in our church, we have a number of young people, Hunter Richards and Ashley Miranda, doing ministry or studying for ministry, and we can help them. Hunter is in seminary in St. Louis. Ashley is in Fairbanks working for Intervarsity Ministry.

4. Others help in soup kitchens, serve as Christians in governmental offices, or volunteer at the hospital.

5. They are trusting God to use their efforts to share the love of Jesus with others. Where can you put your faith to work?

CONCLUSION - Last Sunday I know of church members who were in Minnesota, Houston, Texas, Kansas, Utah, and even 3 families in Hawaii. They had to pack and prepare for their trips. Were they, are we, taking care of our faith and putting our faith into action so that we are prepared for the place we will spend the immense majority of our time? Jesus calls us to live with our eye on eternity.