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Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL
Pastor David Pfeiffer

Sons of Light Take a Sober Look!

1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

INI

Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we obtain salvation and in whom we live. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. ² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³ 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. ⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸ 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. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

This is the Word of the Lord.

We pray in Jesus name: speak O Lord, we are listening. Amen.

Its the end of the world as we know it ... and I feel fine. Or so goes the song. What about you? Do you feel fine? Career going well; House paid off; investments secure; health insurance in place; life insurance guaranteed. Do you feel secure?

Or do you feel more like chicken little? The sky is falling! The sky is falling! You turn on the news and it seems the world is falling apart. War and rumors of wars, school shootings, terrorism, Ebola, sin, death... Should we lock the doors and board up the windows? Its the end of the world as we know it ... how should I feel?

The Day of the Lord is the expected unexpected life-changing event intended to sober us up. It is an expected event – for the Scriptures have clearly foretold it. So Paul says, "Concerning the times and seasons you have no need that I should write you, for you know perfectly well that the Day of the Lord is coming." It is also an unexpected event – for it comes like a thief in the night. So Jesus says, "But know this, that if the master of

the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.” (Matthew 24:43) And it is a life-changing event, intended to sober us up – for without this warning of God’s coming wrath against sin, we would be lost to spiritual darkness. In fact, we partially experience this even today, and any day in which the Lord sends us a wake up call. Whether by typhoon or terrorist or tragedy – these events are not the end, but are a glimpse of what the world is coming to: an end.

This sobers us up. But we’re not talking about alcohol. What it means is a well-balanced spiritual outlook. As Egbert Schaller put it, “The Holy Spirit employs [this idea of soberness] to call upon Christians to be free from every form of mental and spiritual drunkenness, from excess, inordinate passion, rashness, confusion, and thus always to be well-balanced, self-controlled.”

As the end draws near, we find the need to be well balanced. Some have gone too far to one way and are falsely at ease; they are dulled in their spiritual senses. Others are have gone too far the other way and are falsely concerned; they have placed their concerns and trust in all the wrong places. But you are not in darkness that this day should overtake you as a thief. You are sons of light. As sons of light, today we will take a sober look – that is, we will look to become well balanced outlook of the end – an outlook which is not at ease; which is not afraid; but rather an outlook which is sober, watchful, and armed. Sons of light, take a sober look!

1. See the ease in the days of Noah.

But what do you see? Is it the end of the world as you know it ... and how do you feel? There were many who felt just fine with how things were in Noah’s day. They spoke of peace and safety. The world seemed to walk to the beat of the same drummer; with the world united, what could stop them from achieving world peace and safety. They were united – all except for one family. There was one family that walked to a different beat. Noah’s family was different. They didn’t feel so fine with the way things were. And neither did the Lord.

So the Lord said, “The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence; and behold I will destroy the earth with a flood.” It was the day of the Lord – an expected unexpected life-changing event intended to sober us up. The warning had come. But they didn’t care. They said “peace and safety.”

As far as they could see it, they were at peace. They were safe. They were at ease, just like those in the reading today from Zephaniah. “The Lord says, ... [they] are settled in

complacency, [they] say in their heart, 'The Lord will not do good, Nor will He do evil.'"

What truly characterized those days was not just immorality. There has always been immorality in the world. But what characterized this generation was complacency. A sense of ease with the way things are. They have forgotten the Lord. They have forgotten His wrath against sin and His salvation toward those who believe. He will not do good, nor will He do evil. They say peace and safety! But there is none. Are these last days so different for us? So Jesus says,

Matthew 24:36–39 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

What characterizes the last days are the fact that things go on as normal. They eat; they drink. They go about their business. Career; house paid off; insurance in place. They celebrate: graduations, marriages, babies, retirement. But they have forgotten the Lord, they have forgotten repentance; they have forgotten His return. And they walk in darkness.

Sons of light, take a sober look! It is the end of the world as we know it. And we shouldn't be fine with that. You, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. So the Lord says, enter the ark. And that ark is here. Here where we "built up" a "spiritual house." Here is a family that is different. Where a beat lives on in a constant rhythm: He has died, He has risen, He is coming again...

Sons of light, take a sober look! But what do we see?

2. See the fears in parenting

Are you like chicken little? The sky is falling! The sky is falling! It makes us want to lock up the doors, board the windows and hide. You turn on the news and it makes you want to hide; to hide your kids from the world.

Maybe you read the headlines last week: Mother's Instinct May Have Saved Daughter from Alleged Kidnapper. It was 4:30 a.m. and they were all fast asleep when mom woke up to footsteps. She hears the front door open and 5 year old daughter talking to someone. It was an abduction. She wakes her husband who rushes out just in time to

confront the Kidnapper and get his daughter back. The disturbed kidnapper flees on foot and is later caught by police hiding in a nearby house.

Among the most powerful emotions to influence parents is fear. With the violence and sickness you see on the news, you might think its time to board up your windows and lock your doors and arm yourself. I was hearing on the news that in schools across America, lock down drills are becoming as common place as fire drills. Fear is a powerful influence. It leads us instinctively to try to take control of the situation.

We take all the precautions to keep our child safe, to take control of the situation. Our concern builds into fear and we think it is up to us as parents to board up our windows, lock our doors, and arm ourselves. Unlike a sense of ease in the days of Noah, now we have gone the other direction. Fear, concern, control.

Sons of light, take a sober look! The sky is falling, and we have shelter – for ourselves, for our children. But where will shelter be found? Can we really control this situation – to keep our children from ever getting hurt? Can we keep ourselves from getting hurt? Feeling pain? Being scared? Is putting another lock on the door the solution?

Sons of light, take a sober look!

3. See yourself: well-balanced, watchful, and armed

Because you know what: It is the end of the world as we know it. The sky is falling! But this is not a time to eat, drink, and celebrate. Nor is this a time for lockdown. It is a time to sober up. To take our watch. And to arm ourselves for what we will face. The expected unexpected life-changing events – on the news, in our lives, in our families – these are intended to sober us up to a ready outlook: Not an outlook which is at ease; not afraid; but rather an outlook which is sober, watchful, and armed.

A sober look is a well balanced and attentive attitude. It is an outlook which is sensitive to the will of the Lord; which sees the needs of others. A sober look is a watchful anticipation of the final coming of Christ. A sober look is to be armed and alert to those things which make us drowsy and drunk. Not wrongly at ease; Not excessively concerned or afraid; but balanced, watchful, and armed.

4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and

those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 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.

Take a sober look. That day of the Lord could be any day; and so today, the Lord awakens us. You are sons of light. The light of Christ has dawned all around, so that you can see the sky falling, and you can see your Lord lifted up.

Your Lord is lifted up in the darkness of our sins. The darkness of our carousing; our carelessness; our catastrophes – have fallen upon Him. The darkness of our concerns, our controlling attitudes, our coverups – have fallen upon Him. The darkness of a sky stained with our sins has fallen upon Jesus, the day of the Lord with all its destruction, the end of the world as we know it has come to God's own Son and He is lifted up on the cross, a sinner.

But He is lifted up again in the light of salvation. In the light of God's new day, He is lifted up on high. He is raised from the dead, from the darkness; He has obtained victory over all evil and is shining with the light of salvation for all to see. For you to see. For you to live in.

We are not of the night. We are not of darkness. You are sons of light – not swaying to the extremes. Not feeling fine about the destruction that has come upon our Savior, but repentant. Not running like Chicken Little with his head cut off, but hopeful. Yes, sons of light, let us who are of the day be well-balanced, watchful, and armed.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Christians, don't hide in the darkness of their homes on lockdown; don't bury the Lord's treasure; rather you are the good steward from Matthew's parable, who is busy, putting the Lord's investment of the gospel to work. So stand in the light of Christ where all things can be seen; stand armed. Armed with the breastplate of faith and love. Armed with faith we venture out of our houses and into a dark world trusting that God will protect us from every evil and use every evil for our good. Armed with love we venture out into a dark world in need of servants, in need of those who will sacrifice their own needs for the needs of others. Armed with the hope of salvation as a helmet, we venture out into a dark world in need of hope, in need of the saving work of Christ. We are well-balanced, watchful, and armed.

Sons of light, take a sober look!

What made that mother wake up that night? Was it divine intervention? A mother's intuition? Something awakened her, and even she wasn't sure what it was. But it saved her daughter.

The Day of the Lord is the expected unexpected life-changing event intended to sober us up. And today, the Lord has sobered us up. He has heard the footsteps; the murmurs of Satan's plans. He has heard the footsteps of death, breaking in to this slumbering world and trying to snatch you away into the night. But He is awoken by the intuition of His love and He responds. He rushes to the rescue. He meets death face to face and He rescues you. He awakens you to an endless life.

So it is the end of the world as we know it. The sky is falling. But we can feel fine in Christ: because the Lord says, "I am your shelter; I do not sleep; I watch over you and your children day and night; I have not chosen you for wrath, but to obtain salvation – so whether you live or die, you will live together with Me. Therefore comfort one another with these words. And remember, the end of this world, is only the beginning of the world which is to come."

Amen.