

November 15, 2020 Sermon  
1Thessalonians 5:1-11

Are you tired? And I don't mean just physically tired, but emotionally tired. Are you fearful or just cautious? Are you ready for good things to happen? Could you use a break from it all?

I've probably shared in the past about how difficult it is to raise kids. If you've raised any, or know of people who have, you will know that it is *not* an easy task. From the time they are born until the time YOU die, they are, for the most part, a handful.

You simply don't get to a certain point in the life of your offspring and say, okay, I'm done, because no matter how old you get, or what you do in life, you are STILL a parent and you *still* worry about your children.

Granted, it was a different feeling when they were growing up because it was a constant push for them to do everything from getting out of bed, to taking a shower, to doing their homework, to making sure they learned proper manners and stayed out of trouble. And if they DID get into trouble, then you had the stress of creating their punishment. Raising children is *no* easy task.

I would call my mother and talk to her about what I should do. Sometimes, I would say to her, "You know, I think I could just walk away from everything they do and no one would even care or notice that I was gone." This was silly, of course, because who would cook their food or do their laundry or push them to do anything if I were not there. So, mom would say to me, "You can't let up. You HAVE to keep going, and you *have* to stay on top of things."

We are coming to the end of the church year, which means we are getting into a lot of apocalyptic "stuff" in our scripture readings. Last week we were told to keep our lamps trimmed. Save some of that oil because we don't know how long we might have to wait until we get some more, and we don't want to be left in the darkness. It's the passage that reminds me that burning the candle from both ends is never a good idea, and we, as a people, tend to do just that.

Today's readings are no different. Even the gospel lesson has a sense of urgency for us to make things better. Pay attention to what is happening around us, to prepare for the future because we *never* know what the future holds.

Isn't this why people still have gardens in the summer? I was told there were more gardens planted this past year than in *any* year recently past. People are being smart, they're looking ahead, they're paying attention to what might be, and so, along with the fresh that is eaten from the garden, there is enough to can or freeze to prepare for *whatever* the winter might have to offer. We don't know what the future holds.

We talk of getting our house prepared for the months ahead, whether it's checking to make sure the furnace is working for the winter or whether the air conditioning is working for the summer; we are *always* in a state of being prepared. This is also why most people get a flu shot. **No** one wants to be caught ill-prepared for future events. But in the process of being vigilant and on top of things, we get *tired* and in need of a *rest*...and *that's* okay, too.

All of the things that I listed above are good. It's *good* to be prepared, but it's also good to know that what we do for our personal well-being; what we do to assure that we stay warm, or have enough to eat, or even that our children are being tirelessly watched, doesn't threaten the assurance of our salvation.

Paul says, in his letter to the Thessalonians, "You do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very *well* that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But YOU, beloved, are NOT in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for **you** are all children of **light** and children of the **day**; we are **not** of the night or of darkness."

We are God's children. We already know that we've got *that* one neatly tied up. We already know about the coming of Christ. We *live* in the light. We live in the *knowledge* of Christ's resurrection and the eternal life that is given to us. We have faith and the peace that is offered through that faith. Yes, it gets drowned out by the worldly stuff that happens around us, but reminding ourselves that we *have* that faith is part of preparing for the coming of Christ.

We've all seen or heard of the bumper sticker that says, "Jesus is coming—act busy!" There is no need, as believers in God to "act busy," because as believers, we trust in the promises of God in Christ and we are at peace.

We are just coming out of what I would call the craziness of a new election year. No matter where you land in your opinions of our candidates, and of the eventual winner, we are responsible for working with one another. We are responsible to show the love of God in Christ to *everyone* we meet. Opinions are just that. We are all entitled to them. In fact, we are entitled to a LOT of things that living in a free world has to offer us.

Veterans day has come and gone, and we owe our undying thanks to *all* in the military who fought to preserve our freedoms. That means that even if we disagree with someone else's ideas, we are all still allowed to *have* those ideas; to *share* and *communicate* our feelings with one another. This is what freedom is...being allowed to have a voice in our country.

Sometimes those voices get loud and vicious and what seems to be out of control, but out of chaos comes possibility and change for the good if, we do as Paul says and "encourage one another and build up each other."

The world is constantly changing, reforming and transforming and we cannot allow each other to forget who we are and whose we are when those changes cause unrest. Paul says, "Since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has destined us *not* for *wrath* but for obtaining *salvation* through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him."

We do *not* know when the day is coming, and *because* we do not know when the day is coming, we must continue to encourage one another in *all* that we do. Come together, work together. Think of a time when someone needed your encouragement and you were there for them. This is what God in Christ is *asking* us to do. Work together in *peace*. Be like those parents who encourage their young one who is just learning to walk. Be like those teachers, parents, aunts and uncles and grandparents who help raise children to become responsible adults.

Instead of wondering if all the turmoil we've had in this crazy world lately is an uncomfortable sign that the end is near, think about what you should *do* while you *wait*, remembering that we know NOT when the end is near.

We can still continue to help the poor and the oppressed. We can still see to it that people have food to eat and clothing to wear. Check in on people with children who may be at the end of their rope and offer to give them some quiet time by keeping an eye on their children in an effort to let the parents go out for the evening. Smile at people you meet in the store or on the street. Whatever you do, ***don't give up being the person that God wants and needs us to be.***

And do as Paul suggests we do later in this chapter and that is: be at peace with one another, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient, rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all things.

If we are to live in the kingdom of God, this is how it should be. Be at peace, love and serve one another. Amen.