

Then The End Will Come!
Pastor Joe Oakley
GFC – August 9, 2020

We are living in some very strange and difficult times. This causes many to wonder if the end of the world is near. That's why we are in a sermon series called Signs of the Times. We are teaching from Matthew 24 and 25 where Jesus taught about the signs of the end times and about what events will take place.

After speaking on the signs of the times and the last days events – Jesus spoke 5 parables in a row to teach the need for believers to stay ready for His second coming. Those parables tell us 4 things we should do until the second coming of Jesus Christ: worship, watch, work and witness.

We've looked at the first 3 and today I'm preaching on the 4th in a sermon entitled "Then the End Will Come." I get this title from Matthew 24 where Jesus listed the signs of the end. In verse 14 He said:

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Jesus said He's not coming back until every people group has heard the gospel. Not all will be saved, but all will have a chance to hear the Good News! This is what God is patiently waiting for. 2 Peter 3:3-10 says:

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' He promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Peter shows us that people have always mocked teaching on the last days. But they deliberately forget that just as God destroyed the earth by a flood in the days of Noah, He will destroy it in the future by fire.

Peter also tells us that to God – a day is like a thousand years. So, to God – the 2,000 years since Jesus died are like 2 days! It seems like a long time to us, but not to Him!

And Peter tells us what God is waiting for – He's waiting for as many people as possible to come to repentance and salvation through Jesus. God does not pick and choose who gets saved and He does not want only a few to be saved. The Bible clearly teaches He wants everyone to come to repentance. Not everyone will – but they will all get the chance to receive or reject His gracious offer of salvation through the cross of Christ!

And we have a role to play in God's plan! One of the devil's biggest lies is that we have to do huge things to make an impact with our lives. That lie keeps many people from doing anything. But Jesus says that small things done in His name have great impact! Matthew 10:42 says:

If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is My disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.

We are all called to be witnesses to what Jesus has done for us! Being a witness comes before witnessing! What do I mean by that? People need to see something in our lives that shows the power of God and the grace of God at work in our lives. And it's the seemingly small things we do that make a difference.

In our passage today – Jesus shows us that small acts of love done for people have major results. They even impact eternity. Here's what Jesus said in Matthew 25:31-46

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited Me in, I needed clothes and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you came to visit Me.

Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and invite You in, or needing clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me.'

Then he will say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite Me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe Me, I was sick

and in prison and you did not look after Me. They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help You?' He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

By the way – you might be surprised to know that the person who said the most about hell in the Bible – by far – was Jesus Christ Himself.

I find it interesting because people usually see Jesus as a gentle loving teacher who only spoke about love, acceptance and forgiveness. But Jesus gave more teaching on Hell and more warnings about Hell than anyone else in the entire Bible.

Before I get into all this, I want to make certain you understand this first:

1. We are not saved by works – but works are evidence of salvation

The judgment does not turn people into sheep or goats. They are already sheep or goats. The judgment just reveals them for who they really are.

There are some people who are only concerned about social gospel who meet needs without sharing the Good News of the gospel. There are others who share their faith – but who do nothing to meet the needs of people around them. Jesus is saying that both extremes are wrong. We must love God and love people.

In fact – Jesus said that when we fail to meet the needs of needy people – we are failing Christ. But Jesus is not saying that helping people is the way to salvation. Rather, He is saying that helping people is the result of salvation and the evidence of salvation.

So, the point is that salvation is not by works, but by faith. But true faith results in good works.

2. Jesus said that He will judge the nations

In His last teaching before going to the cross – Jesus shows us that all nations will one day be judged by God. And they will be judged based on how they treated what Jesus called “the least of these.” Who are the least of these? The Amplified Version translates it the least (in the estimation of men). The Message says - someone who was being overlooked or ignored.

In this passage Jesus identifies 4 groups of people included in “the least of these: Poor – Prisoners – Sick – Strangers. Sometimes that word strangers is also translated aliens. That is not talking about creatures from outer space – but people who come to one country from another. The Bible is very clear that we need to take care of the poor, the sick, those in prison and those who come from

other countries. The Bible is very clear about how to treat people from another country. In Leviticus 19:33-34 God said to the people of Israel:

When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 24:17-19 says:

Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this. When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

Jesus tells us to be intentional about meeting the needs of needy people – especially widows, orphans and aliens. That’s because:

3. Ministry to the least is ministry to Jesus

Jesus has shown mercy to us – so we must show mercy to others! And nothing on this list exceeds our grasp: Any of us can help feed the hungry, donate clothing, visit those who are sick or in prison.

We have ministries in this church that are doing these very things that you can easily get involved in. And when you give to missions you are feeding and clothing needy people around the world.

And we must realize that choosing to do nothing is faith without works. Sin is not just doing wrong things – it is not doing right things. James 2:14-18 says:

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no works? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

When we minister to the least of these in the name of Jesus – we are showing forth our faith by our works.

4- Witnessing requires show and tell

How many of you remember having show and tell time at school?

I remember being in the 3rd grade – sitting in circle – I didn't have anything to share so I made something up. I said I went on an airplane ride with my dad. That part was true and everybody believed that – but I kept going and the story got out of hand. I said we went up in the clouds and I opened the window and the clouds came inside the plane and we couldn't see and almost crashed. That's where I lost them.

I learned that day why they call it Show and Tell – I was telling without showing and nobody was buying. I learned my lesson, and when I got into the 4th grade, I gave it another shot. I talked about how my grandfather was a sheriff in Tennessee. This time I had proof – his badge. This time everyone believed me because I was showing and telling.

One of the problems with Christians today is that many are telling without showing! Show and tell is a pattern of ministry seen all through the Bible. People believed in Jesus because He showed and He told. The Bible is the record of what Jesus did and taught. The book of Acts begins by talking about *all that Jesus began to do and to teach...*

His 2-fold pattern of ministry involved demonstration and proclamation. This was also true of His disciples and should be true of us. Sharing our faith involves proclamation and demonstration.

We've got to proclaim God's goodness and demonstrate God's goodness.

We've got to proclaim God's power and demonstrate God's power.

We've got to proclaim God's love and demonstrate God's love.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:16

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

We've got to be the good news and live the good news (demonstration) in order to earn the right to tell the good news (proclamation).

Good works provide an opportunity to share Good news! That means we need to be show and tell Christians who walk the walk and talk the talk. Christians who live it in our lives and share it with our mouths. And the Bible is very specific about how we should live. 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 says:

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

God tells us to live life in a way that gains other people's respect! Our lives must show something to people that attracts them before they will hear us.

Are you showing and telling? Are you living a life before others that is attracting them to Christ? The point is we can tell people we are Christians all day long.

We can read our Bibles and pray and argue doctrine – but that means nothing to unbelievers. Few people have been argued into the kingdom of God.

People of the world judge Christianity, not from preaching, or from books, or from the conduct of Jesus and his apostles, but from what they see in the daily lives and conversation of the members of the church.

We may be very devout church goers - regular at prayer-meetings - even tithers - but all these are of little worth in the eyes of the world, unless accompanied by a life of integrity and good works!

We witness through our lives first, our words second. Most people are drawn to a Christian before they are drawn to Christ. What draws them? They must see something different in us. We can talk about our faith all day long, but people need to see our faith in action! They need to see us going through the same issues in life and in school and at work as they go through – but we go through them differently! We have joy in our hearts and peace of mind and hope for the future. At some point – they will ask you about that. And 1 Peter 3:15-16 says -

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

In other words – live a life that is above reproach so that there is no cause for accusations – only cause for questions about how you live such a hopeful life. Then you'll have the opportunity to share your faith with them.

People believed in Jesus because what He said and what He did. Now – they either believe or don't believe based on what we say and do!

1 John 4:17 says *love has been perfected in us... because as He is, so are we in this world.*

You're the only Jesus some people will ever see. That's why how we live is important. But so is what we say. What have you seen and heard? What have you personally experienced? That's what you witness to.

Once you tell your story – all you need to know to lead someone to faith is Christ is the ABC's. A – Admit B – Believe C – Confess
We get the ABC's from Romans 10:9-10

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

The ABC's are all you need to know - Admit you need a Savior,

Believe in your heart that Christ died for your sins and rose from the dead, and Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.

By the way, I want to take the pressure off you to convert people. We are called to be witnesses, not to convert, save or change hearts. That is God's job. Our part is to witness about what God has done for us. His part is to save!

By the way, every Christian is a witness, whether they want to be or not. What is your life preaching? I like to ask this question, "If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" The way you live can give you an open door to share the good news with people. At that point, you must have something to share! You don't have to have a degree in theology – just some good news! You don't have to know the answer to every question – you just need to know what Jesus has done for you!

There was a man in the Bible who was healed by Jesus. The theologians asked him some difficult questions, but the man said this in John 9:25 – I don't know all the answers: *But I know one thing for sure: I was blind, but now I can see.*

You see – someone with an experience is never at the mercy of someone with an argument. So, when someone asks you a question you don't know the answer to, just say, "I don't know, but what I do know is what Jesus did for me!" I believe that all of us need to get our stories down to one sentence to share with others. Share your story! What's Jesus done for you?

Has Jesus done anything for anyone here this morning?

Can you say:

Once I had nothing to show or tell, but now my life is changed!

Once I was blind, but now I see!

Once I was lost, but now I'm saved!

Once I had no purpose in life, but now I now I know my destiny!

Once I was headed straight for hell, but now I'm on my way to heaven!

Once I was sick, but now I'm healed!

Once I was empty, but now I am full!

Once I was addicted, but now I'm sober!

Once I was depressed, but now I'm happy!

Once I was full of fear, but now I am full of faith!

Once I was lonely, but now I'm part of the family of God!

Once I was defeated, but now I am more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ my Lord!

Once I wanted to die, but now I a reason to live because I have abundant life in Christ!

Do you have anything to show? Anything to tell?

Anything to praise the Lord for?

Begin showing and telling because God is at work saving the lost and one day the last lost person God is waiting on will be saved, and then the end will come!