

Sermon Transcript for October 17, 2021

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

It's always interesting when the Gospel ends the way this one does. "Bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." This is the Gospel of the Lord. The Good News is a little bit clouded in the ending of this Gospel, but let us see if we can find it as we go through. Although in reality, this Sunday is very much a cautionary tale. This Sunday very much is focused upon on what we are, what we have and how fragile and beautiful it is and how gracious our God is. But it's also a condemnation that there are going to be many who are called, but few who are chosen. In other words, we ought not to be surprised when the message of the Gospel is rejected by our society at large.

The Ephesians passage says, "Make the best use of the time because the days are evil." Now Paul wrote that in the early 50, 60, 70 AD. And the fact of the matter is that nothing has changed. In almost 2,000 years, the same thing is still true. "The days are evil." Now in the past, growing up, I know in America where I grew up in small town Iowa, it really didn't feel like the days were evil. It felt like everything was pretty good. Vast majority of people went to church. There was peace and harmony amongst neighbors. There wasn't really any strife, or chaos, or shooting, or rebellions, or revolts, or fires and buildings being destroyed. And all the other things that we turn on the news and then turn it quickly off because this is awful. And yet, the Scriptures would say that even then that the days were evil. And why is that?

It is because mankind as a general rule has rejected our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And very often we have looked for our comfort and our security and our hope in the things that we have done and the type of person that we are. So we have looked very often internally to what we do or how we act as a gauge of whether or not we are good people or part of the Kingdom of God. But the thing of the matter is, if we're honest with ourselves, we may try to be good people, and a lot of times, we may even succeed at being good people. The problem of the matter is we are not perfect people. We are not holy people. In order to be perfect and holy, we need something outside of ourselves to bring us into that holiness and that righteousness, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness so that we might then stand before God, pure and holy, and stand before our neighbors.

And here's what Jesus has to say. He speaks in parables. Now remember a parable is Jesus using an allegory or a story to try and help us figure out what the Kingdom of God is like. Parables very seldom talk about what we are called to do or how we are supposed to live. Most of the parables are about "the Kingdom of God is like..." The Kingdom of God is like a woman who had 10 coins and she lost 1. The Kingdom of God is like the master whose son ask for his inheritance. The Kingdom of God is like the wine press owner. "The kingdom of God is like..." is a majority of the parables. And here, this is no different. The Kingdom of Heaven is like, or can be compared to, a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.

Now the first thing, and I've mentioned this a few times, but it never hurts to reiterate, the Kingdom of God is very often compared to, or connected with a person, not a place or not an event. When I think of the Kingdom of heaven just naturally and normally I think of the place of Heaven, the place of the new Kingdom, of the new heavens and the new Earth. That's what I think of when I think of the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven. I think of the place, I think of the mansions that God is building, and the roads made of jasper and gold and all this other beauty, the pearly gates and all that. When I naturally think of the Kingdom of Heaven,

that's what I think about. But when Scripture talks about the Kingdom of Heaven, it talks about the Kingdom of Heaven is like a king, or a master, or a person, or the Kingdom of God is a person in other words.

So when we talk about the Kingdom of God, we are talking about Jesus Christ. He is the Kingdom of God and wherever He is, there is the Kingdom. And we are part of that kingdom when we know Him and we put our trust in Him. And the extending circumstances don't really matter. So currently you and I are in the Kingdom of God. Even though the days are evil, even though this world is falling apart around us, you and I are still in and with the kingdom of God, because we are in and with Christ. And so we stand in a different place, even though our feet touch the same ground as everybody else, we are in a different world. We are in the Kingdom of God. We are members of the Body of Christ. And therefore our citizenship is not of this world. Our hope is not of this world. And that's very important for us to remember because we need not be foolish. We need to be careful in how we walk.

Because when I turn on the news and I start listening to the chaos and I start thinking about everything that is going on, my walk gets a little bit slower. My head droops a little bit more. My mind gets a little more befuddled, and frustrated, and angry and sad. And I feel just a little bit more depressed and anxious. And if I allow that to inform the way I walk and the way I live, it is not going to be what God desires. It's going to be foolish because I'm looking at the kingdom of this world, the kingdom of Satan. And I'm allowing that to rule my heart, and my mind and my soul. And if the kingdom of this world is ruling me, how am I ever going to be a faithful witness, to the joy of my salvation, to the rest of the world that needs to hear it.

And so I am being conformed, when I get depressed, when I get anxious, when I allow the cares of this world to consume me, I am being informed by the world rather than me being informed by Christ. And I'm walking away from my birthright as a child of God. And I'm allowing the evils of the world to be my birthright. And that is foolish because it fails to understand the power, and the majesty, and the authority, and the might, and the glory, and the love of God that is ours. Because it is a truth that many are called and few are chosen. You and I tend to think of the Gospel message as Good News. I mean, our sins are forgiven, we have been promised life everlasting, and God is with us. That seems like good news. And it is Good News. But when we proclaim that to the rest of the world, they don't always hear it that way.

What they hear is everything that you believe is wrong, and you need to change your ways and you need to change your thoughts and the things that you thought were good are now evil, and you are not in control of your life, but God has a plan for you, which means that you need to conform to His will, not Him conform to yours. When you speak in those terms, a lot of people don't want to hear that. They like their life the way it is. They're comfortable in their own sin and their own desires. And so when we say they're wrong, or they're evil, that doesn't sound like Good News. So the message of Christ has a hard time getting out into the world because the world does not want to hear it. And so if we do not conform our lives in our walk to the way that Christ wants us to, to be wise and not unwise, and not foolish, then we are going to hamper the message even more.

And so what are we called to do? And Paul makes it fairly clear in some ways. I mean, there's a simple one, do not get drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery, over excess of, and you could say this of wine or possessions or leisure, or whatever. Do not get drunk or do not over consume something that is of no value, that is of no lasting value. In this case it was wine, but it could be any number of things. Where is your focus? Where is your desire? Where do you spend an exorbitant amount of your time? Is it on things that are quality? Or is it on fluff and pointless stuff that is just going to fall away?

Now, again, wine is good for the soul, a little bit, little bit of leisure and wellbeing and rest is good. None of this stuff is evil in and of itself, but when it becomes the focus or when it consumes us or takes over, or it is our focus, then it becomes foolish and it goes against the Spirit of God. So in other words, everything that we do, we're called to be filled with the Spirit, including where we spend our time, who we talk to, how we act, how we interact with our neighbors and our friends. We're to be filled with the Spirit. And what does that mean to be filled with the Spirit? It means that we are to address each other's in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, that sounds pretty good.

Now notice it doesn't say, okay, you've got to convince everybody you are right by having a theological discussion with them and beating them down with your truth, as opposed to theirs, which is how we often think we have to convince the world that our ways are right. So often we tend to go into the world looking for a fight, or maybe not looking for a fight, but just expecting a fight. You're going to say your thing, and I'm going to say my thing, and we're going to argue about it. And I'm going to prove to you that I'm right. Or you're going to try and prove to me that you are right. Well it doesn't do any good, except we now don't like each other. And we're convinced that our ways are right. And they're convinced that their ways are right. But if we go into the world, filled with the Spirit, singing hymns and spiritual songs, making melody to the Lord, with all of our heart.

In other words, making melody in our interactions with each other, by the joyful life that we live, that our neighbors would see us and go, wow, what kind of joy do you have? And why do you have it? That is what is going to help them hear the Good News of Christ. See, we are to praise God and give Him thanks for everything. Give Him thanks for everything. That includes the hardship and the struggles and the difficult times that we are facing today. And that's one I hadn't thought about for a while, but as I was studying, I'm going, we need to thank God for the chaos of the day. And when I thought about that, I thought, man, you're just crazy pastor, what are you talking about? But in reality, when the world is in chaos, when none of the world's answers seem to be working, we have something that is true. We have something that's eternal. We have something that is demonstratively different than the world has to offer. And so it is an opportunity. I think more people are hearing now, then they were maybe 5, 10, 15 years ago because the world's plan is not working. And it's obvious. But God has been working His plan for 6,000 years and it has always worked. Now we don't worship it just because it works. We don't worship God, just because it works well for us. We worship God, and we give Him thanks because it's true.

God has spoken. He has given us all good things. He has promised that He was going to send His Son so that a whole nation that never knew Him would come to Him, as Isaiah says. And they found Him, and they sought Him, and they heard Him, and the unrighteous man turned his thoughts to the Lord. And we had compassion upon the people who, because God parted us. And we recognized that our ways are not His ways. And our thoughts are not His thoughts because God is so much greater than all of us. And because God has chosen to dwell with us, as we talked about last week, about the enfleshing, the incarnation, the "God with us".

How many people know who their God is and exactly what He desires? Few people actually. A lot of people say, well, my Jesus or my God would never ... It's dangerous when we try to create God in our own image. We need to see what the image of God truly is. And He calls everybody and He wants everybody to come. But we're called to come with open arms trusting in His Word, not in our own actions, not in our own thoughts, not in our own goodness. But in the greatness and holiness and perfection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which He has given to us freely as a gift. Let us wear His gift of righteousness in our daily lives. Let us allow

that garment of forgiveness and grace to fill us so that we might thank God in all circumstances and sing His praises to a world that does not know that they might hear and see the joy of our salvation, and come into the Kingdom, come with and into the Kingdom of God, which is Christ Jesus, our Lord.

May God strengthen and preserve you and bring you joy from this day forward, unto life everlasting. Amen.