



Opening Sermon of 2021

Next

Forest Park Church

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What if you knew the future?

Matthew 24 opens with the disciples presumably leaving Jerusalem marveling at the construction of the temple mount area.

Matt 24:1

Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. 2 “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

If the future is unpredictable

I. Looking Ahead.

Matt 24:3

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

There are many ways to approach the future.

- Some try to ignore it or stop it.
- Some people look at the big picture.
- Some break it down into smaller chunks.
- Some like to just go with it.
- Some plan for it.

God created you (and every person on planet Earth) with several parts. Like a pie with separate pieces, each part is critical to who you are.

Five Parts of Every Life:

- Spiritual
- Family
- Social
- Physical
- Work

If you fail to give each part the proper attention and care, you'll experience problems.

For example,

A: God created you as a spiritual being, He wants you to love Him with your whole heart, soul and mind (Matthew 22: 37-40).

- This means that your decisions must agree with your spiritual convictions.
- If you set goals that go against what you know God asks of you, you will become fragmented emotionally and intellectually
- and you will lose your joy and enthusiasm.

B: Additionally, because God also created you to need connection with others,

- if you neglect the social aspect of your life and become "all work and no play," you will become out of balance
- you'll likely lose important connections with family and friends.
- Someday you'll realize just how much you lost.

C: We need to care for our physical bodies as well.

- Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit
- We don't see 20-foot pillars in front of you, or heavy curtains covering our bodies I Cor 6 reminds us that God inhabits our person with his spirit.

"Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself..."

(1 Corinthians 6:19)

Don't forget We only have one body:

- Although we are promised to become recipients of a glorified body, while we're here on earth, we only have one body.
- And this one body is the only one that God gave us in order for us to live for Him and love Him.
- God's not the one who suffers when we're sick: We are.
- God's not the one who feels discomfort when we don't give ourselves rest. God is complete in Himself and rested.
- However, we can't fully give our service and wholehearted devotion to God when our bodies are down.
- "the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (see Matthew 26:41)

D: Finally, remember that the world does not rest on your shoulders.

- You will make mistakes.
- It's OK. Because God wants to see you do His will,
- He will teach you the way to go as you walk in faith (Psalm 32:8).

II. Prepare for what's Next.

Jesus Responds to the apostles question by sharing with them a parable.

Matthew 25

*"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. **2** Five of them were foolish and five were wise. **3** The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them.*

***4** The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. **5** The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.*

***6** "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'*

***7** "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. **8** The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'**9** "No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'*

Paul's Timeless Life Principles:

1. We prepare when we quiet ourselves and pray.
2. We prepare by focusing on the unchanging, timeless principles of the Bible, not the most recent fad.
3. We prepare when we take time to know ourselves, look at how we are living, and change things.
4. Remember the Ultimate Authority.

A: We prepare when we quiet ourselves and pray.

(Which yields gifts of endurance, patience, joy, and a spirit of thankfulness.)

Col 1:9–12

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and long suffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”

Paul charges Christians to be role models who demonstrate specific qualities or traits that will aid us to prepare for the future. Paul emphasizes that God will fill the Colossians with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. With the knowledge that God's will will be done, the Christian officer must prayerfully step out in faith and serve God with confidence and joy, resulting in a spirit of thankfulness.

Paul states that those who are living a Christ-centered life will “bear fruit.” Any success for the Kingdom of God, no matter how small, gives us an attitude of joy and thankfulness. Therefore, the first general order of preparing yourself is to pray, and a spirit of patience, confidence, thankfulness, and joy will emerge.

B: We prepare by focusing on the unchanging, timeless principles of the Bible, not the most recent fad.

Col 2:8

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

Paul’s second timeless principle talks about remaining true to the fundamentals, in this case,

General Douglas MacArthur, in his farewell address to the Corps of Cadets in 1962, stated, “And through all this welter of change and development, your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable-it is to win our wars.”

The Colossians’ true identity in Christ became unclear because of the many confusing religions competing for their attention.

- They readily accepted other religions teachings and traditions of faith because they did not know their true identity in Christ.
- Instead of preparation, the Colossians sought the fast-food approach in turning to Gnostic teachings.
- It takes meditation and prayer to know oneself.

C: We prepare when we take time to know ourselves, look at how we are living, and change things.

Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

*24 And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Col 3:15

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”

Christians who have opened themselves to God’s changes are genuine, confident leaders who easily work well with others.

Sun Tzu, a Chinese general around 500 BC and author of *The Art of War*, explained wisdom. He said, **“If you know the enemy and you know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”**

The Colossians were slowly succumbing to heretical teachings, and Paul saw that the battle for Christian truth was waning.

- As Christians, we can represent Christ as ambassadors charged to “go and make disciples” of peace.
- It leads to transcending our daily existence and actions.

If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.

D: Remember the Ultimate Authority.

Col 3:23–24

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”

Conclusion:

10 *“But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.*

11 *“Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’*

12 *“But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’*

13 ***“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.***

What comes Next? It really doesn't matter if your prepared.

It was the lion’s den for Daniel,
the prison for Peter,
the whale’s belly for Jonah,

Goliath's shadow for David,
the storm for the disciples,
disease for the lepers,
doubt for Thomas,
the grave for Lazarus,
and the shackles for Paul.

God carries us through stuff:

through the Red Sea onto dry ground (Exodus 14:22),
through the wilderness (Deuteronomy 29:5),
through the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4),
and through the deep sea (Psalm 77:19).