

10/15/23 Christ Fellowship

What Christians Do

Be Ready – 1 Cor. 15

I have some beautiful words of great wisdom to read to you. The author of these words is the great theologian...Mr. Magorium. Do you know who Mr. Magorium is? Why, he is the magical owner of the toy store in the wonderful children's fantasy movie "Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium." It is seriously one of the best rated G movies I have ever seen and I recommend it. And in it, Mr. Magorium, played by Dustin Hoffman, says these words. "At the end of Act 5 of Shakespeare's King Lear, Shakespeare has written these words, "He Dies." That's all. Nothing more. No fanfare. No metaphor. No brilliant final words. The culmination of the most influential dramatic literature ever written is, "He Dies." It takes Shakespeare's genius to come up with, "He Dies." And yet every time I read those two words I find myself overwhelmed with dysphoria. And I know it's only natural to be sad but not because of the words "He dies" but because of the life we saw prior to the words."

Do you understand Mr. Magorium's words? He said he is sad, not because King Lear died, but he is sad because of the life he lived. What a tragic statement. What do you want said after you die? Well, let me tell you something. It doesn't matter one whit what people say when you die as long as you hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:23) People can say whatever they want to when I'm gone. The only opinion that matters is God's. Would you agree with that? Well, if you would agree with that and if you are a true believer in and follower of Jesus then we want to know how we should live in order to please Him the most. What should we as Christians be doing and not doing in this life? If we truly want God to be proud of us and we truly want to honor Him then how should we be living?

We just got through with a six-week study on the tests we can take to prove to ourselves that we truly are Christians. And evidently all of you passed all those tests. And if that is the case then the main goal of our lives should be to please God. So, we are going to talk about that for the next four weeks. I have four ways we should be living as believers. And the first way we should live is by being ready. We need to be ready. Now, if I said you need to be ready to leave at any time, some of you would probably stand up and walk out. You are ready to leave this place already, right? Well, that's not exactly what I'm talking about. I mean we should be ready for Jesus to come and get us at any time. He's not just going to take us out of this building. He is going to take us out of this world.

After church, where she had been taught about the rapture, a little girl was quizzing her mother. "Mommy, do you believe Jesus will come back?" "Yes." "Today?" "yes." "In a few minutes?" "Yes, dear." "Mommy, would you comb my hair?" (Don Hussong)

If we are all true believers here then we all need to be ready for the rapture. But what is the rapture and what does it look like to be ready? Well, turn to 1 Corinthians 15 and let's see how Paul describes the rapture. Paul is closing out his letter to the Corinthian church and gives them some information and some encouragement to close. They had lots of questions for him and I'm glad they did because it is helpful to all of us that have questions today. Let's look at just two verses of chapter 15, verses 51 and 52.

Paul said, "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." Stop right there. That's enough for a thousand sermons. Paul starts off revealing a mystery, he says. Now when we think of the word "mystery", we think of Alfred Hitchcock or somebody telling a surprise or scary story. When Paul says he has a mystery, he just means something previously hidden but is now being revealed.

Let's start at the very beginning so we have context and can understand this mystery and why Paul called it a mystery. In the book of Genesis, God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great big nation with more people than the stars in Heaven or grains of sand on the seashore. And that nation is who? Israel. Just remember, that even for us Gentiles and even all these thousands of years later, the world has and will continue to revolve around Israel. God chose them to be His chosen people before the creation of the world and all through the Old Testament God protected and provided for Israel like no other nation.

And because of that, Israel was obedient to God and showed their love for Him and worshiped Him and was blessed by God for their obedience...except for all those times when they weren't. Right? You remember how it was all through the Old Testament. God blessed, the people were obedient, then they would stray and worship other gods and then God would punish them. Then they would start obeying again and the cycle would start all over again.

Well, when Jesus came and changed the whole sacrificial system and basically everything else, the Jews refused to believe He was the Messiah. And most of them still don't. And so, the mystery that Paul talks about is that for all those years, the Jewish people thought they were the only ones that God loved and the only ones who would go to heaven. But their continued refusal to believe the truth about Jesus has allowed the mystery to be revealed that *gasp* God loves everybody and wants everybody to come to Him through Jesus. And for the Jews, that was mind-blowing. They didn't want to believe it and still don't want to believe it and so God sort of put a pause on His laser-focus on Israel and has revealed Himself to the rest of the world and we are living now in what scholars call the church age.

So, what's that have to do with the rapture, Todd? Good question. Well, God is not done with Israel and will give them one more chance to believe the truth; to believe the mystery and to accept Jesus as the perfect sacrifice. But God is going to take all believers out of the picture first and that is the rapture. After the rapture there will be seven years of what is called the Tribulation. It will be a horrible time for everybody but especially the Jews but it will make very plain that everything God said is true and that they have one last chance to accept Jesus as God and as their Savior. That's the main purpose of the Tribulation. God loves Israel and wants to give them one more chance. And when the church age is over, (what scripture calls the fullness of the Gentiles) God will resume His final time of dealing with Israel.

So, you can see that even today, everything revolves around Israel. If you want to know when the rapture is coming, watch Israel. If you are interested in end times at all, keep your eye on Israel. That is why the huge news about the war between Israel and Palestine is such a big deal. There is no more prophecy that has to come about before we are raptured. It could happen at any time. The last great piece of prophecy to be fulfilled was when Israel became a country again in 1948. Since then, we have been or should have been on high alert for the rapture to happen.

Now, there are several reasons why this war between Israel and Gaz ought to make your prophetic ears perk up. Between the books of Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation, scholars believe that the modern-day nations of Russia, Iran and Turkey plus several other smaller nations will lead all the other nations in a war with Israel at the Second Coming of Jesus.

Do you remember the difference in the rapture and the Second Coming? At the rapture, Jesus will meet us believers in the air and will then escort us to Heaven. At the Second Coming, Jesus will lead us from Heaven back to earth where He will supernaturally completely destroy all those nations about to go to war with Israel. And it says He will stand bodily on the earth.

But right now, we don't see any of that happening. We don't see Russia or Iran or Turkey getting involved yet. Or do we? What we see behind the scenes is Russia training the soldiers of Hamas. They were actually trained specifically by the Wagner Group who you might have heard of in their war with Ukraine. And we know that Iran is funding Hamas. Our own country has unfortunately given Hamas and Palestine millions of dollars over the years for some crazy reason. But all

of this is fitting right into prophecy for the Second Coming which happens AFTER the rapture. So, do you see how close we could possibly be to the rapture? It could happen at any minute.

We saw Israel and all of the Middle East go from enjoying a time of relative peace to the whole world seemingly about to blow up in like 24 hours. So, we know things can move very fast when it comes to stuff like this so we need more than ever to be ready. In Luke 21, Jesus said that when we see these kinds of things starting to happen, look up for our redemption is near. That should be very exciting for you as a believer. But if you aren't a believer, it should scare you to death.

In 1921, Sir Ernest Shackleton sailed toward the South Pole with a large crew. Almost there, his ship hit an iceberg and finally sank. Shackelford and his men barely escaped onto an ice flow in some life rafts. So, Shackelford and a few others took a life raft and left most of the crew there on the ice, promising to return as soon as possible. Some months went by but Shackelford finally got back to that ice flow in a ship to get his men. He feared the worst but when he finally saw them, they were all packed up, ready to go and standing at the edge of the ice ready to be picked up. Shackelford told them, "It was fortunate you were all packed and ready to go!" They replied, "We never gave up hope. Whenever the sea was clear of ice, we rolled up our sleeping bags and reminded each other, 'The boss may come today.'"

That ought to be how all of us live our lives. Yes, it may be another one hundred years but it might be today. We need to live like the rapture is imminent. And yes, I know people have been saying that since least the Apostle Paul. And I know it seems like He is taking forever and I know you are ready. If you are like me, you have heard a hundred different preachers say, "We are closer than we've ever been!" And yes, that's the truth, but I'm telling you today, things have never been shaped up like this with all the different signs pointing to it happening soon like it is today.

So, what does it look like to be ready? We don't have any bags to pack. I can't even comb my hair like that little girl in my story. What should we be doing? Well, number one, make sure you are right with God. Make sure that when Jesus comes back, He doesn't find you doing something you shouldn't be doing. Can you imagine how embarrassing that would be? I want you to think for just a second about that little pet sin of yours. You know, that thing you have asked for forgiveness of a thousand times. Can you imagine if Jesus came back while you were doing that or thinking that or saying that? If it's anger, do you want to be yelling at somebody and in the blink of an eye, you see Jesus? If it's gossip, can you imagine whispering it as Jesus is taking you to Heaven? What if He came on a Sunday morning and you were at work? Yea, it would be good to get out of work and you would have a pretty good excuse to miss work but how would you explain to Jesus that you chose to miss out worshipping Him so you could make a buck? We need to make sure that everything we do is pleasing to God. We said at the beginning that that was what we wanted, right?

The other thing we need to do, now that we see that the time is short, is to ratchet up a notch our witnessing. Even if all you can do is invite somebody to church, you need to be doing that more and more. But what people really need is not a relationship with the church but a relationship with Almighty God through His Son Jesus. And nobody can witness to some of the people you know like you can. You can bring them to church but it's better to bring them straight to Jesus and you can do that with your own testimony.

Maybe you were saved fifty years ago and maybe you were saved yesterday. It doesn't matter. God has given you your own personal testimony that is unlike any other so that you can tell it to somebody that needs to hear exactly what you have to say. Just tell them what you know and tell them how Jesus has changed your life.

Do you have a testimony like that? If not, I want to talk with you right now. Timmy will be down here as well if you would rather talk to him. But all you have to do is ask God to forgive you of all your many sins and He promises that He will. Then repent of those sins. Turn away from that lifestyle and allow God to come into your life and change you and make you more like Him every day. Do it right now as the music plays.