

Christ's Kingdom Forecast-Part 6
The Perennial Precautions
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Well I've asked my children many times the question as their semester finals approach, dad asks them, "Do you think you're ready?" Do you think you're ready? Of course, I can put myself in their shoes because I remember well myself cramming to get all that information in my head just hours before the exam. You realize it's not just students but all of us throughout our lives there are many things that are looming on the calendar. They're there, they're set, they're fast approaching and there are things for which we must be ready. It's a part of life. Working at some job, you've got some big presentation you've got to do, you've got some project, it's on the calendar, it's fast approaching, you've got preparations and study, whatever, you got to get done. You got a baby on the way maybe, a million things you've got to prepare before that baby arrives. Or maybe your son is getting married in 14 days and there are lots of things you got to do to get ready. Now all those things, because there is that date, there's no one to blame but yourself if you're not prepared. Right? It's very clear, the professor said when the final would be, it was there at the beginning on the syllabus. You knew that was coming. I mean, clearly the boss told you we have a new client, you going to have to give this presentation on this particular day. I mean, the obstetrician gave you a due date. I mean, the couple has announced their date long ago. We know when this wedding's going to be. I mean, that is something you have no one to blame but yourself when it comes to you not being ready. But we have a very different arrangement in the Bible when it comes to the most important future event that you have on your calendar. That is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. We don't know when that's going to happen. We don't know. It's not that there's not a date attached. Last time we were together we ended with that, every promise of God has a date. But when it comes to this date God isn't telling you. And so we've got to be ready. And that's hard for us to do. It's one thing for us to know that there's a final for which we must be ready. It's another thing to know that that final is going to be a pop quiz and we know no time, we have no idea during the semester, when that test is coming. It's one thing to have your boss say, "The CEO is flying in from the headquarters and he's going to tour our office." It's one thing to know that date, but to not know it, like, you know, like a sergeant coming into the barracks and having a surprise inspection. I mean, that's a completely another thing to live with that kind of imminent expectation that we're going to be judged. We're going to be evaluated. We're going to have our lives looked at. I mean, to be ready for that. That is difficult.

And that's what we've been studying here in Luke Chapter 21, something we call the Olivet Discourse. Jesus has been on the Temple Mount preaching all week and this one particular sermon he gives as he sits across the Kidron Valley looking at the temple and he's talking about the coming of Christ, he's talking about the return of himself, the consummation of the ages, that comes in a series of events, him coming to receive his Church, we learn elsewhere. His coming in judgment on the world and a great tribulation such that there is none other in history and nor will there ever be, the worst possible time ever, a seven-year period that is shortened because of God's Grace. And then at the end, a coming to redeem his people, Israel, at the end of that tribulational period. All that sequence of events is going to start with a snap. It's going to be beginning without any warning, an imminent inauguration of those events. And he says, "You guys need to be ready."

He ends this sermon, after all those details, in the passage we arrive at today. If you haven't turned there yet, please turn there to Luke Chapter 21 verses 34 through 38, the conclusion of Chapter 21 of Luke. We have here Jesus giving his final words and it's all about you and I being prepared for something that we don't have any idea when it's going to happen. And he says, "Get ready." And he

gives us two very specific things that you must do. Two key ingredients to you being prepared, two necessary preparations. Then in the last two verses, as Luke gives us a summary of the whole week of what Jesus has been doing and teaching, we learn from the disciples by way of their example, something that we can add to this list, a third thing.

So let's look at these three things from this passage beginning in verse 34. Let me read it for you from the English Standard Version as Jesus finishes this message by saying, "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down," and then he uses the word you probably didn't use this week, dissipation, "with dissipation." We'll look at that in a minute. "And drunkenness." Now we know that word, "and cares of this life." We may know the phrase but I don't know that we always interpret that as we ought to, we'll look at that.

Why don't we want our hearts weighed down? Because, "that day may come upon you suddenly," and not like a wonderful thing that you've anticipated, but "like a trap," it'll snap like a trap, like an animal in a trap that wasn't ready for it. This whole terrible scene that's described of Christ coming in judgment. "It will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth." But, verse 36, very familiar requirement, you "stay awake at all times, praying, praying that you may have strength to," this is what we want, we want to escape, "to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." Then Luke adds, this whole week, describing it from the Triumphal Entry that we saw at the beginning of the week, now we're about to get into the next series in Chapter 22, the Passover celebration, we know of it as The Last Supper, and in that period of time it says, "Everyday he was teaching in the temple," that means the temple grounds, "but at night he went out and he lodged on the mount called Olivet. And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him." Great.

You need to be ready. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, that will not come with warning, lots of signs but those signs are all going to transpire after this immediate unexpected thing just like Noah's day. It's going to be people thinking everything's fine. As a matter of fact, as Paul says to the Thessalonians, peace and safety, everything's cool, and then suddenly this sequence of events that we call the Day of the Lord, which is more than a 24-hour day, a sequence of events of God bringing this age to a consummation. We'll see all this happened and he says, you better be ready when this starts, you better be ready.

Two things that he tells us to do, starting in verse 34. He says, "Watch yourselves." Pay attention to yourselves. Guard yourself like a goalie. Don't let this happen to you. Don't let these things into your life. What is it? "That your heart would be weighed down." Paul put it this way in Second Timothy 2, that you'll be entangled in stuff like what? Three things. Dissipation. Now that is what we call a hapax legomenon, which is a fancy way to say, it's the only time this word in the Greek New Testament ever appears. Of course, it's found in extra-biblical literature, but this particular word, interesting word, only appears here, and it describes a kind of lifestyle, a kind of seeking of an experience that is nothing more than me feeling good, recreating, having fun, being happy.

As a matter of fact, it's the description of people who live for that. Dissipation. Not a word we commonly use. If you want kind of a modernized version, how the young folks say, it's about someone who just wants to party. It's about having fun. It's about saying, I'm going to live for fun. Now, there's an adult way to talk about that but it's the same thing. "I want to get what I can out of life that's going to make me comfortable, make me happy, make me euphoric, let me have a good time." I just want to feel good. That's what it is to be someone who's weighed down with dissipation.



Second one you know, although there was only one drug of choice back then that was frequently available to people, and that was the drug of alcohol. And of course, we know what it is to think of someone who is drunk. And it says, you might be weighed down with drunkenness. Now drunkenness, if you think about it, are people who aren't using, as they did in that day, really, one of the only options besides water as a beverage with your meals. It's people who are seeking this element, this thing, this beverage that we know will intoxicate me, is seeking it for the sake of that kind of euphoric recreational feeling. It is, as I often put it, it's toying with my body chemistry to make me feel good. That's really what I want. I'm seeking the drink, I'm seeking the alcohol. What that leads to, it has a compounding effect, we call it the principle of diminishing returns, where you've got to keep having more to have that experience, because really what you're drinking for is to have that experience and that means eventually you'll become a drunkard.

Now you don't need to picture a guy with a bottle in a brown paper sack stumbling around in old clothes behind an alley somewhere saying, "that's the drunkard, I'm glad I'm not him." To be weighed down with drunkenness is the same thing that drives that guy and that caricature that you paint in your mind of being someone who goes for that bottle. It's really living, really, as a subset of the word dissipation. "I just want to feel good. I just want to have fun." And in a day and in a culture where we've actually legislated that, that we're going to say, "you want to toy with your body chemistry for recreation, great. We know things like THC and marijuana. Hey fine. We're going to legalize that." Done with the whole game that most people play of saying, "I got an ache and a pain and some guy in a tie dye shirt can write me a prescription and I can get it." Now we're saying, "Hey, you know what? When it comes down to it, it just fine. You want to recreate with marijuana? Have at it."

We live in a culture that's put this into our laws and the Bible says, don't be weighed down with that. Don't let that be what your life is all about. You're saying, "Great. You know what, I don't like going to parties. I don't use any chemicals in my body. I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't do it. I don't vape with THC drops." Fantastic. In my upstanding Orange County life, not that no one was really convicted by those first two words, I guarantee it, I'll catch a lot of us with this one, and that is, "weighed down with the cares of this life." There are a lot of people who would never touch a bottle of alcohol, they would never go out there and do things that would toy with their body chemistry for recreational, euphoric purposes. But they're in the rat race, particularly here in California, in Orange County, of trying to grab life in such a way that it might make them feel significant and important and fulfilled.

They're chasing after all the things, to put it in the terms of the Sermon on the Mount, where God says, "you ought to be all about the kingdom, seek first the kingdom." Now, the pagans, as it's sometimes translated, they're chasing after all these things. What's the context? What you're gonna wear, what you're going to eat, where are you going to sleep. I know there are things in life you've got to have to survive. You've got a place to live, you got to have something in the closet to wear, I get all that, but there are people who find their life in that. As we learned earlier in the Gospel of Luke, they find that their life consists in their possessions and to them they're chasing all that. It's about the power of their job, it's about the comfort of their house, it's about what they drive and the status of that. It's all about that and they're chasing it.

Now, don't think it's the people who HAVE those things, though sometimes it is. It's the people who are living to GET those things. Just like the Bible says, it's not sin to be rich, First Timothy Chapter 6, it's a sin to crave to be rich, to want to be rich. And the Bible says, Christians shouldn't care about

that. Like the Apostle Paul, "I can live with a little, I can live with a lot." I understand it's more comfortable to live with a lot than a little, I understand that. But my heart isn't weighed down with all of that.

This paints a picture, basically, and I know it's just a sample of the things in this world, but it pictures the worldly mindset that should be in radical distinction to Christians. And it says, watch yourself that you don't start looking like the rest of the world, because the rest of the world, this Day of the Lord we're talking about, it's going to snap on them, not like some kind of escape, not like some kind of relief, not some kind of rapture to a place of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, it's going to snap on them "like a trap."

Now, Christians should be living differently. It ought to be clear that you're looking for the coming of Christ. You ought to live a distinctively holy life. It will come upon all who dwell in the face of the earth. This thing is coming, the end of the world is coming for everyone, when it comes to this day of Christ that starts with the rapture of the Church, the judgment on the world. All of that is going to be something that you know you are not going to be a part of. The Scripture would tell us, I think, elsewhere in the Bible, it's clear, if you recognize through your Christianity that your life is evidencing your faith by the kinds of works that make your life distinctive. Now let me make this clear, I'm not talking about you saving yourself by your works. But I am saying that if you are saved, as James makes very clear to us, it's the Holy Spirit writing through the pen of James super clear, we understand that "faith without works is dead." Can that faith save you? The answer is no.

Therefore, I'm going to talk about you. Number one, "Decreasing Your Worldly Distractions." Not so that you can qualify to be with Christ at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, I'm not saying that. I'm talking about you decreasing the worldly distractions in your life so that you can recognize that real Christians live for a value in a place that's somewhere else. They live for Christ, their focus is on Christ and therefore they live differently.

The Bible often tries to compare this in terms of our practical sanctification. And by that I mean, the way we're living more and more like Christ and a lot less like the world by our clothing. Speaking of clothing and speaking of marriages and weddings, I know a girl who's got a dress that's been carefully altered to fit her and look really nice and she's probably tried it on a couple of times and she wants it to look really good two weeks from now. It's there, probably in a safe place, and I guarantee you this, she doesn't want to put it on, go to Lucille's, eat ribs with, you know, with the barbecue sauce. She doesn't want to go do that. Matter of fact, someone invites her to go do something, she's not going to wear that dress. Why? Because that dress she wants it to look spectacular for the day of her wedding.

Think this through now. I'm just all I'm really doing is taking an analogy that Jesus already gave us in Ephesians Chapter 5, and he says this, "That's what I'm looking for in my Church. I'm looking for a bride who can be presented to me," here are the words, "in splendor, without spots or without wrinkle." This is a great passage, verse 27. He said that "he might present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."

Now note carefully the distinction between justification and sanctification. Note this. Follow me. You can say, "I'm a Christian, I'm justified, I'm ready for the coming of Christ because I'm saved." I understand, that's fundamental and foundational. And in a sense, judicially, this is called justification, you're robed in the righteousness of Christ. Now God says, "Here is one who is mine, forgiven, they will never suffer the condemnation their sins deserve." But, those people who are



justified, they now begin the process of sanctification, which means that they will, same analogy applies, have a kind of roving or a kind of a being clad in clothing. They'll have garments of righteousness and those aren't the righteous deeds of Christ that are viewed through justificational lenses, these are the righteous deeds of the saints that are actual and practical and real.

I can prove this to you that we're not talking here just about the kind of justificational truths that we all celebrate when we sing songs about Grace. I get all of that. I'm talking about statements like this, in First Timothy Chapter 6 verse 14, when it says I charge you "to keep the commandments of the Lord, unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now think that through. God wants you to take a look at the commands of Scripture, which if you obey them you'll start looking less like your co-workers, less like your neighbors, and more like Jesus Christ. And he says, I want you to keep those, and keep it to where you keep your life clean. Now we use those analogies all the time. And I want to say your life needs to be clean, a lot cleaner than your neighbor's life. Why? Because you're gonna earn your way to heaven? No. But because people who are justified and are robed in the righteousness of Christ as God looks at them through the lens of the cross, these are people who in real time, in real life, in their sanctification, they start to look more and more like Christ. Now we all stumble in many ways, James says. Right? If we're without sin, John Chapter 1, I know we're lying. But it's not about sinlessness. I've said this many times and I'm not trying to be cute. It's not about sinlessness. It's about sinning less and real Christians sin less than they did, this year than they did last year, next year than they did this year.

That's a kind of progressive sanctification in real time with your behavior so that you look, even to a watching world, more and more clean. And you know what? They don't like it. Matter of fact, they reproach you. They wonder why you don't walk into the same level of excess and dissipation, to use that word again, Peters says, as they do. They'll mock you for not following along with them.

Let me change the analogy a bit. Maybe you've had the dreadful experience of having your kid, and you can say this now because the couple that ask you to do this is not here, to have your kids in their wedding as a ring bearer or a flower girl, alright? Let's talk honestly about this for a second. It's hard enough to think about you being in the wedding as an attendant, a bridesmaid or a groom, but to have your kids, and of course, they think the younger the kid is the cuter this is going to be. Now you're supposed to go rent a \$140 mini-tux for your son, or buy this expensive dress for your daughter that she's going to be fit for and will fit in for three weeks until she grows out of it. And they want you to come to this wedding and all the pictures they're going to take, they want your kids to look like they haven't been playing on the playground all morning.

So, you have the job, parents, of trying to keep your kids, once you find out the very moment this is supposed to happen and you're timing it, "OK, how can I dress them in this so that they don't get mustard on their tuxedo, so they don't get grass stains on their shirt, or on their dress. I want to get them ready for this, so I have to keep them clean from the time I put this tux on them, put this dress on them, until they're sitting there walking down an aisle and everyone is going "Ooh" and "Ahh" and all the rest. I don't mean to put this in such a negative light, but anyway, I don't want to say more than I need to because some of you have asked my kids to be in your weddings before. But listen, it is a challenge, is it not, for parents to do this?

Now all of that assumes, as I started this message, that there is a time scheduled for this wedding. What if there's not a time scheduled for this wedding? What if this is the most important wedding in the world, it's going to be advertised all over the world like this one that happened this weekend

over there across the pond. What you have is your kid called to wear that tux and that dress in that ceremony so that everyone can watch in the most majestic building you could ever imagine, in the most important wedding in all of the universe, and your kid is on call for that, but you never know when that's going to be, it could happen at any moment. You have to send them to school every morning in that tuxedo and that dress because at 10:15 they might be called out of that classroom and immediately ushered into that aisle and everyone's taking pictures. Hard enough to keep them clean for two hours in their tux. Can you imagine having to keep that white shirt clean for their entire childhood?

Let me be your spiritual parent here for just a second. That's what this sermon is all about. Right? You're called to wear a tuxedo in a world full of t-shirts and jeans, where you are called to keep your clothes on, ready, dressed for this wedding, and you are supposed to be spotless, without wrinkle, without stain, without blemish. Can you do that perfectly? No, of course not. You live in this world. You're going to get some grass stains on that dress. I understand that. But you're going to try your hardest to keep that outfit looking as good as it can possibly look because at any moment the wedding could start. You should care about that. And let me be your parent and say, keep yourself clean this week.

And you know the things I'm talking about. There are things that are just barely represented here by these words, dissipation, drunkenness, cares of this life. But you got to keep yourself clean. How do you do that? You have to keep your focus on the wedding. You have to keep your focus in your own mind on the fact that I'm about to meet Christ. I do not want to shrink back in shame because I'm in a mud pie fight when Christ comes back. I want to be caring about looking the way I ought to look in terms of my behavior. This is critically important and it's all throughout the Scripture.

Now, when I talk about dissipation, drunkenness, even the cares of this life, you can picture some guy with a suit on driving up to Irvine thinking, "I'm not any of that. You know, I just keep this all in perspective." Let me help you with this verse. First Corinthians Chapter 7. First Corinthians Chapter 7 verse 35. The context, if you know it, Paul is talking about marriage. Is marriage a good thing? It's a great thing. He says this, "it's better for you to not get married than to allow your marriage," listen now, "to somehow derail you," here's how he puts it, "from an undivided devotion to the Lord." Let me read the whole verse. He's just told them if you can get by without getting married, great. "I say this to your benefit, not to lay a restraint on you, but to promote good order." What does that mean? That your priorities are right. Gentiles chasing after a lot of things. Christians focused on God's kingdom and his righteousness. "But I want you to secure," I love that verb, "secure an undivided devotion to the Lord." Now we're going start to probe and get under the surface here. You may think, "Ah, my Christian life's on track." I just want you to think for just a second, allow the Spirit to convict you of anything in this context that may make you think that a good thing in your life may possibly, at some point, become something that is detracting from that undivided devotion to the Lord. Now this passage is mind boggling and you ought to study it sometime.

It's not just about divorce and marriage and all that, it really is ultimately about a pastor who looks at a church in Corinth and says, you need to be really careful about these things, because you can be married and have the completely wrong perspective on your marriage. As a matter of fact, you can have the world applaud you, even the Christian world applaud you, because you're such a family man and such a devoted husband, that all of your heart and your affection revolves around your wife, and you think you're fulfilling Ephesians Chapter 5 and what you're really doing is you're violating First Corinthians Chapter 7. Because you're living to be the best husband, the most

devoted husband in the world, and that kind of devotion is coming at great expense to your devotion to the Lord.

Now, if you're saying, "you don't know my spouse, there's no possible way my life orbits around my spouse. I've given up on that." Let me talk about your kids. Let me talk about your grandkids. This passage gets very practical when it comes down to issues like your children, think about it, in a culture, a Christian subculture, that has now made Christianity commensurate with great family life. Matter of fact, we call Christian radio stations "family radio stations," we call Christian bookstores "family bookstores."

I just want you to think about this, that it's become so accepted among Christians that for you to be a good godly person is to have that real great family life that, really, everyone, if you interview them at the mall today, they're going to say, that's what they want. They just want that. You want to be the best parent you can be. You want your kids to see you sitting in the stands for every Little League game. You want to be the best parent on the PTA, you want to be all about your kids, and I'll tell you what, you may have given up on having your life orbit around your spouse, but I can see a lot of parents and a lot of grandparents revolving their entire lives around their children.

And Paul is saying you've taken a good thing, a gift from God, marriage is a gift from God, children are a gift from God, grandchildren are a gift from God. All of those are biblically tenable statements to make. But those gifts become distractions to you being devoted to the kingdom of God and his righteousness. All I'm saying is you're going to be weird wearing a tux to school every day in this world. You just need to get used to being called weird. You need to recognize that their values are not going to be your values. And the subculture of Christianity is not helping us very much when they really make you out to be someone who's godly, if your life starts to look like the ideal secular life, which is a devoted husband and a wonderful father. What does that mean? That everything I do, my wife just adores me because I'm the perfect husband, and my children think I'm wonderful because I can do everything for them and I make sure they have a wonderful life. Paul says, it'd be better for you never to have children than to fall into that trap. Be better for you never to be married than to let your marriage detract from your devotion to the Lord.

This is hard, I understand. You have to reconcile and balance the distinction between loving my spouse, loving my children and loving the Lord. But there should be no comparison. One is supreme and one is an outgrowth, an expression of my love for the Lord. And that means that I will not, in every case, in every way, be able to please my wife with my decisions. There are times she might think we need to spend this and invest God's money and our family on this, and I say no because there is a higher priority and a higher devotion in my life.

Kids, no question. I know they want this, it would be great if I were devoted like every other Orange County parent to saying all I want is my kids to be happy. But really that's not what I want, I want my kids to be holy. I want them to see holy parents. I want them to recognize that I'm not going to be able to give them everything they want. I'm not going to serve them like every other parent in this county. I've got to show them that there's something much more important than your happiness or our comfort.

That's a long way from the drunk with a bottle in a bag stumbling down an alley. But I recognize this: that in a county like ours, in a subculture like ours, a lot of us may be much more worldly than we think we are, because really we're living by the same values that the idealized secular culture wants us to live by. "Cares of this world." Think about that phrase. When it comes to what it means

to be worldly, the Bible says, the world has a set of values as it relates to these worldly priorities that, even in First Corinthians 7, says if you have the world's goods, you live as though you didn't have them. If you have a wife, you live as though you didn't have one. Now that's a verse that's not taught at most marriage conferences as the prime text. Right? I mean, WHAT? But if you understand the whole of the context of this passage it's about I want to secure undivided devotion to the Lord. Does that mean I shouldn't get married... Jesus said it? He said that if you cannot get married, great, stay single.

I recognize this about our lives. They're easily distracted and we're good at rationalizing and justifying the fact that really this has become a massive priority. I'm bowing down to the altar of my children and bowing down to the altar of domestic life and I'm bowing down to the altar of my job or my advancement in my work or my career. And that has become our obsession. When our obsession, clearly in Scripture, is to be so distinctive, all we can wait for, the focus of our lives is the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's a kind of distinctiveness the world's not going to applaud you for. They're just not going to applaud you for.

Worldliness. Don't make a caricature out of that and don't push me back right now with your arm in your mind. You need to recognize, I need to not just give the L-shaped amen that this really applies to the guy in that other aisle in the other section of the church, or I know someone who really needs this sermon. Think about you and think, God, if there's anything in my life that has become a worldly offense to you. It would be better for you to quit your job today. It would be better for you to shut down the cable in your house than forever that to be a stumbling block or a pipeline of worldliness in your family. It would be better for you to take your kid's smartphone, put it in a sock, take a hammer to it and smash it this afternoon, and say I'm never giving you that, if that's become an avenue that you can't control of an outlet, a portal, to them living like the world.

It would be better for you to go to their closet and burn every piece of material in their closet and say we're starting over because so much of what you're wearing even has become something that is nothing more than a reflection of your values of the same things we see in this world. The Gentiles wanting all this kind of self-promotion. It would be better for us to start over and live without, than for us to run the risk of not having that undivided devotion to the Lord or promoting proper order.

I'm not trying to, I hope you recognize, put some list of man-made regulations on your life. I'm just asking you to be sensitive to the Spirit in the middle of a sermon today and say, God, if you want to put your finger of conviction on some thing in my life and say this is a problem, then I just want you to be open to what God wants to say to you this morning through this message. Because here's how it starts. "Watch yourselves." Don't watch someone else, watch yourselves. You got a tux to wear, a dress to wear, there's a wedding coming, it could come at any time.

I should say this because it doesn't preach in the day we're all dressed fairly casually. I'm probably the best dressed guy in the room. I mean, we are casual church. Right? We live in a casual culture. I've got to dig out a coat to go travel to go somewhere because I don't even know how to wear a coat. Right? If you think about this, I got to wear a tux while the rest of the world's wearing jeans and t-shirts and flip-flops. "I want to wear that, I don't see..." Here, let me make this even worse. Let me help you with this. OK?

The Bible doesn't make the contrast in Revelation Chapter 16 between people being casually dressed and you being dressed in wedding clothes. I know Jesus does that in one of his parables. He talks about people not wearing the wedding clothes at the wedding banquet. In Revelation 16 he's...

I'll just quote it for you, it's a great text, verse 15. He says, "Behold, I'm coming like a thief!" The wedding can start at any time. "Blessed is the one who stays awake." That's a theme we're about to look at in verse 36. "Keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed."

I want you to picture this: most of you have enough sense not to show up at my son's wedding naked. Am I right about that? You're not going to come naked. We don't want to see you naked. I don't want you to be naked at it. I'd like you to keep your nakedness private. OK? If you come naked we're going to have a security guy take you, pull you out, take you away. In the words of Christ parable in Matthew 22, "bind you hand and foot into outer darkness you'll go." We'll find the darkest room we can find to get your nakedness away from us. We don't want to see it. OK? You may want to come in jeans and a t-shirt and I can't help that, because I pastor in Southern California, whatever, whatever. But you're not coming naked. Right? You're coming with clothes on.

The Bible makes the comparison between what you're really doing is stepping out from the nudist colony, the shameful nudist colony, into a place where people are clothed. You've got to live like a weirdo in this world and you've got to keep your clothes on. Your clothes are the righteous deeds of the saints. Do you live a distinctively Christian life? Or are you as worldly as the next guy? Maybe it's not marijuana, maybe it's not drugs, maybe you're not snorting cocaine, whatever it is, you may not be at parties every night. You could be weighed down with the cares of the world. You could have this Norman Rockwell desire to be the perfect Christian family, when in reality, what you're doing is you're taking the priorities of Christ and making them secondary in your life.

These are the perennial precautions of the coming of Christ. I wish I had more time to get into passages that you need to get into. The second question on your worksheet on the back will take you to a classic text in Second Corinthians Chapter 6, and you know it is the unequally yoked passage, but read every section of it. There's a great set of words in this passage in verse 17, where he says you've got to "come out from their midst," here it is, "and be separate." Are you really? Could I go to your neighbors and say, "Hey, your neighbors go to Compass Bible Church. I'm the pastor of Compass Bible Church. Tell me about your neighbors." If they say, "Oh, they're great guys, they're fantastic, love them, they're like everybody else on the block." Then you've failed the test. Right?

They ought to be able to say, really, if I give them a little truth serum to tell me the complete truth, they ought to say, "They're weird. They're weird. Their priorities are weird. When I invite them over to the Christmas party they come but they're weird. The things they want to talk about are weird, the things they won't do are weird, the things they abstain from are weird. I hear they go to church all the time, it's weird. They don't go to all their kids baseball, it's weird. They carry their Bibles to church, it's weird. I heard they give money to the church, I hear they give money to missions, it's weird."

I hope your neighbors think you're weird. There's a tweetable line for your Twitter this week. Right? "What did you learn in church?" "We're supposed to be weird." Because you are not like everyone else, weighed down with the same things they're weighed down on, because everyone who is weighed down with those things that the world is, that day will come upon them, it'll snap like a trap, it'll come upon all those who dwell on the face of the earth. But you, verse 36 Luke 21, are to "stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all the things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Again, let me make it clear, we don't do these things to earn our standing before God. But if you have saving faith and it makes you justified, it puts you before God robed in his righteousness, then you're going to be clad in righteous deeds. What does that mean? You're going to be able to stand before God and be commended. Does it mean we're perfect? No. Is there going to be a judgment? Yes. Is there going to be some embarrassment or suffering loss. Sure. But when it comes to my life, it was distinctive. And the Bible says, you ought to be praying about that. Prayer is the thing that will keep you from the first point of fitting into the world.

Matter of fact, when Jesus took Peter, James and John at Gethsemane, we're going to read about this in Luke, and he tells them to pray, he wants them to "watch and pray so that you will not enter into temptation." Your prayer life is going to keep you from compromise. You need to ratchet up your prayer life. If you're going to decrease your worldly distractions, number two, if you're taking notes, "Intensify Your Prayer Life." Intensify it. You need more prayer, more often, more intensely. That's the kind of thing we need.

Let me put it this way. If you're to live your Christian life like a kid who has to wear a tux to school every day, the only way you're going to be able to not be taking off your bow tie, shedding your jacket, trying to roll up your pant legs, and take off your shoes and run through the mud like everyone else, is for you to be on the phone all the time with the groom who says, "I'm coming. We're going to have the wedding. It could happen at any time." You'd better be in communication with the one you're wearing that tux for. You better be sure that you are constantly praying, so that when you're tempted to get in the mud fight out on the playground, you say, "Nope, nope. I'm going to be in a wedding. I'm going to stand before the Son of Man." Do you have that perspective? You're not going to have that perspective if you just have a casual prayer life.

75% of Americans say that they pray. 75%. Go to the mall, ask them. Go to the beach, ask them. "Yeah, yeah, I pray." 75% national average. OK? Almost 50% will admit, "I pray when I feel like it." They're asked, "When do you pray?" They pray when they feel like it. And you know when they feel like it? When they're in trouble, when they're sick, when someone they love is in trouble, when someone they love is sick. Right? When you're in the foxhole and the bullets start flying overhead, you start praying. So I know this: most people say they pray, 50% at least are going to say and admit, close to 50%, "I pray when I feel like it."

When asked the question, "Do you pray before your meals?" 1% say yes. You know when they put the fried chicken in front of me, speaking of Lucille's, getting hungry, I'll see you there, you know what I want at that point? I want to eat it. I don't want to stop and talk about it. I want to eat it. I know I don't want to pray, but here's the thing, the Bible is very clear, every good gift comes from God, the example in the Scripture when he gives, we give thanks. Before Jesus ate meals, he'd lift up his hand and bless the Lord, and he would give thanks for it. The picture in the Scripture is giving thanks in all circumstances. I know that when I get something from God I should be thankful. And it's good, it can be traditional. I'm not saying you got a verse, the Bible says every meal you've got, start with prayer. But it makes perfect sense for me to pray, and I can tell you one thing, I don't want to pray when you put my food in front of me. I mean, I'm like a dog. I want to eat. I don't want to sit there and have you say, "Heal. Stop. Sit." I'm going to eat. I want to have my food.

Well, 99% of the people do what they feel, which is, "Ah, now is not the time to pray. Oh, up in a hospital room. My loved one's in a hospital room, I'm in the waiting room, now I'm going to pray."

If you're waiting to feel like praying more, you've lost. You're not going to pray. Here's a word, "agonizomai." Agonizomai is the Greek word used in Colossians Chapter 4 to describe Epaphras, who was wrestling in prayer. That's a translation, agonizomai, we get the word "agony" from that. Agonizing in prayer. Some translations translate it that way. He's agonizing in prayer for you. I'm just telling you, you can't wait to feel it. You got to pray because you know we're living in a world that's constantly beckoning you out to the playground to be like them, to be absorbed and engrossed in them. To not be that soldier from Second Timothy Chapter 2, who is not entangled in the world's affairs. The world's beckoning you to do that. The thing that is going to keep you from that is prayer.

You know how that passage goes, the Matthew record of it, when Jesus says, "Watch and pray so you won't enter into temptation?" And the next verse says, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." So I know this: I'm going to have to power through my desire to not pray, to be the kind of prayer that's going to shore up my Christian life so that I can be clean and ready and prepared and set for the arrival of Christ. I got to pray. Ratchet up your prayer life. You need to start praying more consistently. You need to start praying more intently. You need to start praying more specifically.

"A great hymn was written in 1836. They don't write them like this anymore and you probably haven't even heard this sung in church. Charlotte Elliott, she wrote a great hymn in 1836. "Christian, seek not yet repose." That's probably why we don't sing them anymore because no one knows what they mean. "Christian." you know what that means, I hope, "seek not yet repose." "repose": chill, relax, feel good, hang out. Don't seek it yet, as Tozer used to say, "This world is not the ideal place for you to try and find rest and happiness and relaxation. We wait for that in the next world. Our rest is coming."

For now, the God of this world, Second Corinthians 4:4, he's in charge. I know, I'm in the middle of a war "principalities and powers," not wrestling "against flesh and blood." This is tough. I got to read this in sequence so you can hear the rhymes. Here it comes. "Christians, seek not yet repose, cast your dreams of ease away." Ha. That'll preach in Orange County right there. Right? That's what we call Operation Crowd Reduction. Right? You want more parking, just preach more about, "Hey, cast your dreams of ease away." Modern Christianity is merging those two, your desires and Christianity. Let's just make those work. That takes a lot of crafting and sculpting to make that happen. The Bible says, "No, that's not how it works. Putting to death the deeds of the flesh."

Okay, I'm going to make this rhyme. "Christians, seek not yet repose. Cast your dreams of ease away. For you are in the midst of foes. You had better watch and pray. Principalities and powers, mustering their unseen array. They wait for your unguarded hour. You had better watch and pray. Watch as if on that alone, hung the issue of the day; Pray, that help may be sent down. Oh be sure to watch and pray!" Look that old hymn up. Charlotte Elliott knew what she was talking about when it came to us realizing prayer is not something you do when you get around to feeling like it. It is the lifeline for us being on guard against the things in this world that will make you, as it's put in Ephesians 5, stained, wrinkled, blemished. Live for Christ this week. You can't do it the way you're supposed to without a dedication and a reliance on prayer. As Luther said, "As is the business of tailors to make clothes, it's the business of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians that they pray." You need to pray.

Let me give you some practicals on this as though we had time for it. You need some help? Get a prayer partner. Get someone in your life who will pray with you. Peter, James, and John fell asleep

in the garden, but in Acts Chapter 1, after listing their names in verse 13, it says, "They were all together in one accord," I love this, "devoting themselves to prayer." Now they said, "Oh, we got to do this. I don't care if we feel like it or not, we're resolved to be people who are praying," and they pray together. Acts 12:12, another good example. They assembled together so that they would pray. You need to pray with someone.

I mean, I know there's casual times, you pray with your family, whatever. Get a prayer partner. Go out to the doughnut table. OK? Go up to someone who is just about to take a sip of coffee and go, "Hey, let's be prayer partners." Exchange numbers, text each other through the week, keep each other accountable for praying, get together, try this, just once a week just to pray. I've got several situations on my calendar, getting together to pray. Schedule times. Not like we're going to pray when we feel like it. I've got friends I pray with like that. But here is some time we're just going to get together during this time and just pray. Get a prayer partner. Talk to someone about praying together, talking about your prayer life.

Here's another simple example, get a prayer list. Some of you say, "I don't know what to pray about." OK, all you got to do is start making a list. There are a million apps for your phone for this. Go out and get a prayer app. Just get a simple To Do app. Get the To Do list app, it's simple. Get it, write down things. My prayer list is so long, it is so hard for me to get through my whole prayer list every day. Almost impossible. I almost feel like the only time I can do it is when I get a break or on vacation. I'd rather have a playlist that's too long than one that's like, "Bless me. Bless my family. Bless the missionaries. Amen." Right? That's most people's prayer list. Get a prayer list that's significant. Get a significant set of things that you know you should be praying for. Get a prayer partner. Get to praying. I wish I had more time for that.

Number 3. Verse 37 and 38, Jesus basically says don't be worldly and start praying. Get alert and pray. The end of all things is at hand, as Peter says. Pray. Give yourself a prayer. And then it shows us that that week that Jesus had been teaching, at "every day he was teaching in the temple." That means in the temple grounds. "But at night he went out of the lodge," he needed some rest. He'd sleep "on the mount called Olivet. And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him."

I talked about some of you taking a break when I'm gone and you don't come to church. If I had a guest speaker come next week as I'm gone preaching at a conference and I said, "you know who I got to preach? Jesus Christ in the flesh. Are you going to come?" I'll bet you'll come. Then I said, "Oh, there's just one catch. Starts at 5:00 in the morning." I'll bet you'd go to sleep early on Saturday night, you'd set a couple of extra alarms, you'd pull into the parking lot at 4:30, you'd get a seat and you would listen to Jesus Christ with his sandals and his toga and he'd preach, and you'd be like, "I want to hear Christ's preach." Last week here of his life, his earthly ministry, he's on the temple everyday preaching and they went out early in the morning and came to hear him. I'll bet you'd come.

Well, he is preaching. Matter of fact, his words are living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. According to the Upper Room Discourse in John Chapter 15 through 17, you have this discussion about the reality of him putting his words in and through his apostles to codify in the 27 books of the New Testament, you have his words living and active, they're there, they're on the page, he has spoken. And it sits there on your shelf printed in a little two-inch book called the Bible or it's digitized on your phone, your iPad, your laptop. You have the words of Christ, not only directly in red letters, but through his apostles as authoritative as any other word in the Bible. And

it's there for you to take it into your life.

And all I'm telling you, as simple as this sermon is now sounding, you need to not only be not worldly and not only pray, you need to, number three, you need to "Increase Your Biblical Intake." You need more Bible in your life. And again, I've said this so many times that this may sound like your grandparent's church. All they talked about is don't be worldly, read the Bible and pray more. I'd love to be in that church, be a part of that. I mean, all these new-fangled things I quoted this week on my Twitter, people want some kind of new, fresh idea, some kind of mechanism, some kind of method to be godly, they want their fast-track to godliness. It's the same instructions that have always been there. Deny your flesh. You better be a man or woman of prayer. You better get the Word of God into your life.

And I guarantee you, you need to realize, that when it comes to the Bible, it's just like prayer, don't wait for your feelings to lead the way. Matter of fact, Second Timothy Chapter 2 verse 15 says this about the Bible, if you're going to take it, handle it well, you're going to be called a "workman." Comes from the Greek word "ergates." Ergates is used in this as a noun and it regards someone who's in the field with sweat coming off his brow, not Matthew, sitting there counting money at a money changing table, at a tax table, a tribute table. It's not about Luke, a physician. This is a job where someone's in the field and they're sweating. And what does that mean? That means that a lot of days I don't want to study the Bible, it's too much work.

A quick checklist. Let me just help you here and just give you some suggestions. Do you read the Daily Bible Reading with us? I mean come on. I know there are a million ways you can do it. Do it this way, would you? If you're part of our church and I'm your pastor, it's here every week in that little tiny box on the worksheet, it's on the app, it's on the web site. Just read those chapters. "Well, I can read a lot more than that." Read this much with us and then when you're with people from our church, just talk about the Daily Bible Reading. Spend time in it. Here's this week's assignment. If you're not reading the Daily Bible Reading, read it. "I want to go deeper." Great. Pick a section from this that you read and go deeper. Great.

You know our real estate is a little bit economized here. We don't have as much space as we would like. I guarantee it, if we had all the space in the world, yeah, we'd build your kids a great, you know, I don't know, playground, we'd have a great barista and coffee bar for your crazy, expensive lattes, all that would be there. But with the economy of space that we have, guess what the first thing we want beyond classrooms and an auditorium, it's called a bookstore. Priority. OK? Do you know why we have a bookstore? Just for fun? No, it's there because you need to read good Christian books. And we want you to go into that bookstore, I'd love for you to go there today and just crowd it out, make it to where we can't even turn around in the bookstore and find a book. Clear it out. Let's see if we can sell every book today.

And you know, we make zero profit on this. Matter of fact, we sell one dollar less than Amazon, which I don't know how they're making money, most of time they don't and they haven't, but I guess they starting to now. Anyway, sorry, buy our books in our bookstore. Our pastors and leaders go through and try and give you the best books that we can find. On the back of the worksheet, I list books every week. Have you noticed that? You know why I do that? Just for fun? No, I do that so that you can get some title that might jump off the page and say, "this relates to the sermon. I want to read a little bit more." Get in good Christian books, good theology, good doctrine, good practical theology. Read, read, read.



One more. I think I put it on the back. Seventh one down, it's a godly number, we know this is God's will for your life. Number seven. Logos Christian Bible software, Logos Bible software. "Pastor, I did. I looked it up last time you talked about this. That stuff is expensive!" So was your vacation last summer. So was your paddleboard, your surfboard, your car. Right? Whatever little hobby you do, so is that. I know it's expensive. You know why it's expensive? Because it's really, really good. OK? All of our pastors use this every single day.

Some of you are going, "Yeah... I got that one. I've already bought it." Do you use it? Do you use it like you would use a web site, do you just use it to find verses? Come on. This is absurd. It's like pushing your Ferrari around. It doesn't make any sense. Use it. This is the most powerful Bible software in the world. And I don't work for it. I'm not a stockholder. I get no money for this. But I'm telling you, buy Logos Bible software.

And you're going to ask me, "Well, which level should I get?" Standard answer, don't even need to ask me. I say it every time. As much as you can afford. Buy whatever. "Should I buy the bronze or the gold or the platinum?" Buy whatever you can afford. Some of you are saying, "Well, I've already bought it and I look versus up with it." OK. Let me help you redeem something that has very little redemptive value. YouTube. OK? Go to YouTube, type in the words Logos Bible Software. You'll get over 23,000 videos to watch. That'll keep you busy this week. Just start looking through them. Just watch some videos on how to use the Ferrari that you spent so much money on, that you say, "Oh, I already got that." Get to work. If you just learned how to use this software, you'd realize that at your fingertips is something the Apostle Paul, Peter, Augustan, Calvin, all the rest would salivate to have access to and you've got it on your phone, on your iPad, on your laptop. This is an amazing opportunity you have in this generation, have access to dig deeper into the Word of God with more dexterity and more efficiency than ever. Please let me suggest to you, this is not a command from the Bible, this is a suggestion from your pastor, get some good Bible software and get to work at using it.

When I first started studying Greek at the University of Arizona my professor started the semester by saying, "Expect a quiz every single day." He said, "We won't have one every day but expect one every day." And at some point I recognized that, if I did what I was supposed to the night before, I came and prepared for the quiz. I was almost disappointed when we didn't have the quiz. Right? "Oh, I was ready and you didn't have it." That's exactly how I want you to live the Christian life.

I want you to show up every day with your tuxedo on being, "Ah... bummer, we didn't have the wedding today." That's exactly how we need to be, prepared and ready to go. "How in the world can we be ready to go? How can we, I mean, if we really study the Bible, like you say, I'm going to learn this is the lion from the tribe of Judah." Here's John, who loved Jesus and he sees him on the island of Patmos and he falls down in fear. I understand that. The reason we can stand before the lion from the tribe of Judah, not only with confidence, but with a sense that he's going to reward me, is because I realize he's also the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

Let's get back to justification for a minute. The reason I know I'll stand before the Son of Man is the evidence that my faith has in the works, not perfect, that are produced in my faith that remind me that I am washed in the blood of the lamb. The ushers are going to come down the aisles, they're going to pass the elements of the Lord's Supper. Please take a minute. Get these in your hand. If you're Christian, I want you to think about what they mean. That you are here, ready in the most fundamental way for the return of Christ because you are a Christian. If you're not a Christian, put your trust in Christ right now. Realize you do not want to stand before God without Christ as your

ally. And then get to work this week at engaging in the deeds, the good, righteous deeds of the saints.

We're going to take these elements together so, once you get them, if you can pass them quickly here without spilling them. Grab that cup, grab that piece of bread, spend some time talking to God. Maybe it's a conviction from this message, something worldly in your life you need to confess right now. Maybe something about your neglect of prayer or your neglect of the Word, tell God I'm ready to live for you the way that I ought to. Resolve, like the early church, to devote yourself to these basic fundamental Christian things.

Then know this, because of the blood of Christ, you can confess your sins and know that he is faithful and righteous to forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. When you get those elements hang onto those. We'll take those together in about three and a half minutes, and we will celebrate together the fact that you and I are qualified, just like the thief on the cross was immediately qualified for heaven, because of his transferred trust to Christ. And even though he only had hours to live, he started bearing fruit right there on the cross, didn't he? Standing up for the honor of Christ, humbly admitting his own sin. Telling that other criminal, "Hey, you deserve what you get, but Christ is here as the innocent one."

It's time for us to leave this building today and start bearing fruit for the King, but know that the reason we can bear fruit is because we are vitally associated with Christ because of the finished work of the cross. So think about his blood, think about his broken body and then in about two minutes we'll come back together and we'll take these elements at the same time.

What we celebrate in the Lord's Supper is a reminder of the Grace of God. And the Grace of God means that there is no possible way, my own good works, my merit, my good deeds, could ever qualify me to be accepted before a holy God. God's mercy can only be realized in someone's life when they cling to the Grace of God. What does that mean? That means the description of God granting to people the kind of acceptance they don't deserve, and he can't do that without his justice being satisfied. That's why, as weird as it is, we celebrate blood and a body that was pierced.

That Grace, Paul wrote to Titus in Titus 2, has appeared bringing salvation. I can say I know I am saved because of the Grace of God to all people. Not all without exception, not every last person is saved, obviously, but all without distinction. Jew, Gentile, barbarian, Scythians, slave, free. And then it says this: that Grace is "training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions." So that I'm not like the world. It's training me. Every time I remember that I'm accepted before God because of Grace. I'm pressed, I'm pushed, I'm instructed, I'm trained to say I can't be like the world, I got to be more like Christ, "to live self-controlled, upright, to lead these godly lives in the present age." The next verse which is so good, says as we are "waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."

See the connection of these things are so clear throughout the Bible. End of all things is at hand. Give yourself to sober thinking and self-control so you can pray. Prepare yourself. Live a way that is holy and sinless before God. Of course, I can't be sinless every single day, I'm going to fall, I'm going to stumble, but today I'm going to work, I'm going to strive, I'm going to say God give me all that I need to live more godly today. Less like the world, less like my old self, more like Christ. That kind of holiness, connected with the return of Christ, is foundationally predicated on, it is the foundation of me saying the only reason I know I can be rightly aligned with Christ is because of faith, a grace, a gift.



Maybe you grew up in a church that taught you something mystical or magical happens to this and I got to say this because some people misunderstand this. Jesus, when he said, "This is the blood of the new covenant given to you," he used those analogies, then he turns around in the same conversation and says, "I won't drink again of this fruit of the vine until I drink it with you anew in the kingdom." He's not trying to say this literally turns into his blood. This is a representative of his blood.

This bread represents his body. And in a weird turn events, it's like baptism, the one tactile tradition, an experience, a liturgy, if you will, of something God asks us to do, is to eat this bread, drink this cup on a periodic way all the way until Christ returns. Baptism, Lord's Supper, those are the two ordinances of the Church that remind us of two fundamentally important things: our being placed into Christ, and the reason we can be is because he spilt his blood and his body was pierced and broken on a cross.

All of that should, I want to remind you from Titus 2, instruct us, train us, coach us to say this week we're gonna leave this building accepted and forgiven before Christ, because God is wanting me to live a godly life. He wants me to lived distinctively, as James says, "How in the world can I say I have a faith that's going to save me if I don't have those good works." The good news is, as we confess our sins to God, he's faithful and just. Right now, you get a fresh start. Don't say, "Well, I know I'll fail again. I'm not going to resolve to live for him." Resolve to live for him! Recognize this: this is what forgiveness motivates us to do. So get out there and live for Christ knowing that Christ has paid the penalty for us. If you believe that, you understand that, you know that, you trust in Christ, then I invite you with me to eat this bread and drink this cup.

Stand with me please as we dismiss you. God, as we swallow this bread, swallow this fruit of the vine, we remember your words that this is a remembrance of you. How foolish we would be to take these elements that give us, as I often say, a tactile experience, our taste buds taste them, our teeth, our gums, our mouth, our throat, we feel this, to not remember what this means, my alliance, my association, my connection with you. And God, we want to be so connected with you that we get all the benefits of your righteousness. We want all of our sin to be rightly understood as being appended to the cross and paid in full. And God, may that complete forgiveness allow us to be motivated in a way that we wouldn't otherwise be, to live as joyful Christians knowing we want to stand up in a world that's getting darker and darker by the day. We want to live for you. We're called weird if we're different, if we're ostracized, if people don't understand who we are in Christ, God may we not be frustrated by that. May we take comfort in the fact that you've forecast all of this. So let us take these perennial precautions that we find in this text today and let them be the theme of our lives as we live for you this week.

In Jesus name, Amen.