

The Second Coming and Living Hope in 2004

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

Introduction

- A. We are in a series of messages named **Final Things**. We have examined death, judgment, heaven and hell, and now we come to the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- B. The point I've attempted to make repeatedly in various ways is that according to the Scriptures final things should effect our lives.
 - 1. The way we live changes when we have these things in view daily.
 - 2. It is true that we live for the glory of God. Yet, who can consider the absolute finality of these things and feel chipper and comfortable.

In our pragmatic, materialistic society, where each of us seeks comfort and "fulfillment" and respect, it is hard to follow a despised, crucified Messiah - unless we fix our eyes on the end. If we do not aim for the new heaven and new earth, many of our values and decisions will be myopic, unworthy, tarnished, and fundamentally wrongheaded. To put the matter bluntly: can biblical spirituality long survive where Christians are not oriented to the world to come? And, in this context, can we expect to pray aright unless we are oriented to the world to come? D.A. Carson in *A Call to Spiritual Reformation* p 50

- C. The title of this message is **The Second Coming and Living Hope in 2004**.
 - 1. Not because I am making a prediction, we will avoid that folly.
 - 2. Rather, I want to show that the second coming of Christ, along with other final things already covered, effects the way we live our lives.
- I. The text is Paul's first recorded prayer in the New Testament.
 - A. You may remember that Galatians was written first and it contains a stinging rebuke to that church. Having begun by faith they were turning to the flesh to be saved.
 - 1. No internal evidence that Paul was praying for them, though he likely was.
 - B. But Paul does tell us he is praying for the church in Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians 1:2 & 13 ESV We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers. [13] And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-10 ESV For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, [10] as we pray most earnestly day and night that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?

 - 1. What exudes from Paul is a passion for God and a passion for people. These two cannot be separated or divided. To have one correctly is to have both.

- C. Consider what Paul asks God to do. Allow his prayers to inform your prayers.
 - 1. Paul first prays that God would make a way for him to come.
 - Ex: Leaders (members!) in the church are only as effective as folks can feel our care in their lives. Robin Boisvert and C.J. Mahaney.
 - 2. May God increase and abound your love for one another.
 - 3. May God increase and abound your love for all (unbelievers).
 - 4. May God establish your hearts blameless in holiness.
- D. Paul bases all of this on the second coming of Jesus Christ. Paul is thinking about the nearness of that day. So you may be found blameless in holiness. He goes on:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 ESV For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. [18] Therefore encourage one another with these words.

- 1. A question we may ask ourselves is do we speak that type of encouragement to one another?
- 2. Paul makes eternity their hope and their reason for living life.

II. What does this have to do with Living Hope and 2004?

- A. This series has been building in you and in me a desire for eternity with God. Your thoughts are going there more frequently than they ever have.
- B. You will find that God is beginning to stir your heart with the ramifications and the effects this will have on the way you live.
 - 1. As you hopefully know, our motto here at Living Hope is **Changing Lives for the Glory of God!**
- C. What does a changed life look like? A mature LivingHope-ite? We say it in many ways but I want to give you 3 easy handles for getting a grasp of our mission.
 - 1. **Upward.** God matters most. Intimacy with God (relationship, worship).

Psalms 73:25-26 ESV Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. [26] My heart and my flesh may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Matthew 22:36-38 ESV "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" [37] And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. [38] This is the great and first commandment.

Philippians 3:7-8 ESV But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

- Method? Corporate worship and private devotion (without the 's'). No one can do this for you.

2. **Outward.** Evangelism as you are graced. Influence with outsiders.

Matthew 28:18-19 ESV And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

- Method? Alpha, evangelism team, personal investments, a personal passion for the gospel, mission trips or baking cookies.

3. **Inward.** Discipleship and community. Holiness, sanctification, and growth which cannot happen apart from the local church. Accountability.

Matthew 28:20 ESV "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

- Method? Care groups and relationships. Building strong, thriving marriages and families.

III. Upward, outward and inward will not happen at Living Hope in 2004 if we are lacking in any of four essentials. If Christ returns all is well. James would say, "Lord willing."

A. One, **vision.**

1. My responsibility to make a simple, compelling picture of our mission that inspires you to participate. A part of that relates to eternity.
2. 2004 will see upward, outward and inward defined in a new bulletin.

B. Two, **leaders.**

1. Nothing happens anywhere without leadership. A means of grace.
2. In 2004 I will begin to devote more time to training leaders. This means John picks up some slack on the counseling side of things, especially pre-marital.
3. Leadership is not a call to glory and fame and control, it is a call to serving and suffering.

C. Three, **commitment.**

At the heart of any great organization or movement is a core group of participants who eat, sleep, and dream its mission. Ideally, in a church this core group is its members. Andy Stanley in Can We Do That?

1. Thanks for serving! We each only have one life to invest.
 2. We are developing a church covenant for all who are willing to sign, pledging to God to lay down our lives.
 3. Your generosity in giving to the land and building fund inspires me. We remain on goal with our pledges. Join in if you haven't signed up.
- D. Four, **creativity**.
1. Pray for the leadership team, pray for me. Here is where I want to grow and let's see what God does with us.
 2. I'm praying about and working towards creating a team of folks to help Mr. Creativity-challenged-senior-pastor out.
- Ex: Our good friend Mark Prater said after being in Philly it is the one thing he would do differently back in Pittsburgh.

Close

- A. In 2004:
1. Our calendar will get condensed. Church activities apart from care groups will be on Tuesday and Thursday.
 2. Tuesday - women, worship, men (discussion/theology) and parent/youth.
 3. Thursday - Alpha, worship, intercessory prayer team.
 4. Care groups may meet whenever it blesses their hearts (2x per month min.)
- B. 2003 has been a year of getting settled in. Lots of transition. 2004 will require more from you because you're beginning to live with eternity in view.
1. One day you will reap a reward from your master. Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into eternal joy and rest.

Pray

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By Ken Mellinger

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