

The Rev. Michael J. Bridge
Sermon- 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10
Sunday, November 19, 2017

The danger of complacency

1. In a few short weeks we will be moving into a new house. We will finally be in Petoskey, which is what we have always wanted. We will be closer to the church and church community, and thus will be better able to engage with our community.
2. Since buying the house, most of my thought has been about getting my game room set up the way I want, where tv's will go, how difficult will it be to keep the driveway clear, and other such trivial concerns.
 - a. The reason we wanted to move up here- to be closer to all of you- is not what has dominated my thoughts and planning now that I am moving up here. Add to that the fact that I will be going on a three-month sabbatical starting January 1, and all of this looks like the perfect recipe for some good old complacency.
 - b. Of course, that isn't my goal or plan. And I now realize that it is something for which I must be on guard.
3. I look around and see a world that has grown very self-satisfied and complacent. People are enamored with themselves, their possessions, or institutions such as the government. Those in the world either don't stop to think about the problems in the world, or they think that the government should fix them. If they think of God, it is only to be certain that he approves of them and all that they are doing. They never stop to question whether they are pleasing him.
 - a. To be sure, they either assume that God thinks they are amazing, or they simply don't care what he thinks, if he even exists.
4. First Thessalonians 5 opens with Paul telling the Thessalonian Christians that he doesn't need to tell them that the day of the Lord- that day of which he was speaking about in the last chapter- will come like a thief in the night. They have already been prepared for the potential that the day of the Lord, the second coming, could come at any time. That was the root of their concern in what we talked about last week.
5. Paul continues in vs. 3, "While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape."
 - a. While the Thessalonian Christians don't need to be reminded, he does want to put them at ease with reassurance that they are fine. But Paul knows that the world of the unbeliever is in trouble.
 - b. The day of the Lord is the day of reckoning. While we understand it as the second coming, it is also the day of settling accounts. The wicked will face their punishment and the righteous (those who have inherited Christ's righteousness) will be brought to God.
6. The day is coming...like a thief in the night. In case you have never thought about that metaphor, it has a negative connotation. The coming of a thief is a bad thing. Likewise, the coming of the Lord will be terrible for those who are complacent and aren't watching for it.

Walk as children of the light

1. The reason I began my message talking about myself is that I have to be careful not to grow complacent. I don't want to be distracted by the same things that those who will have sudden destruction come upon them.
 - a. Yes, Paul gives us this comfort, "But since we belong to the day... God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." That doesn't mean that I should allow myself to get complacent.
 - b. I belong to the Lord. I have been destined for salvation, not wrath. But one of the main consequences of me, as a Christian (and, of course, as a pastor), growing complacent and focusing on my worldly passions is that I will stop grieving for those who are lost. When I stop grieving for them, I will stop being aware of them. And then I will stop trying to reach them.
 - c. When it is all said and done, if I allow myself to grow complacent, I will then grow apathetic, and many will face sudden destruction because I never tried to waken them from their slumber by sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. I have been referring to myself, because that is ultimately who I have control over. But the same is true for all of us. If you don't yet know the Lord, you should hope that the day of the Lord (or of your own death) is far off so that you might come to know him.
3. If you know the Lord, then walk as a child of light. When Paul describes being a child of light and says to keep sober and awake, I think he is wanting us to remain vigilant and aware of the coming of the Lord, with the knowledge that it will go well for us as Christians, but also with the knowledge that it won't go well for others.
 - a. That wakeful and sober vigilance is what should drive us to share the love of Christ with those who are asleep and drunk with worldliness.
 - b. Wakeful and sober vigilance for the day of the Lord reinforces day by day our responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission.
 - i. I know that, for many, evangelism is a "church growth" strategy. For God, it is his plan for the spreading of the gospel and the saving of souls.
 - ii. So, I don't want to grow complacent. I want to remain vigilant so that I can see and grieve for this lost and fallen world so that I will be moved with compassion to share with it the gospel of Jesus Christ.