



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 53”

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The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 53

Matthew 25:13

13 “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles. We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

In this, the last part of Jesus' public ministry, Jesus' focus is on warning the disciples of the trials and tribulations to come. Jesus understands that which He must undergo to save the souls of mankind, and He also recognizes that His Passion experience is going to be so difficult and so devastating that His disciples will not have the courage to go through it with Him, even as bystanders. The plan of God, however, is one of redemption after repentance.

God expects every one of us to sin. As we have often read, He says, in

Romans 3:23:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

God revealed this truth to the Apostle Paul twenty centuries ago, long before any of us were born. Long before God gave Paul these words, God made a provision to remedy our sin problem and to give us access to heaven. He tells us, in **1Peter 1:18-21:**

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,

19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

All of the perishable things of the Jewish ceremonies and sacrifices were ineffective in redeeming man from sin. Those Jewish sacrifices were only symbolic replicas of the salvation through Jesus Christ that was to come. Should you visit the Lincoln Memorial, you will find that they sell little replicas of the building so that, when you go home, you can show your acquaintances a symbol of the place that you have visited. Just as the replica is not the actual Lincoln



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Memorial, the Jewish ceremonies and sacrifices were only replicas of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that was to be made to save us from our sins.

The blood of Jesus Christ, as that of a lamb without blemish or defect, is effective to save us from our sins. The devil, however, does not want us to be saved from our sins. Satan could not negate the effectiveness of Jesus Christ's sacrifice, although he tried his best to do so. His only shot to keep us from being saved is to keep us from thinking that we are sinners.

Jesus' message, as recorded by **Matthew 4:17** is:

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Jesus further teaches, in **Luke 13:3** and **Luke 13:5**:

3 But unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

The point of Jesus' preaching is that His sacrifice for sin will be effective for anyone that chooses to repent. However, if you do not acknowledge your personal sinfulness, you can not repent of your sins. In order to repent, you must first acknowledge that you are a sinner.

Many people confess Christianity but are not committed to it because they are not really convinced that they need salvation. They may know that **Romans 3:23** says that all are sinners, but they hold the preconceived misconception that God would not send everyone to hell and since they are as good as anyone else, God won't send them to hell either.

Their position is analogous to that of someone that is speeding on the highway at fifteen miles per hour over the speed limit. In order to feel comfortable at this speed, two things must be happening, First of all, we must be able to see someone else travelling at fifteen miles over the speed limit or faster. We feel that if a large enough sample of the population is breaking the law along with us, lawbreaking will be excused. We deceive ourselves that we are only keeping up with the traffic. The second thing that must be happening is that the police must not be visible. If we perceive that a police car is in the vicinity, we automatically slow down, regardless of whoever else might be speeding.

Since it is true that everyone sins, the first condition that would allow us to speed is met. Since everyone sins, we feel that some sin is normal, and that sin, in our case, is really alright. The second condition of speeding is met if we are generally doing well in our lives. When things are going well, we are not generally concerned about the wrath of God, because no wrath is visible to us. If you think I'm wrong, let the doctor say "cancer", and see how quickly people begin trying to straighten up their affairs and call on God, in the same way that they slow down when they perceive a police car.

Our preaching and witnessing are ineffective because that the people to whom we talk about God are not convinced that they are not bad enough to be condemned, and even if they agree that they are sinners, they don't see any condemnation in their immediate future. Why should I worry about repenting of



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my sins today, they might think, when I can always repent when I get old and sick. The “name it and claim it” crowd undermines the gospel by making our earthly lives the focus of our Christianity, teaching that Christ came down to give us prosperity, good health, and to make our earthly lives more enjoyable. Jesus Christ actually teaches that we should spend this life watching for Him and in preparation for our next life, our eternal life. Our text, **Matthew 25:13** says: **13 “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.**

To emphasize His point, Jesus tells his disciples three parables, beginning in **Matthew 25:1-4**:

- 1 “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.**
- 2 Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.**
- 3 Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,**
- 4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.**

In the days of Jesus Christ, the wedding vows were taken when the groom betrothed himself, or got engaged, to the bride. However, the bride and groom weren’t actually married until the groom prepared a home for his bride and she came there to live. On the day that the bride moved in, the groom came home from work and made her his wife by consummating the marriage.

The job of the bridesmaids, the virgins talked about in this passage of Scripture, was to facilitate this consummation. They were to help the bride move, and then illuminate the path for the groom as he came to his home to make his bride his wife. Since the groom anticipated needing a good night’s sleep after consummating his marriage, he came home at night rather than 2 o’clock in the afternoon.

However, the bridesmaids did not know exactly when the groom was coming. It could be that the groom planned to take a few days off to enjoy marital activities with his new wife, and so he tarried at his place of business to get things prepared for him not being there for a while. Five of the bridesmaids in the parable anticipated the groom’s situation, filled their lamps, and then brought extra oil for their lamps in case the groom was late. The other five bridesmaids had full lamps, but foolishly brought no reserve. The fact that the foolish bridesmaids had full lamps is significant. This parable is not spoken to rank sinners that have rejected Christ, but to Christians that have a relationship with Him, that ostensibly have oil in their lamps.

Here’s an analogy. Suppose, as you are travelling down the King’s highway, you see a sign that the area that you are passing through is a stringently enforced speed trap. Would you keep speeding at fifteen miles over because you did not see a police car? Not if you were intelligent, because you know that the police can hide themselves in places that you cannot see from the inside of your car. The sign is a warning for you to slow down, and if you choose



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to ignore the sign, you can anticipate getting a ticket, whether you see the police coming or not. The five foolish virgins chose to not take precautions, but to continue going at fifteen over, and suffered the consequences, as **Matthew 25:5-8** tells us:

5 But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all [the bridesmaids] slumbered and slept.

6 “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’

7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’

The fools took the chance that they would not need extra oil, but they were wrong, and now it is time for the ticket. **Matthew 25:9-12** says:

9 But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

11 “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’

12 But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’

The Bible warns us about the return of the Lord, in **1Thessalonians 4:16-18**:

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Does the Bible tell us when the Lord Jesus Christ is going to descend?

1Thessalonians 5:1-4 explains:

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

3 For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

When my wife and I travel to Mexico for our two-week vacation, we have to be at the airport two hours before the plane is scheduled to leave. We generally just sit and watch for those two hours, but we arrive two hours early



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because it is worth giving up two hours to spend two weeks in Mexico. The eighty or so years of life that we are living on earth is analogous to those two hours that we spend in the airport, when compared to the eternity that we are going to spend in heaven with Jesus Christ. We may have trials and tribulations and have to wait and watch for Jesus during these eighty years, but it is worth enduring the trials and the watching for these eighty years in order to vacation for eternity in heaven with Jesus. We don't know exactly when the plane is scheduled to take off, but the vacation is going to be so pleasant that we can certainly endure the time that we spend waiting for it. So we should follow Jesus' instruction, as given in our text for day, **Matthew 25:13**:

13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Jesus reiterates the theme of perpetual preparedness in His next parable, given in **Matthew 25:14-18**:

14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.

15 And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.

16 Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents.

17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also.

18 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

The Lord has given each of us the gospel. In the first part of this message, I have tried to point out that people do not receive our preaching because they are not sufficiently convicted of their own personal sinfulness. People often become uncomfortable, and even angry when we point out their sin to them, because their self-image is not enhanced when they are told that they are not good people.

But, consider another example. Suppose you are flying on an airliner with a companion. When the stewardess reaches your row, she gives you and your companion a parachute, and instructs you to put the parachute on. You do so. Now, sitting in an airline seat wearing a parachute is not that comfortable, and your companion begins to complain about the fact that he can't sit back and enjoy the flight. He calls the stewardess and tells her that the parachute is uncomfortable, and he doesn't want to wear it. "Well, sir", the stewardess responds, "we have a few parachutes on each plane that we give out in case of an emergency, and I picked you and your seatmate to receive them. But if you don't want the parachute, that's your decision. I can certainly give it to another passenger."

A few minutes later, the captain comes on the speaker. "Unfortunately", he begins, "we have sucked a flock of birds into the engines and both engines have



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stopped. I'm looking for the best place I can find for a crash landing. We are over a field now, and those passengers with the parachutes are welcome to bail out and save themselves. I will do the best that I can to bring the plane in safely for the other passengers."

How important is the discomfort of the parachute now? The servants that invested were servants that wore the parachute, meaning that they invested in their peers by presenting the gospel to them, and were rewarded for doing so. The servant that buried the talent complained about the parachute and kept the gospel to himself, because it was uncomfortable to present the gospel to people that wouldn't receive it. The parable continues in **Matthew 25:19, 24-30**:

19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.

25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'

26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.

27 So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.

28 So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.

30 And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

There is no question that presenting the gospel to people is an uncomfortable thing to do. Even the courageous are intimidated by the disapproval of those with whom they come into contact. Paul gives us the example of Peter. Last week we read that Peter received a vision from the Lord that God accepts everyone that repents and believes in Jesus, regardless of their ethnic heritage. Peter and Paul were ministering to the Gentiles, meaning non-Jews, in Antioch, but when a group of Jewish Christians came to town that did not believe that Jews should socialize with Gentiles, Peter was intimidated by their disapproval. Paul confronted Peter, in **Galatians 2:11-16**:

11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;

12 for before certain [Jewish] men came from James, [Peter] would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, [Peter] withdrew and separated himself, fearing those [Jews] who were of the circumcision.



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13 And the rest of the Jews [in Antioch] also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?

15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Our biggest problem in witnessing is fear. We want to be part of the group, and we do not want to be isolated. Fear is a feeling that is very unpleasant and difficult, but we cannot allow our lives as Christians to be ruled by our feelings. It is important for us to get our feelings under control. Effective Christian witnessing is based upon Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, as **Matthew 26:39** records:

39 [Jesus] went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

Jesus' fear in Gethsemane was palpable. He saw the agony of the Cross before Him, and sweat fell from his brow like blood. When we mention the Lord to someone, the worst that they will do is reject and ridicule us; killing us is not really an option for them. But the fact that they can't kill us doesn't really take away our fear, which is a very real emotion to us. It is important for us to get our feelings under control. Before we allow our feelings to overtake us, we should know that which God says in **Ezekiel 3:18-19**:

18 When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

19 Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

We are commanded to witness for the Lord, whether or not we are motivated to do so or not.

There are tapes and books galore on obtaining and attaining motivation, which means to change our feelings so that we want to do something, but it is my opinion that it is a hopeless, impossible quest to feel motivated to do that which we are called to do. Why?

Because we are human beings. Because we have moods. Life being what it is, our circumstances don't always match our moods. It is impossible to feel motivated all of the time about anything, even things that we actually love to do.



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There are days that we wake up tired. There are days that we are distracted, by work, by relatives, by the ceiling fan, by ants in the kitchen, by the sump pump backing up and flooding the basement, or by whatever. Life happens, and life impacts our moods and our feelings.

Unfortunately, our society has become enamored with feelings. We can define feelings as our subjective perceptions of messages that are communicated non-verbally. Someone may look at us a certain way, and we draw a subjective conclusion about their attitude from their look, which would be defined as a feeling. Someone may say something to us, and we draw a subjective conclusion from their tone rather than from their words, which would be defined as a feeling.

To a heretofore unprecedented degree, feelings now take precedence over responsibilities, discipline, obligation, or even common good sense in our society. We have come to revere feelings as the grand dictator of reality. Our feelings make it so. If we feel that someone, our husband, wife or mother-in-law for instance, harbors some negative feelings toward us, we give ourselves license to react based upon our perception as if our perception was reality. We feel justified in withholding affection or in some other way retaliating against the person who we perceive to have bad feelings toward us, because if we feel that they are negative, our feeling absolutely must be correct. Unless, of course, our feeling is not correct.

In reality, it is important to not focus on our feelings, but rather on that which actually happened. We can talk about our feelings, and we can talk about how our feelings influence how we respond in today's reality, but first, we must be clear about what actually happened. Our feelings are not rational; they have no intelligence quotient, and they are self-oriented in that they serve only ourselves without taking anything outside of ourselves, even the feelings of other people, into account.

Feelings are primitive, and to use them as the pivotal point for our reactions to the world is childlike. It takes the maturity of emerging adulthood to temper feelings, and the necessity of examining the world and others in it while being less emotional, even being dispassionate and objective, as we use our rational mind to assess situations concretely, and probably, more accurately.

So how do feelings relate to motivation?

Motivation is nice to have, but we do not need it; we do not have to change our feelings about doing something it to actually do it. For instance, to not be affectionate to our spouses because of our feelings about some childhood experience for which our spouse is not responsible is totally self-centered and ultimately irrational. Unless we actually marry the person responsible for our negative experience, our withholding is punishing our spouse for misdeeds for which he or she has no responsibility. That is neither rational nor useful for our lives. We are continuing the pain of our childhood all the way to our graves, and



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we are doing this to ourselves; the person that was initially responsible for our trauma is not doing it to us.

Choosing not to share the love of God because of our perception of how we would be received is also self-centered. Jesus says that no man knows the day or hour in which the Son of Man comes, so those who are unsaved are in danger of hell every day. The threat of eternal damnation in hell is no less immanent than that of a car crash, and we prepare for a car crash by putting on seat belts every time we sit down in our vehicles, whether we want to or not.

What's the answer to a lack of motivation?

The answer is to do that which we should do because of self-discipline rather than waiting until we feel motivated. Is it really that simple? Yes. Do what is healthy. That means that we exercise and maintain portion control every day even though we don't feel like it. Do what is loving. That means that we give our loved one attention and affection every day even though we don't feel like it. Do what is intelligent. That means that we take care of our homes and businesses even though we don't feel like it. Do what is compassionate. That means that we concern ourselves about the eternal destiny of everyone we meet and give them an informed, insightful and intelligent account of the plan of salvation even though we don't feel like it.

Operating by feelings instead of compassion, discipline, and responsibility is to abdicate being an adult. Operating by feelings makes us slaves to irrational, self-defeating emotions rather than a participant in our own destiny. We are more human when we operate from nobility. We are more adult when we operate from discipline.

So dump the idea of motivation, of what you feel like, and replace it with the idea of discipline and nobility, and then see how you feel.

Part of our repentance is trying to help others as well, as Jesus tells us in his last parable. **Matthew 25:31-40** tells us:

31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?



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38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?

39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’

40 And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

Jesus’ last public teaching is that our life is not about us. In 21st century America, that is a hard lesson to learn. But Jesus tells us that we are sent here to build up the Kingdom of God. Our job is to witness to others and to bless others, because as we do so, we fulfill the plan of God. When Jesus was questioned by Pilate, He revealed the reason that He was submitting to the pain of the Cross. In **John 18:36:**

36 Jesus answered [Pilate], “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”

All of Jesus’ parables tell us that the focus of our lives should be to prepare for that Kingdom to which we are traveling, where the wicked will cease from troubling, and the weary will be at rest. We do not know the day or the hour. It might be anytime, and we need to be ready, whenever it happens, as **2Peter 3:8-13** tells us:

8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Jesus tells us, in **John 3:16-17:**

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Let us do the



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best that we can to get as many as we can into the Kingdom before the Day of the Lord comes.

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