

Are You in the Jesus Group?



Saturday, 11/14 at 4:00 | Sunday, 11/15 at 9:00

24th Sunday after Pentecost / 23rd Sunday after Trinity – 2020

Introduction: Dear Friends in Christ! 116 years ago, *way back in 1904*, the Holy Spirit was at work through faithful members of **St. Mark, Cleveland** to establish **Bethlehem, Parma**. Before we come to today's sermon text, what else was going on in 1904? ♦The Ford Model B and Model C were first produced; ♦the board game, Monopoly – *originally called, The Landlord's Game*, was patented; ♦Dr. Seuss was born; ♦Cy Young pitched the first perfect game in American League history; and ♦the first subway train emerged from the New York City Hall Station! **1904 was quite a year!**

Now, *in 2020*, as we continue here at Bethlehem to ☞believe the Bible IS God's Word and ☞trust in JESUS ALONE as our Savior, we come to **1 Thessalonians chapter 5**. Why is that

chapter important and relevant today? ➡ It helps us to be ready for Jesus' return; ➡ it reminds us that some are deceived; ➡ it identifies two distinct groups; and ➡ it reminds us about ✦ God's love for us now and ✦ the blessings that will be ours in eternity through our Lord Jesus Christ!

1. **Some are Ready:** ¹ **Now as to the times [periods of time] and the epochs [appointed times], brethren [fellow believers in Jesus], you have no need of anything to be written to you. ² For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord [the return of Jesus] will come just like a thief in the night.** // The Thessalonian believers were "on the ball," as we say; that means **they were aware** that Jesus would return "like a thief," thus *at a time when most people did not expect Him to come!* We are also in that category; even though it's been a long time since Jesus said, "**I am coming soon**" (Rev. 22:12 ESV): ✦ we know He will come, ✦ we know He could come at any moment, and, *by God's grace*, ✦ we live in *constant readiness* for His return!
2. **Some are Deceived:** ³ **While they [unbelievers] are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.** // Imagine being **glad** about these things, and yet NOT knowing Jesus. Someone might say: **Wow!** ✦ The sun is shining; ✦ I feel great; ✦ I have a good job; ✦ I have money in the bank; ✦ the crime rate is down; and ✦ world peace is increasing more and more! In other words, ☹ "Peace and safety," ☹ everything is fine, ☹ don't worry, ☹ just enjoy! **HOWEVER** and **SUDDENLY**, *Jesus will return and it will be TOO LATE for all who are unrepentant – for all who do not know Jesus!*

3. **Two Opposite Groups:** ⁴ But you, brethren [*fellow believers*], are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; ⁵ for you are all sons of light and sons of day [*people who walk in the light of God's Word and in the light of God's Son*]. We are not of night nor of darkness; ⁶ so then let us not sleep [*not live in sin*] as others do, but let us be alert [*watching*] and sober [*clear-headed*]. ⁷ For those who sleep [*sin*] do their sleeping [*sinning*] at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we are of *the day*, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation [*to guard against spiritual assaults*].

- a. Sons of light: This group also includes daughters; the members of this group are:
- i. Believing in Jesus for eternal life
 - ii. Living in harmony with the Bible
 - iii. Watching for Jesus' return
 - iv. Maintaining clear thoughts
 - v. Guarding against spiritual assaults
- b. Sons of darkness: This group also includes daughters; the members of this group are:
- i. **Not** believing in Jesus for eternal life; therefore, points 2-4 are normal and natural.
 - ii. **Not** living in harmony with the Bible
 - iii. **Not** watching for Jesus' return
 - iv. **Not** maintaining clear thoughts
 - v. **Not** guarding against spiritual assaults

c. Many of the sons of darkness are no longer in the closet: **In the past** sin was shameful, *so people tried to hide it*; Jesus said: “everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed” (Jn. 3:1 NAU). **However, today**, *most shame is gone*; for example, it’s no longer a secret
▶ when a couple has a baby outside of marriage – *as they share pictures on FB*, and ▶ to be homosexual – *as they host a gay pride parade each year!*

4. **Forever Blessed through Jesus**: ⁹ **For God has not destined [appointed] us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake [physically alive] or asleep [physically dead], we will live together with Him.** ¹¹ **Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.** // Even though – *because of our sins* – we deserved God’s wrath, God has chosen us and made us His very own through His Son and through His saving work. Therefore, **through Jesus**, we are ▶ ready to die and ▶ ready for Jesus to return – *whichever comes first!*

This Week’s Challenges: Look into the mirror of God’s Word, rejoice that you are in the Jesus Group, and take action to show God’s love to the sons and daughters of darkness!

Let Us Pray: Father in Heaven, we are blessed now and forever through Jesus – TYSM! Now, *as we live each day*,
▶ keep us close to You and ▶ help us to point others to Jesus!

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