

Until Then

Have you ever been given a window for service? Some windows for service are tolerable, but some are like yes we are coming sometime between noon and five. Well that's specific. And then after the window they call at 5 saying they are just finishing up and they give you a window of another hour. All the while you have been camping out at home or at work, unmoved because of the slight possibility they might come by sometime in the window. And the question I have for you is what do you do with your time in the window. Well, I can't really concentrate on work - after all they are probably about to come. I can't really dig in to the project. And because of this it could lead to a lot of wasted time. Similar to a watched pot never boils. So *there is a lot of wasted time in the window*. I recently had an experience similar was on a call that took over an hour to negotiate a contract and they put me on extended holds. And I said. I know what I'll do. I'll go to the gym. I'm going to get the work out in. When they came back hey are you there. 20 and yes. I wasn't going to waste time. No sirree.

Hey welcome back to Amazing Love. Especially if you don't consider yourself a Christian we are so glad to have you here or watching online. We've come to the end of our series called Edge of Heaven. What we've seen is that heaven is close. Jesus could return at anytime. So where we find ourselves is in the window. From when he rose to when he is coming back. But we do not want to waste our time in the window. God warns us about this. He says, "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." (Eph 5:14-16)

And we want to do this. We want to make the most of the window. But how can we be sure we are. I was reading online of a man who is 46 and was blogging about the fact he believes he wasted his life. As 20 year old he was ambitious to dream about writing a novel, traveling the world, and helping the homeless. And he did some of that when he was 20. Went to New Zealand, wrote a few chapters of the book. But then he took a banking job which was 9-7 for 6 days a week. At 46 he hasn't traveled since 20, hasn't written another page, divorced his high school sweetheart because life changed. "Please do something with your life...DO NOT forget your friends, your family. Do NOT waste your life." The major question is how do I live wisely. How do I keep from wasting my life. Is it by doing what this man aspired to do - traveling the world, writing a book, and helping the homeless? What could keep us from wasting our lives?

Which is why I love gathering in this place and considering the Word that God has for us. We dig into the Bible and see so many of the wonderful things we could be doing with our lives. So many opportunities. Now if you are a Christian at a very high level the purpose of God for your life is simply to glorify him. 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." So from a very high level as you look at your life would the theme over it to be to give God glory. As you go to work is that what's driving your footsteps

and activity. As you step on to the court or field to play sports. When you have free time? When you spend money is the thought - this will help me give God glory. When you eat that meal? Is the theme over you life to give God glory? If you're answer is no. Watch out you may be in danger of wasting your life. But what are some specifics we can consider together.

Well that's what I'm excited to consider with you. I hope you enjoyed this series as much as I have. When looking at what is coming next and for all eternity - it is then we start to live with true wisdom. And after all God has commanded us, "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." (Col 3:2) So we've taken a look to see that heaven is close, that there are two remarkable different eternities in store for believers and unbelievers. Last week we focused on the importance of a faith burning brightly throughout every age. And now we want some specific marching orders of the things that would please God. So let's get into it. We've been taking a look at Matthew 24, 25, and also the book of Revelation - picture language of the end times. There it is. "There's good work to do." We have so much to consider we'll get into to marching orders but before we do.

This past week was one of the best weeks to view Halley's Comet. It technically will still be visible until November 2nd, but on Monday and Tuesday we had the best viewing days. Don't know if there are any here who have telescopes at home, or maybe appreciate the Adler Planetarium. I bring this up because the Halley's Comet was attached to one man's idea of how the world would end. Back in 1910 there as French Astronomer Camille Flammarion who predicted the the earth would go up in flames because it was going to hit the earth. At the time they even nicknamed Halley's Comet as 'the evil eye in the sky.' As you know, 1910 wasn't the only time someone predicted the end. Some of you remember Y2K. People thought the end might come, or at least a bunch of computers would crash. They didn't. Do you remember 2012? The trigger then was the end of the Mayan calendar. They made a movie out of this one. Most recently I heard a year or so back that because of the constellations there as a specific day that God was coming back.

And all of those days have always made me laugh. All of those predictions I was confident of one thing. That Jesus was definitely not coming back then. Because I knew what he said here, "But about that day or hour **no one** knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mt 24:36) Have you considered this - not even Jesus knows. How is this. Let me remind you of the dual nature of Jesus. He is completely human and completely divine. According to his humanity if the Father wants to hide this from the Son he definitely can. But if Jesus doesn't know, then know French astronomer or calendar guru or religious person will ever know. So about the end. *If some claims to know, they do not know.*

More than that there is a reason this is the case. Jesus says he is coming like a thief in the night. An illustration given throughout the NT about the return of Christ. And you consider a thief. Thieves don't give courtesy calls. I had a buddy post on Facebook that he recently had \$3000 worth of tools stolen from his garage this week. And here's what I know didn't happen. He didn't get a text the day before from whoever it was saying, "Hey just wanted to give you a heads up. Love the tools man. That set is going to look real good in my garage actually." Because if my buddy knew what would have done. He would have been at home the whole day, gotten a padlock or a ring video camera. *The reason Jesus is coming like a thief in the night is so we stay ready.*

How does this apply? He is saying there is never a season of your life where you can go without keeping your eyes on me. If you're planning to take a season off of your faith life - whether it be college, whether it be Spring Break, whether it be this week - how do you know I won't return. And what will happen if you're found not ready? One of the things I've appreciated about Jesus' words about the end is that he doesn't mince words or soften anything. He just straightforwardly gives us a picture in v.48-51. So last week we focused on staying ready. And the greatest way?

Reminds me of music. Anyone ever have a song they love so much they just play it on repeat? You use this button. Back in my day they used to sell these cd's called singles - one song to play over and over. I could and should ask what singles did you buy. Recently I've been playing the song we sang on repeat King of Kings. It's one thing to hear again that favorite K-pop or Taylor Swift song. But the solution for readiness is a different kind of repeat. It's the repeat of salvation's story. Over and over considering the work of God's salvation for us. That when the world broken, he promised to fix it. When the time had fully come he sent his Son, born of a virgin. When his ministry culminated he was crucified. 3 days later he rose - when no one was expecting it. It was the greatest comeback. He ascended to the heaven where he is reigning. And why did all of this happen? Love. Love for you and love for me. Love to rescue us out of our brokenness, and imperfections, out of our despair, out of our fear. To live in the light of his love and forgiveness now and forever. *Stay ready by getting salvation's story on repeat.* Hebrews 12:2, "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."

But what are the specific works we are to do so we don't waste time? I think we can learn from two end times parables that Jesus tells. One is the parable of the talents. There is a master who entrusts a bag of gold with servants. One he gives 1 bag, another he gives 2 bags, and another 5 bags. And he expects them to put them to work - that is clear. What is clear is that God has given to us all specific gifts. To each he has assigned a portion of time here on earth, which we call his time of grace. He has assigned a portion of talent and ability. I don't know if you know this but you didn't choose your mental acumen, your athletic ability, your creativity. Before you were born God planned for you. You also have limited control over the opportunities created for you, as seen in the family dynamic. You didn't choose your family. And finally God has given a portion of treasure, or material possessions. That all came from him. And so what do we do in the meantime? *We use talent, treasure, and time for his glory.*

So I have to ask in your life? Is there any area currently not dedicated to the glory of God? Talents? Treasure? Time? When is the last time you took a spiritual inventory over the state of these items.

I had a poignant conversation with my neighbor recently. We were talking about family members who believe in God, but don't go to church. I don't know if you know someone like this. And we shared a concern, not from a point being holier than thou, but legitimately concerned about a connection with Christ. And we cannot judge the heart to see saving faith there, only God judges hearts and souls. But we walked through all the missed opportunities of the all that God gave by not having such a place. For example the gift of time. Can time be dedicated to God in the same manner if you do not prioritize worship? One can say you are reading the Bible at home, but the question is - is that happening. It seems that you would offer

less time away from church to God. Treasure. Without a church home or ministry. Where do you have an opportunity to return the gifts of God to the giver. In what manner are you able to declare your financial dependence to God? And perhaps most obvious is talents. In a world where every message we hear is what we can do for ourselves to make us more comfortable. Where is your outlet to use talents for someone else and serve, and empty ourselves for the glory of God. Consider just the area of outreach. Without a church home, where do you go when the person you reach out to has questions you don't have answers for. Where do you go for prayer support that there may be a turnaround. Where do you take the unbeliever after the Spirit takes hold of them.

Which is why I love the Sunday we are having. It's new member welcome here at Amazing Love. We get to welcome new family members to this place to be known and belong. To serve together, to give time together, to support financially as we *Reach the Lost with the Love of Christ*. And this God glorifying. This is exactly what our Savior wants until then. I've said it before and I'll say it again I'm sure. But it was never God's plan for any Christian to be without the bride of the Church. There is no Scriptural support for going it alone, and I don't believe there is a way you can be as faithful with the gifts God has given you if you are not. *Until then serve and be part of a church.*

The other parable Jesus speaks of gives us more marching orders until then. In the parable of the sheep and goats, Jesus says this about the believers, "35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

This reminds me of a drastic difference in life that we know as either givers or takers. Adam Grant a psychologist did a Ted talk about the difference. A taker is someone self-serving in their interactions. It's all about what can you do for me. The opposite is a giver who approaches interactions saying, "What can I do for you." He says there is a test you can take to figure out if you are one or the other. The truth is we all have moments of giving and taking. But what are the best organizations made up of? This should come as no surprise to Christians. Givers. Givers build the type of culture you want to belong to, and provide the best results. I recognized this dichotomy even in a child's movie. Our family was watching the real live version of the Lion King, and no they did not recreate this image. But they did add certain new scenes like Timon and Pumba stealing from Beauty and the Beast. And this interaction with Simba's mother, Sarabi and Scar. Sarabi was describing the difference between a King's greatness. And that a great king is not known for what he can take, but rather for what he can give.

So do you believe givers are greater? Do you believe this is noble? If believers were merely takers God would have never said these words at the end. If I could guide you more with the Word consider this one from Galatians, "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, **serve one another** humbly in love." (5:13) So here's what I find we are to be doing until then. *Until then meet the needs of others as you give rather than take.* Now a word of direction. Bono a U2 singer started a charity that says let's make poverty history. Though that be good, I'm not sure anyone of us is equipped to do just that.

But here's what each of us can do. We can look at the needy around us or in our families and plan generosity and support, saying I can't do everything but I can do something. We can go back to our families today and ask how can I give to those around me. Helping, encouraging, supporting. We can go the school and around our classmates looking for opportunities to encourage others. We can go to work prepared not to take from a company, but to give in support of what that company needs to be better. Yes we can operate in a church.

And the inspiration behind it all? We'll that's why we've gathered. It's our Savior Jesus. Jesus who came into the world to give to us. To give to us peace. To give to us forgiveness. To give to us joy. To give to us the most priceless commodity - sure and certain hope. That it works out and we win. Jesus who planned to be able to give us all this, because he paid for it with his life. How can we who follow him, who saw what he did, not say. Until you come back dear Jesus. Here I am, help me to serve and give all according to your glory. Thank you for the good work I have to do. Amen.