

Title: Come Before Winter
Text: II Timothy 4:9-22
Theme: Pressing on to the very end
Series: II Timothy
Prop Stmtnt: The promise of a safe arrival gives perspective to everything else.

As a regular part of our morning service, we have a time for “ministry updates.” Informing people about upcoming events or reminding each other about certain details doesn’t sound as spiritual as reading Scripture, praying, singing or preaching and so there is a tendency to treat this as a commercial time out in the program, or a pause in the action. In fact, those who plan the service wonder at times if these things are really necessary and should we find a different way to do them. But, I think we ought to look at these ministry updates a little differently. Here’s what I mean. Most of the time when we are giving you ministry updates, we are informing you about events that are taking place in the life of our church family that are our attempts to help one another follow Jesus better. They may be a men’s ministry or women’s ministry meeting, a series of bible study electives that are being offered, a special seminar, etc., but the bottom line is, we are attempting to either apply or flush out in more detail things that we study together here on Sunday morning. In fact, if you look at the life of our church family and the things that we do together, you should get a sense of how serious we take what we profess in our singing, praying and preaching. So, rather than being details that are disconnected from the main event, they are in reality details that reveal what we say we believe in the main event. Church is not over when the service is done. Our worship service is a dress rehearsal for our lives all week long.

The same thing is true about the ending of 2 Timothy. These last 14 verses appear to be just logistics, updates and a final good-bye. And we might be tempted to gloss over these words and even be a bit dismissive of them when we read them. But, there is so much for us to consider in this conclusion and in fact, we get to see how Paul thinks through and processes the truths that he challenges Timothy with.

Read Text:

Flying over this text at 30,000 feet we notice that there are a lot of people named in these verses. In fact, there are 17 people names. There are 4 commands, 4 prayers and several other related statements. When you put it all together you get some really good insight into what Paul was doing, planning, thinking about and how he was responding to his imminent death. It’s fascinating because it is so real and so realistic. And here is what we see. Paul died, the way he lived and the way he lived revealed what really mattered to him and, in fact, is what really matters.

1. You need people. (9-22)

Let’s face it. Paul is a pretty tough dude. His resume (2 Corinthians 11) included great labor, imprisonments, countless beatings, often near death, given 39 lashings on 5 different occasions, beaten with rods 3 times, stoned, shipwrecked 3 times, spent a night

and day drifting in the ocean before being rescued and lived in constant danger from rivers he had to cross, robbers who wanted to steal the monies he was taking to Jerusalem for the believers, and the constant threat of attack from people who hated what he was preaching. He often went without food, water and sleep and was exposed to both heat and cold. He knew tough times. He lived them. This guy was always going from the frying pan in the fire. If you traveled with him, you were signing up for trouble. And yet, here is this tough guy who is saying how much he needs other people. Listen to his heart as he says to Timothy, “do your best to come to me soon.” Later he says, “do your best to come before winter.”

If Paul needed people, so do you. But Paul did not wait until the end of his life and wished for people to come around, Paul spent his life as a follower of Christ investing himself into the lives of others and here he is getting ready to die and he can talk so personally and knowingly about the lives of so many people. He knows what is going on with all sorts of people because he is involved in their lives. These are the brothers and sisters he has prayed for. These are people he has led to Christ. These are people he has traveled with (Luke) prayed with, taught, laughed with, gotten into trouble with and served with. These are people that he has done life together with. Prisca and Aquila, Onesiphorus, Erastus, Mark, Titus, Luke are all people we’ve met before because Paul spent so much time with them. Do not wait until you are dying to start investing into the lives of other people.

For many years, this church was blessed by the quiet and faithful ministry of a man named Jim Kuczma. Jim was an unassuming man who worked as a pharmacist, but deeply loved Christ and loved to pray for and encourage others. He regularly sent letters to guys who were in Bible college or seminary and included money in those letters. He would go into different ABF’s when a new guy was teaching so that he could sit there and pray for him. He would write our missionaries and encourage them. Jim had a good job, and was able to provide for himself whatever he wanted, but that really was not his focus. He loved people and he cared deeply for them and he invested in so many of them and he was a happy man. Jim, like Paul, died the way he lived. He died caring for others and his death while a loss for us, was a sweet release for him. He loved Christ, so the people of Christ mattered a great deal to him.

2. People need you. (9-22)

Technology is changing us and it is not always for the better. Tony Reinke just released a book entitled, 12 ways your phone is changing you. (I downloaded it on my phone – jk)

- 1) We are addicted to distraction
- 2) We ignore our flesh and blood
- 3) We crave immediate approval
- 4) We lose our literacy
- 5) We feed on the produced
- 6) We become like what we “like”
- 7) We get lonely

- 8) We get comfortable in secret vices
- 9) We lose meaning
- 10) We fear missing out
- 11) We become harsh to one another
- 12) We lose our place in time

What is your summary of this? We are losing the ability to actually relate to people in meaningful ways. Loneliness is not just the curse of old age; it is becoming the curse of life now. We might produce self-driving cars but when we try to relate to computers, as we would a human, we become less human. You live in a society where fundamentally, people are lonely because so many people do not know who they are. If you have an iPhone, you probably know about Siri. Siri is the artificially intelligent personal assistant who researches information and because that information can be helpful, it is easy to assume more about Siri than is true. I hate to break it you, but Siri does not actually care about you. Siri does not have feelings. Siri does not have a soul. That is why the internet is the friend of information but it is the enemy of thought. Thought demands time and conversation. People may have technology, but they need people. People need you. And even more significantly, your brothers and sisters in Christ need you. When Christ saved us, he saved us from sin and saved us to holiness. He saved us from isolation and saved us to a body of believers. You cannot grow as a follower of Christ without the involvement of brothers and sisters in your life. And, not only do you need others, but others need you.

Paul needed Timothy. Wow! The young man that Paul trained, the young man who depended on Paul is now the man whom Paul is depending on. People need you to encourage them in times of need. People need to know that they can depend on you. Paul needed his cloak. He left it with Carpus at Troas, possibly when he was arrested. He realizes that he is probably going to spend the cold, damp winter months in this prison, so he need his cloak, otherwise he is going to be miserable and most likely sick. People need you to visit them. People are lonely and vulnerable to stinkin' thinkin'. Your most valuable treasure is not your money, it is your time. That is why when you give yourself to others, (not just pay someone else to do it), you are honoring them with your life.

3. Some people will disappoint you. (10, 14-16)

Demas is mentioned in Colossians 4.14 and in Philemon (v.24) where he is identified as a fellow worker of Paul's. Here is a man who was in the trenches and served alongside of Paul. That means that he traveled with him, taught with him, ate with him, counseled with him, prayed with him, preached with him and yet now, a few years later, Paul informs Timothy of the fact that Demas has defected.

I need to say something that ought to be obvious, but it is not always obvious. The fact that someone whom you counted on as a dear brother or sister in the faith has seemingly walked away from the faith does not mean that you necessarily did something wrong. But, it sure feels that way. We want to know, why we didn't see that coming? Could we have stopped that somehow? In this case, while Paul's investment into Demas meant that

Demas should have been there to help Paul when Paul needed him, but Demas bailed out. Instead of loving and longing for the appearance of Christ, Demas loved this world too much. Demas loved the world instead of loving God. We love the world instead of loving God when we think that the world will give us what we want and that God won't. We love the world instead of loving God when we believe the promises of the world and do not believe the promises of God. We love the world instead of loving God when we think that the world will love us and that God won't. We love the world instead of loving God when we love ourselves above all. Demas was gone. He went back to Thessalonica (perhaps his hometown).

The reason why Paul is sitting in prison is possibly due to Alexander the coppersmith. The wording that Paul uses here "did me great harm" is actually a legal phrase that speaks of being an informant against another person. Alexander may have been the one who brought charges against Paul that resulted in him being arrested.

Then in verse 16 we read something that makes our hearts sink. "*At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me.*" I think that Paul is referring to his initial hearing there in Rome. No advocates. No supporters. No one. After all of the people that Paul had helped out, in his time of need, there was no one who stood with him. And yet, here we are reading about this. Why? Because, while Paul was wounded by this; he did not throw in the towel. Yes, people disappointed him, but the foundation of his life was not set on being admired and respected by others.

I know that when I challenge you to take on the responsibility of caring for, discipling and encouraging one another that I am asking you to take a risk. I know that if you care for people, get involved in their lives, pray with them and become close to them, that there will be occasions when someone will disappoint you and it will hurt and it will cause you to wonder if it was worth it. I know that and challenge you to risk that anyway. There will be disappointment. But, I do not challenge you to do it because it will always work out, or because you will always feel good or what it will do for you, but because in so doing, you will reflect Christ and that is what matters – forever.

4. The Lord will always come through. (17-18)

But, even though others may have deserted him, the Lord did not and Paul not only knew that the Lord did not, he rejoiced in it. He knew that his deliverance from death meant that at least for the time being he would still have an opportunity in some way to continue to get the gospel out to the Gentiles, even if he had to do it from prison.

We have a tendency to say, "I know that the Lord was with me, but..." As if the Lord's presence doesn't really matter. Paul is saying, "I know that others were not with me, but, the Lord was and that does really matter. In fact Paul was grateful that he was delivered from possible death in his first trial and likened his delivery from death, ironically, to his delivery from this life. Paul's confidence in his safe arrival in Christ's kingdom is the occasion for him to respond with a shout of praise! "To him be glory forever and ever, Amen!" When you read through Paul's writings you will note that he says this or

something very similar every time he is overwhelmed by something. And the thought of him landing safely in the kingdom of Christ just caused his heart to sing again. What causes your heart to sing?

5. You need to keep on learning. (13)

What are you reading right now? What are you trying to learn about? What area of your life are you trying to bring into more conformity to Christ? How are you trying to expand your heart so that you can grasp more of who God is?

Paul asks Timothy to make sure that he brings him his books and above all, the parchments. He wants these even more than he wants his cloak, and we can only imagine how much he needs that cloak. But think about this. Does Paul think he will get out of prison and teach another lecture series? No. Does Paul think he will get out and be able to preach and offer seminars in the halls and synagogues? No. Paul believes, rightly so, that he is close to dying. So, what does a man who is close to dying want? He wants the books and the parchments, which refer to the OT Scriptures. Paul has more to learn. Paul wants to keep learning. Paul wants to love God more. Paul want his affections to be set more and more on God and he knows that in order to finish strong, he cannot will himself to do so, he needs God's Word.

I've attempted to take on some home improvement jobs in the past few months. One lesson I've learned is you have to have the right tools. I cannot tell you how many times I've tried to do something and someone has come along and said, "here, try this" and they let me use a tool that I've never seen before and I'm amazed. Well, the same thing is true about your life. You have a very important job. You have a responsibility to finish well and in order to do, you need the right tool. You need the Word. And if Paul needed the Word, then you and I certainly need the Word. Seriously, you need to read the Bible. You need to listen to sermons. You need to read good books. If you do not have a good book that you are reading right now, then go the book store or library after church and ask one of the volunteers for a suggestion and they will help you. And then read your Bible, and read a good book and discuss it with someone, but keep learning.

Watching the golf channel, Tigers games, Fox news, CNN, the Hallmark network, History station and Wheel of Fortune every day, may pass the time, but it will not help you finish well and will not cause you to pray for our missionaries and pray for church planters and pray for people to come to Christ. And if you want to read good books when you get older, read good books when you are younger. I made a list of 10 really good books that we have in our bookstore that I wish every church member would read and posted it if you need some suggestions for reading. Keep on learning.

6. The gospel church goes on.

There are some good reasons why Paul is alone. He sent Crescens to Galatia in order to help strengthen the churches there. He sent Titus to Dalmatia to do the same. Tychicus he sent to Ephesus, which was probably his way of telling Timothy that it would be okay for

Timothy to come and visit him since Tychicus would take over there for a while. But what I want you to see is how invested Paul is in the gospel churches all the way to the end. He is sending these brothers out to help the churches, even if it means that they have to leave him. Paul is able to do this because it is more important to him that gospel churches go on, than he be surrounded by his friends.

The final words of his final letters are a final personal touch and update. He wants Timothy to greet Priscilla and Aquila and the family of Onesiphorus. He wants Timothy to know that Erastus stayed in Corinth and that Trophimus was too sick to travel and was still in Miletus. But now, Paul did have a few others who were coming to see him. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus and Claudia all sent greetings. But Paul wants Timothy to come and come quickly before the winter weather sets in and makes ship travel impossible for a few months.

As I studied these words this week, I wanted to hear Paul's heart. I wanted to see what he saw, feel what he felt, trust what he trusted, and believe what he believed. But, the more I tried to hear Paul's heart, the more I saw Christ.

Look at the end of v.16. Who does that sound like? That sounds like Jesus, doesn't it? Christ should have been able to depend on his disciples, but they bailed on him. I have no doubt that Paul reflected on that and in fact rejoiced that while Christ had no one, he had Christ! Paul's loneliness became an occasion for him to learn more about what it meant to be like Christ and therefore, Paul has no bitterness. While he knows that Alexander hates Christ and will face the consequences of that, Paul is very willing to let go of the fact that the people he should have been able to depend on, did not come through. I read the end of v.16 and I am humbled and so blessed.

And then there is verse 18. Paul can't wait to get home. The kingdom is his to enjoy and he knows that he will get there, which again, is the same thing that Christ tells his disciples before he dies. And finally we have this wonderful little line in v.11 about Mark. Mark (John Mark) went with Paul and Barnabas (cousin of Barnabas) on the first missionary journey, but part way through he couldn't handle it and went home. When it came time for Paul and Barnabas to go on the second church planting trip, Barnabas wanted to take Mark and Paul said no. These two brothers disagreed so strongly about this that Paul and Barnabas went separate ways. Paul took Silas and Barnabas took Mark. And now, at the end of his life, Paul wants Timothy to bring Mark with him because Mark is very useful for him in the ministry. It's a sweet reconciliation that reminds me so much of how Christ restored Peter. All of which simply reflect that if we really want to love others better, we need to love Christ more.

- do you know Christ
- Are you intentionally investing in anyone right now?
- Do you have anything to invest in them?
- Are you reading, growing?
- Do you have a relationship with anyone who is investing in you? (Praying, spiritually encouraging, challenging you?)
- What is communion if what we have in common is shallow?