TITLE: Don't be left behind!

TEXT: Rev. 21:1-5; Mt. 24:36-42; Gene. 6:5-7;

1st Thess. 5:1-3 & 4:13-18

INTRODUCTION: When there is someplace important to go, no one likes the thought of being left behind.

 A group of friends going to a ball game or a fishing trip or whatever, and the plan is to leave at a certain time sharp, and there or not, they would leave...And then finding yourself 15 minutes late and being left behind...

 I can't think of too many things that makes a person feel as bad as being left behind on something that you really wanted to do...something that was important to you....

 It leaves a sick feeling of disappointment in the pit of your stomach.

 Let me share a favorite passage of Scripture of mine this morning...

**Reve 21:1 (NIV) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.**

**2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.**

**3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.**

**4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."**

 John, while exiled on the island of Patmos, receives a vision from the Lord...What John sees, he reveals to us in this book called revelation.... These words that I just read are a part of that vision... They describe what we most often refer to as Heaven, the place that each of us hope to reside someday! The future residing place of the saints...

**3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.**

**4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."**

 **Reve 21:5 (NIV) He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."**

 Does this prospect, the prospect of Heaven excite you?

I mean, are you looking forward to it?

 Are you so looking forward to it that the thought of your missing it, of your being left behind, gives you a sick feeling in the pit of your stomach?

 This prospect was equally important to the disciples in Jesus's day...

 One day as the disciples and Jesus were alone, sitting around chewing the fat, so to speak, on the Mount of Olives, after Jesus had spoken in Jerusalem about the end of the age and His second coming, the disciples ask Jesus..." Tell us, they said, when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

 Jesus tells them, not exact dates, but gives them general signs that will accompany all this and He tells them a little about what that specific day will be like...

**Matt 24:36 (NIV) "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**

**37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.**

**38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;**

**39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.**

**40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.**

**41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.**

**42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.**

 Jesus starts out..

**"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**

 Paraphrase.... the exact time of the event isn't really important...just know that the event will take place at Gods appointed time!!

 And even though Jesus doesn't give us an exact date, He does go on to further describe some general conditions that we will be able to recognize that will proceed that date...

**38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;**

**39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.**

 In other words, just as the people in the day of Noah were oblivious to all the evil that was going on around them, so it will be in the days that proceed the 2nd coming of Christ...

 How evil was it in Noah's day?

**Gene 6:5 (NIV) The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.**

**6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.**

**7 So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them."**

 The heart of man had become so evil, so desensitized to sin that God said: that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

 It says that this grieved God and filled His heart with pain.

 Example: pain caused by unfaithful spouse!

 Jesus said that this is what the world would be like in the time just preceding His return.

 If I asked you what the general condition of the world is like today, how would you describe it?

 China-- Genocide, one child per family & parents killing female babies so that they can keep trying for males to carry on the family name!

 If that seems cruel and wicked to you, as it should, that is not as bad as what we are doing in our own country.

 We kill our unborn children no matter what their gender!

 China has enacted the policies they have as a means of population control--

 Abortion in America is simply a matter of convenience.

(Over 99 % of abortions performed in America are non-therapeutic in nature).

 And how does this holocaust of killing our unborn affect most of us? For the most part, It doesn't!!

 Every day that it goes on we become more and more desensitized to it!

 That is the way that it is with all sin! If you don't address it early, you start to become desensitized to it!

Example :t.v. shows 1960's-1990's—I dream of Jeanie & 3 stooges & little rascals

(Anything that you accept becomes normal)

Kennedy--oswald--vietnam war

 Look at all the "sins" that we have not nipped in the bud in our country and see what has happened!!

 Abortion, pornography, homosexuality, sexual immorality of any kind!

 Do you notice how all these things are defended today?

 By rights! You have the right to do them if that is what you choose!

 I mean, this is America! The land of the free!

 If men such as Samuel Smith could see what we have done with our freedoms in this country they would roll over in their graves in disgust.

 This kind of freedom, the freedom to promote sin, is not what Samuel Smith had in mind when he wrote the words to "My Country Tis Of Thee."

 "My country tis of thee, sweet land of liberty"

"My country tis of thee, land of the noble free, thy name I love."

 Our founders did not intend for the constitution and bill of rights to be used as a covering for these kinds of behaviors.

 Yet that is exactly what we have seen happen and in fact are seeing happen in our country today....

 How far is our world from being a place where---

 Every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

 Jesus said that in the days prior to His return that the world would be in the same condition that it was in the days of Noah, just prior to the flood.

**38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;**

 With all the evil that is going on around us today, yet what do we see happening around us?

 People are eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.. Paraphrase... Life goes on as though everything is hunky dory..

 Even the people who don't approve of these things are going on as though they weren't happening.

 Scripture says that in Noah's day that--

 **39 they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.**

 **And that is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.**

**1The 5:1 (NIV) Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you,**

**2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.**

**3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.**

 We don't know the hour or even the day that the Lord will return, but we do know that the day will come when most are not expecting it!

 There is a day coming, there is an event of unprecedented proportions that will happen, that will even put to shame all the special effects of all the Steven Spielberg films ever made!

 The Apostle Paul describes it the way...

**1The 4:13 (NIV) Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.**

**14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.**

**15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.**

**16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel** **and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.**

**17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.**

**18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.**

 This is the same event that Jesus is talking about in Matthew 24!!

 **Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.**

**41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.**

 **Two will be in one bed, one will be taken the other left...**

 This is what we refer to as the rapture of the Church.

 When Jesus comes back for His bride!

 Think about it??

Scripture says that when this happens it will happen in a instant, in the twinkling of an eye>. Do you know how fast an eye twinkles?

Example: on an airplane and pilot is a believer-

 Los Angeles freeway at rush hour-

 in a crowded elevator-

 A mortician preparing the body of a deceased believer---The dead in Christ will rise first. Then if he is a believer, he is gone!

 All of this happening in an instant all over the world at the exact same time!!

 If it wasn't so sad for those left behind it would be funny…

 This will be the most spectacular event in the history of the world...

 Unless you find yourself not ready and left behind!

 Song- "I wish we'd all been ready"

 Church, the day is coming! We don't know the exact day or hour of the Lord’s return but the lord is coming back. And even though we don't know the date or how soon it will be, I can assure you of this... We are closer to His return today than we were yesterday and will even be closer to the day tomorrow.(unless he comes tonight).

 We are living in exciting times! We are living out the pages of Scripture that talk about the time preceding the return of Jesus!

 Do you realize that, especially if you hold a pre-tribulation view of the rapture of the church that there is absolutely nothing else that has to happen before the Lord returns--He can come at any time?

 The important question isn't when will the day come---The important question is will we be ready for the day whenever it is?

 Don't let the day come and find that you were not ready to meet the day.

 Don't let the day come and find that you were not ready to meet it and because you were not ready you got left behind.

 Don't find yourself wishing that you had been ready--Be Ready.

 Jesus said: "**Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.**

 Are you keeping watch?

 Are you living your life as though today may be the day that we hear a loud shout from heaven and Jesus descending in the clouds to call home His Church?

 Who knows-maybe it is!

 Are you ready to take the trip?

Prayer- Invitation