TITLE: Being Left behind

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

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

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

 Say a group of friends are going to a ball game or a fishing trip or whatever, and the plan is to leave at a certain time sharp, whether you are there or not, they would leave...And then finding yourself 5 minutes late and being left behind...

 I can't think of too many things that make 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.

 One thing an experience like this has a tendency to do is that the next time that something important comes up we will be ready.

 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 hopes to reside someday. The future residing place of all 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."**

**5 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."**

 No more death or mourning or crying or pain sounds pretty good doesn’t it? I mean this is not something that we would like to be left out of when the time comes because we were not ready for it.

 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 of Heaven was equally important to the disciples in Jesus’ day...

 One day as the disciples and Jesus were alone, sitting around on the Mount of Olives ,chewing the fat, so to speak, after Jesus had spoken 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 some 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 precede that this time has drawn near...

**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 precede the 2nd coming of Christ...

 How evil was the world 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 might be the pain caused by an unfaithful spouse or a wayward rebellious child..

 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 we live in today is like how would you describe it?

 In China we find Genocide, Chinese law until 2015 says one child per family so parents often would kill female babies so that they could keep trying for males to carry on the family name. Because of labor shortages in 2015 china raised the number of children to 2 per family.

 If that seems cruel and wicked to you, as it should, that is not really any worse than what we are doing in our own country

 We kill our unborn children no matter what their gender!

 China had enacted the policies they did 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

(Non-therapeutic means that they are not preformed to insure the life or health of the mother).

 So most abortions in America are for the perceived connivance of the mother.

 For most it is really just looked at as an alternate form of birth control because it is easier to abort than it is to abstain.

 But abortion is not birth control because birth control keeps a life from beginning where abortion snuffs out that life after it has already begun.

 And how does this holocaust of killing our unborn affect most of us today? 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: Just look at the evolution of prime time TV shows…

 Take the TV. shows of the 1950’s such as Ossie and Harriet & Fathers Knows Best and leave it to Beaver.

 For the most part wholesome family shows with a high moral standard.

 Then TV programming started to change in the 1960's-1970's—I dream of Jeanie & Three stooges & little rascals.

 Then came shows like Three’s Company where a man lived with two women and to be allowed to rent the house with them he had to pretend to be gay.

 Now it seems most sitcoms today promote openly gay lifestyles and sexually promiscuity of all kinds.

 With the Viet Nam war came something new to news broadcast.

 In all previous wars all news footage had to be run through the military before getting released to the general public.

 In Viet Nam we had reporters embedded with the troops in the field and technology enabled them to get the war to us pretty much in real time.

 Now Americans would see the bloody images of war on the nightly news cast.

 Images that would have shocked the previous generation, we grew up with. The result is that all of us have become somewhat desensitized to these kinds of images.

 Anything that we accept eventually becomes the normal.

 Things that a person was once offended by become less and less offensive.

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

 The promotion of things such as abortion, pornography, homosexuality, sexual immorality of any kind has become more the rule than the exception.

 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, who wrote the great old Hymn “My Country Tis of Thee” could see what we have done with our freedoms in this country today 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"

“land of the noble free, thy name I love."

 Our founders did not intend for our 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 continuing to see happen in our country today....

 How far is our world from being in 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 all 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 often going on as though they weren't happening or they don’t really matter.

 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 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 this 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 when He says:

 **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.**

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 an instant, in the twinkling of an eye!

 Do you know how fast an eye twinkles? Let me assure you it is fast!

 Just think what the rapture will be like---Say you are on an airplane and the pilot is a believer-

Think of how it will be on a Los Angeles freeway at rush hour when the rapture happens and all believers disappear from their cars.

 Or in a crowded elevator and half the people vanish between floors….

 Think about a mortician preparing the body of a deceased believer---Scripture says that the dead in Christ will rise first.

 The unsaved mortician may be preparing a body then all of a sudden the body vanishes before his eyes…

 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 might be funny!

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

 Unless you find yourself not ready for it 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 hour, how soon it will be, I can assure you of this... We are closer to His return today than we were yesterday and we will even be closer to that day tomorrow.(unless Jesus 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, 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 of the Lords return come-- The important question is will we be ready for that day whenever it is?

 Don't let the day come and find that you were not ready to meet it and because you were not ready you finding yourself being 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 that loud shout from heaven, the blast of a trumpet and Jesus descending in the clouds to call home His Church?

 Who knows-maybe today will be that day!

 Are you ready to take the trip?

Prayer- Invitation