I Thessalonians 5:12-18

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Occasionally I have run across something that I think is really interesting and this struck me because it is a reflective of myself as much. I don't know how many of you are familiar with Joshua Bell but he is a renowned violist that has just taken that world by storm for a number of years; I've heard him on the radio a number of times and he is just extraordinary.

> ***Joshua Bell emerged from the subway train and positioned himself against a wall beside a trash basket. He was nondescript—a young man in jeans, long-sleeved T-shirt, and a Washington Nationals baseball cap. From a small case, he removed a violin. Placing the open case at his feet, he threw in a few dollars and pocket change as seed money and began to play.*
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> *For the next 45 minutes, in the D.C. Metro station, Bell played Mozart and Schubert as more than 1,000 people streamed by, most hardly taking notice. If they had, they might have recognized Bell as a world-renown violist. They might have noted his instrument was a rare Stradivarius worth more than $3 million. It was part of a project by The Washington Post that the editors called "an experiment in context, perception, and priorities…*
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> *Only three days earlier, Bell had sold out Boston's Symphony Hall, with ordinary seats going for $100. In the subway, Bell collected about $32 from the 27 people who stopped long enough to drop in a donation.*

They set these public figures in inconvenient times and in rare places. The point was we often bypass and overlook rare things in life because they are out of context or we're unaware. Can you think about someone of his magnitude playing for an hour and you just passing by and maybe throwing in a quarter? That just hit me

because that is so like me and a lot of others that we go through life and we just overlook people, we overlook opportunities.

Today we're going to be in I Thessalonians Chapter 5; we're going to go back and touch a couple of things that you have already covered. As we go into II Thessalonians one of the themes is the second coming of Christ. There is quite a bit of interest in the Thessalonian letter as well as other letters that Paul addresses this.

One of the reasons for this even though these were mainly Gentiles, the Jewish idea of time was divided into two sections. You had the present age which was called the evil age or the age in which they lived and then you had the age to come. What separated those two ages was what was called "the day of the Lord"; it is referred to in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Amos…a number of the prophets referred to this day of the Lord and it was always a terrible day, a day in which the world would be in upheaval and things would be destroyed.

Now, Paul in what we call the 5th chapter mentions this. He said that I don't want you to be ignorant; you know very well the day of the Lord will come as a thief and so he is going to talk about this day of the Lord in many other letters.

One of the reasons why there is interest among the Thessalonians as well as among us is we, even today desire to know when the second coming of Christ is. If you think about it there are a lot of people who spend a lot of time there and it is, in my opinion, natural, because did we know when the first coming was? *___. Yes, we knew the time or the general thing when Christ would come. Isaiah talked about it, Daniel talked about it – remember the vision that Daniel had about the man, the statue with the

head of gold and then silver and then bronze, the feet of iron and clay and he said **in the days of those kings shall the Lord set up a kingdom**….so they knew generally when Christ would come.

We see that it's a birth…there were Wise Men in the East who were watching and they saw the star which told them that the King of the Jews had been born. Now, it is interesting that it is in the book of Numbers that a false prophet prophesied about a star coming out of Israel, so the first coming was known and expected.

Remember the two people that were in the temple; one had been told by God that he would not see death until he saw the salvation of Israel so they knew that in their generation Christ was coming…***but***…we have no markers except Jesus said that when the man of sin would be revealed, after that the Lord would come. Now, we've had the man of sin: Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and we will have them but we don't have any markers like they had at the first coming. In fact Jesus said I don't even know. *___.

There are a number of things that people say are indications but we don't have any of the markers that we had in the first thing. So notice what Paul is saying to these Thessalonians: I discussed this with you when I was with you…so this is a topic of interest and a topic that they had discussed quite a bit when Paul was with them about that. He had some warnings.

Paul did not try to establish a time; notice what his approach was to the church. #1, he said **but you brothers are not in darkness so that the day should not surprise you like a thief…** When do you repair a roof that is bad? Before it rains; that's the wise thing to do, isn't it? Before it rains! Now, some may say well, it's

leaking, let's get a tarp and put it over there but NO, the best time to repair a roof is when the sun is shining and it is not raining. That's what Paul is saying to us here. He is saying if you are prepared it does not matter when he comes and that you should not be concerned with the day, you should be concerned with having prepared yourself for that day. Notice in vs. 10: **He died for us…** now this is the grace of God he's talking about here; **he died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with him.** And then notice what he said: **therefore encourage one another and build each other up as in fact you are doing.** So we must encourage each other to say don't be concerned, don't worry, you are living as you ought to live, you have prepared as you ought to prepare then the coming of the Lord is not something that we should fear; in fact it is something that we should pray for that the Lord come quickly.

This is the grace that we have that we should not fear the coming of the Lord and we should not spend our time and energy figuring out when he's going to come because we don't know…we should be prepared for it.

And then he begins to say in what we call the final instructions, he begins to give some, what I would call, miscellaneous instructions to the Thessalonian church which is certainly applicable to us today. Notice what he says: **Respect those who work hard among you and who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in highest regard and love because of their work.** Here I'm sure he's talking about the elders or those that are over the congregation and notice how he identifies them. He identifies them as Paul does as he begins to describe the work; it is a work, it is a labor, it is someone who admonishes and that is part of the responsibility.

Then he begins to say to the church there as well as to us, **live at peace with each other…** Now, that is a strange admonition for Christians in one way, isn't it? Live at peace – what does that mean to you Paul when Paul says I want you to live at peace? **There must have been some dissention going on perhaps about scriptures, perhaps about just their lifestyle; there must have been some conflict.* All right – live at peace with each other.

Are there any conflicts in the congregation that you are a part of? **Yes, if you don't ask me what they are!* ☺ I'm not going to ask you what they are but I'm just saying, isn't the admonition applicable to us today? I mean do we like everybody? Richard, do you like everybody? You love everybody but do you **like** everybody? **I have trouble with John Hodge!* ☺ **The way to have peace with everybody maybe is to not really associate with everybody*. What he is saying here is we're all human beings; we all are different, we look at things differently, we eat differently and he said but as a Christian you are to live at peace. You're not to be someone causing dissention; you're not someone causing a problem – live at peace with each other.

Now, notice the other admonition that he has that we have transferred from ourselves to "elders" and "preachers": **We urge you brothers…** now he's not talking about leadership; he's talking about Nancy and he's talking about Carolyn and the rest of us…he said: **We urge you brothers, warn those who are idle…** because seemingly some in Thessalonica when they heard that the Lord was coming they decided to say ok, I'll just sit down and wait for him; there's no need for me to build a house or go to work because he's coming and it's all going to be burned up anyway. But I know this is

something that God ever approved… **urge you that those that are idle; encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone…** (that's written to me). **Be patient with everyone, make sure that no one pays back wrong for wrong but always be kind to each other and to everyone else.**

Those are just marks that separate good men and good women from the ordinary. Notice that he doesn't give us challenges that are beyond our reach; he doesn't say go to Africa or give away all that you have, he asks us to do the simple things in life that really make a difference…speaking, helping, encouraging, being there and I think that's the key – just being there!

Make sure no one pays back wrong for wrong… if you think about it, in our early history we had what we called a mutual ministry; some of you may be old enough to remember that. I can remember debates in my part of the country about paid preachers; we had no staff, everything was done voluntarily. We cleaned the building, so and so was appointed to bring the lesson and somebody else was appointed to lead the prayer and take care of the Table (communion). One of the ladies always brought the bread; she always baked the bread and someone brought the fruit of the vine. I don't know when we started buying Welsh's Grape Juice but it was a long time before we did that – someone made it every year and brought it.

This is really what Paul is saying to us today; we have gotten into a mindset that if anyone is to be rebuked it should be the elders that do it or Robert or one of the other men. If anyone gets into trouble, we should tell the elders or tell the church and

yet Paul is saying to these Thessalonians and to us that God's church is a mutual ministry church; we all do things.

That's why I read the little article. What's the difference between us doing it and someone else doing it – it's because many times our eyes are not focused on those kinds of things. We overlook those kinds of things; we're not aware of those things and I think that we have to heighten our ability to be sensitive to the needs. And I think we have to be also open in letting those needs known.

Jo has always been real sensitive to people; she's always doing things for people and sometimes I wonder how does she know about all these things because Jo is attuned to those kinds of things and some of the rest of you are attuned to them. And we need to be aware of that because this is what Paul, I think, is saying here. **Always be kind to each other and to everyone else.** **In talking about working at church, baking and cleaning and such but that's no longer being taught today. You did everything for yourself…if you needed something done, you didn't call somebody and pay them to do it. Today you want the lawn mowed you pay somebody; you want this done, you pay somebody; things at church – we'll pay somebody.* True, and most of us, including myself, if somebody said can you give $20 or an hour of your time…I'm going to give the $20 and we struggle with that but we need to get out of this mentality and to think and to look at people and to see people who have needs and help. We need to have our eyes and our ears open to things.

Shelly is looking for a job; we need to find Shelly a job. She could clean houses because she did it yesterday. ☺ I don't know if she cleaned it or just went

around and sprayed Lysol. ☺ **She didn't do mine.* ☺ Rita also needs a job; she does clean houses and office buildings so be aware of people and think about them. You have a challenge this week; see if you cannot find these two people a job. **In order to do that we have to know one another too. We have to become involved in their lives.* I have thought sometimes we need to just take an hour and go around and say Daisy, what do you do? People don't realize that she keeps kids; she takes care of her family (grandchildren) 24 hours a day. What he's trying to get us to see is don't be concerned about the coming of the Lord; you have a lot of work here to be involved with and the work and the involvement that you are when the Lord comes he will find you working – like the song says: "we'll work 'til Jesus comes"… **That's being prepared!* Yes.

Now, I don't remember what our text was but let's continue because we're going to do some reviewing next week. **James, when we moved here about ten years ago we moved from a small congregation to a large congregation but you said you find your small congregation within the congregation. Here, really is a small congregation (class) and so if we keep up with one another just within this group we have a pretty good job to do.* Yes, you could spend a lot of time visiting because many of us are just getting older. ☺ Not mentioning any names. ☺ ☺

He's talking individually; look at what he says, some of the characteristics that should be ours: **be joyful always…** that has always intrigued me about joy. What is joy and how can we have it always? How can Shelly have it when she is seeking a job and has a house to run? So it must be talking about something more than just an emotion or eating an ice cream cone or something. It could be joy knowing of who's

you are and that God is with you. That's an intriguing thing – the same thing about praying continually.

Now, I do no believe and I don't know why I would say this but I don't believe that you should go around just praying all the time – just muttering although our society has gotten to where they go around talking all the time. I'm still taken back with someone passing me on the street talking and I look around and there's nobody with him; he's on one of these Bluetooth's or whatever it is. ☺ It just brings me up short. I don't think that's what Paul was talking about on praying continually.

I think being able to pray; being of the mindset remembering prayer. What do you think about that? **I think we should constantly give thanks to God for what he has done for us.* You're right, prayer doesn't always have to be a long formal thing; it could be two or three words: Lord, I need your help, thank you God; take care of that person, etc. The mindset is what Paul is talking about; having the mindset, having God a part of your consciousness. Thank you!

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This is a transcript of a bible class taught by James Ard at the Waterview Church of Christ.
**Indicates comments by class members.*
A blank indicates words/phrases that could not be understood.