

THEME: The End Is Near ... Are You Ready?

OPENING REMARKS: I was a pitcher my last year of college baseball. Pitchers, in case you don't know, need to have strong leg muscles for endurance when throwing in the later innings, and that meant that we had to run a lot during practice and for long distances. Unfortunately for me, I was never a very good runner. In fact, I'm a terrible runner if the truth be told. Around my college there was a trail called 'The Loop.' It was 2.7 miles long and we ran it every day as a warm-up. I hated 'The Loop' with every fabric of my being. I could never understand why some people enjoy running; why some people even went out for Cross Country. To me, in every sport I ever played, we always had to run for punishment. It's what our coaches made us do whenever we played really bad. So, running for the sheer joy of running seems to me like pure insanity!!! But as the pitchers all ran together in a group, it made the task somewhat enjoyable. The best part of running 'The Loop' was the last half mile. We would round the corner and could instantly see the finish line up ahead where we would be able to finally stop and rest. I remember huffing and puffing but then always immediately getting me second breath as soon as I turned the corner to see the end up ahead. Knowing the finish was coming soon, I was extremely motivated to finish strong!

THEME: The End Is Near ... Are You Ready?

7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer. 8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 10 As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

ILLUSTRATION:

- Half glass of water on stand next to the pulpit.
- **QUESTION:** Are you glass-half-empty-Christian or a glass-half-full-Christian?
- Did hearing the phrase: "The end of all things is near" make you **NERVOUS** or **EXCITED**?

MAIN POINTS:

- I. The Return of Christ - (vs. 7a)**
- II. The Ministry of Believers - (vs. 7b-11a)**
 - **(Prayer, Love, Hospitality, Speaking Ministry, and Serving Ministry)**
- III. The Glory of God - (vs. 11b)**

I. The Return of Christ - (v.7a)

7 "The end of all things is near"

- A. (v.7a) - "**the end**" - 'telos' - does NOT mean cessation, termination, or conclusion.
- It means: "*consummation, fulfillment, a purpose attained, or a goal achieved.*"
- B. (v.7a) - "**of all things**" - the return of Jesus Christ! - (not merely the end of present-day, negative circumstances)
- C. (v.7a) - "**is near**" - means "*approaching*"
- 1 Peter 1:5 "*for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*"
 - 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 "*Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.*"
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 "*For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.*"
 - Revelation 1:3 "*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.*"
 - Luke 12:35-40 "*Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.*"
- **QUESTION: Are you ready for The Return of Christ?**

II. The Ministry of Believers - (v.7b-11a)

7b "therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer. **8** Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. **9** Be hospitable to one another without complaint. **10** As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. **11a** Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies;"

D. (v.7b) - "**therefore**" - what the word 'therefore' is there for?

E. (v.7b) - "**sound judgment**" - literally means: "be in one's right mind"

- To be under control and not be carried away by an errant view, undue emotion, or uncontrolled passion.
- Used in Mark's gospel of the man Jesus freed from the legion of demons.

F. (v.7b) - "**sober spirit**" - spiritually observant

- **ILLUSTRATION:** A lack of "sound judgment" and a "sober spirit" reminds me of the way a tribe of eskimos hunt wolves.
 - Sharpen a knife
 - Freeze layers of blood all around it.
 - Bury it in the snow, point up.
 - Wolves come to lick it because they lust for the smell of blood.
 - Mouth begins to go numb due to the ice.
 - Eventually gets cut, yet keeps coming back because of its thirst for blood.
 - Eventually starts drinking its own blood and can't stop, due to lust.
 - Dies next to the knife due to loss of blood and self-inflicted wounds.

G. (v.7b) - "**for the purpose of prayer**" - The access point to all spiritual resources.

H. (v.8) - "**Above all**" - refers to the supreme virtue in the Christian life

I. (v.8) - "**keep fervent in your love**" - refers to stretching or straining; athlete

J. (v.8) - "**for one another**" - to other Christians in particular

K. (v.8) - "**love covers a multitude of sins**" - "love" is 'agape'

- **Interpretation #1:** refers to God's love covering sins.

- Interpretation #2: refers to believers who are lovingly overlooking each other's transgressions.
- Interpretation #3: Means either of the above, or even both.

- L. (v.9) - "**Be hospitable to one another**" - literally: "to love strangers"
- M. (v.9) - "**without complaint**" - not just a selfless act of but unselfish attitude as well.

- N. (v.10) - "**each one has received**" - a gift from God; did not already possess it.
- 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 *"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills."*

- O. (v.10) - "**a special gift**" - "gift" is 'charisma'
- Romans 12:3-8 *"For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."*

- P. (v.10) - "**employ it in serving one another**" - 'work it'
- The gift is to be shared with everyone else.

- Q. (v.10) - "**as good stewards**" - we don't own the gifts; we protect them with usage.

- R. (v.10) - "**the manifold grace of God**" - means 'many colored' or 'multi-faceted'

- S. SPEAKING —>
- "**whoever speaks**" - teaching, wisdom, knowledge, discernment
 - "**the utterances of God**" - Scripture; not personal opinions

T. SERVING —>

- **"whoever serves"** - administration, prayer, mercy, helps
- **"by the strength which God supplies"** - not the flesh, but God's power!

III. The Glory of God - (v.11b)

11b "so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

- U. (v.11b) - **"so that in all things"** - how many things, exactly? —> "all"
 - 1 Corinthians 10:31 *"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."*
- V. (v.11b) - **"God may be glorified through Jesus Christ"** - an expression of praise
- W. (v.11b) - **"to whom belongs the glory and dominion"** - to Jesus or God? (both!)
- X. (v.11b) - **"forever and ever"** - how long, exactly?
- Y. (v.11b) - **"Amen"** - 'let it be so'
 - Don't finish the praise or prayer with this final word until you're convinced in your own mind that it is so!

Application: **The End Is Near ... Are You Ready?**

GRADE YOURSELF —> How are you doing in the areas of Praying with Sound Judgment and a Sober Spirit, your Love for other people, Hospitality without Grumbling, a Speaking Ministry, and a Serving Ministry. (Grade: A, B, C, D, or F)

CONCLUSION: READ —> Revelation 5:9-14

- *"To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever"* (Revelation 5:13)
- *"Amen"* (Revelation 5:14)