FOOTHILLS
CHURCH

READY AND WAITING

Dillon Barber // November 22, 2026
2 Thessalonians 2-3 (ESV)
Big Idea: We must not be deceived about the return of Christ, but be ready and waiting, doing the good works that God has called us to do.

Welcome: Good morning friends, and welcome to Foothills Church. As we get started I want to greet our friends in (Classic/Online Community), thanks for being part of our services this morning. I have an exciting announcement. We recently finished our Fall Orientation to Foothills class and would like to welcome 38 new members to Foothills Church. It was one of our largest groups ever. We are going to put their names up on the screen, if you are one of our new members please stand so we can welcome you. I always enjoy getting to know our new members in the class and this particular group had some really good doctrinal questions so it was a lot of fun.

Now, as brand-new members you have an opportunity to exercise your membership this afternoon at 12:30 for a special congregational meeting, over in the Auditorium. We are going to present the updated Articles of Incorporation, and you and the rest of our members will have an opportunity to vote on them. So please come. Aren't you so glad you became members?

Have you all been watching the news the past couple of weeks? It's getting kind of weird out there especially in the tech world. First Microsoft was down for 20 hours. Then the FAA grounded all flights because of a router overload. Then several major banks had online banking problems. Then I read the NSA (National Security Agency) had a major system failure regarding their sharing of classified documents, that's not good. Then Google had problems. Any one of these by itself would have been a blip in the news cycle but that way they have been stacking up on each other seems a bit concerning. I joke that I'm just one incident away from becoming a full blown prepper. I joke about it because it's true and I don't want to admit it. But all this stuff makes me feel a bit anxious, do you feel a bit uneasy about all this stuff?

With that in the background of my mind I approached the passage today in 2 Thessalonians and I felt a strange bond, a strange connection with the believers who received this letter because some of them were feeling anxious about the current events of their day. They were a bit stressed and anxious, and it really made me feel better that believers back then faced uncertainty in every day life, and God cared about them and inspired Paul to write a letter and clear things up. I wish God would write me a letter and explain that he has a plan and it's all going to work out according to his plan.

Let's read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2.

The context is pretty straight forward. There appears to be a letter, that was attributed to Paul and his friends, that claimed that Jesus had already returned. As you can imagine, that caused some real concern in the people that were looking for Jesus' return and are now told they missed it. Now remember news traveled very slowly back then. It easily took days or weeks for news to travel from city to city, if it was across the Mediterranean sea, it could take months. And they didn't have radios to listen to, or phones to call their friends and confirm the news, they couldn't look it up on the internet, all they had was messages and letters sent on foot or by boat. So when they read this letter, saying hey, Jesus came back, sorry you missed him. They kind of freaked out. Can you blame them? They didn't know what was going on. And if someone claimed the Spirit affirmed the letter, then that just adds to the stress. I mean, how would you feel if Jesus came back and raptured the church and you found out about it a month later? That would be rough.

Paul got wind of this fake letter and the stress it was causing and since he cared about his friends, he wrote them an authentic letter to clear some things up about when Jesus will return and help them to calm down about it.

In these last two chapters of the letter, Paul gives the church some insight on how to be ready and waiting for the Lord's return. He spells out some of the signs that point to the return and what we are to do while we wait.

First Paul says, regarding the return of Jesus, don't let anyone deceive you.

There are two clear things that will have to happen before Jesus will return, let's read about them. Verse 3-12.

The Rebellion: Paul doesn't give any details about this, so either he assumed that the Thessalonians understood what he meant or they will recognize it when they see it.

The Man of Lawlessness, the son of perdition or destruction will be revealed. This is the only place in all of Paul's writing that speaks of the Anti-Christ. He gives us some really important details and with some of Revelation 13 and a little bit from Daniel 7 we start to get a picture of what the Anti-Christ will be and the kinds of things he will do. I've tried to summarize the key details for us this morning.

1. The Anti-Christ will come by the power of Satan. Take a look at Revelation 13: 1-10 with me. The Beast is the Anti-Christ, he is the primary agent of Satan, and empowered and supported by Satan himself. That's a real bummer.

2. The Anti-Christ will take his seat in the Temple. I think it was Doug who talked about this recently, there were no seats in the Temple, there was nowhere for the priests to sit who were serving in the temple. The only seat was the mercy seat, the part of the Ark of the Covenant where the presence of God would dwell. That's the only seat, no one else sits. So for Pual to say that the Lawless one sits in the Temple means he is usurping God's place.

3. The Anti-Christ will claim to be God. Now I get it, as Christians, this is the most offensive thing. For a human to claim to be God. But people do it all the time, even now certain world leaders, heads of state, claim to be god and expect to be worshiped. Jesus was persecuted by the Jewish religious leaders because he claimed to be the Son of God, they put him to death. Now he rose from the grave and proved that he was indeed the Son of God, but they didn't believe him when the hung him on the cross.

4. The Anti-Christ will be supported by miraculous signs and wonders and by false prophets. Jesus warned us of this in Matthew 24:24. We also just read in Revelation 13 that the Beast would suffer a mortal wound and yet recover lending to his credibility as a divine being.

5. The whole world will worship the Anti-Christ, except for the true Christians whose names are written in the book of life.

6. The Anti-Christ will have authority over the whole earth, including the Saints for 42 months (3.5 years).

7. The Anti-Christ will force everyone to take the mark of the beast on their forehead of back of the hand to purchase things or be part of the economy.

There are a few other bits and details but these are the big ones. As you can imagine there are a lot of people who have speculated about who the Anti-Christ might be. You might be thinking of some names right now. History is full of speculation including various Roman emperors, medieval kings, medieval popes, the Catholic church, of course Hitler and other despots throughout history. There are lots of great options. But it's just speculation and not a very helpful exercise. We will know when the Anti-Christ is revealed because he will do all of the things we just listed and most of the world will be deceived, but not us.

There are just a couple of other details that Paul covers in these verses. Thes are important for context.

8. The Anti-Christ is being restrained. Verse 7 is one of the most awkward and difficult in all of Paul's writings. Now one can make sense of it. Even Augustin, one of the greatest thinkers in Christianity, read this vers and said, "I don't know what he means." All we can guess is that some power is restraining the coming of the Anti-Christ.

9. The Anti-Christ will be revealed at the proper time. This means that ultimately God is in control and the Lawless one is only revealed and given power because God says so.

10. Those who are deceived will be deceived because they refuse to love the truth. If you love the Lord and love the truth you don't need to worry about being deceived by the Anti-Christ. Remember, the best way to spot a counterfeit is to be intimately familiar with the authentic.

11. When Jesus returns, the True Christ, he will destroy the Anti-Christ with the power of his breath. (Revelation 19:11-16)

Now why did I spend all that time unpacking the Anti-Christ? Because Paul warns us not to be deceived. And because people on the internet will say anything. People will say anything and claim to be filled with the Sprit and prophetic and hear from God and say all kinds of crazy things. So, we need to be careful who we listen to and what we believe, and the best way to do that is to study our Bibles and get to know the voice of Jesus and only listen to him, and confirm what he speaks to us with the scriptures.

How will we know that Jesus is coming soon? There will be a great rebellion against God and his people, and it will be led by the Anti-Christ and will reach across the whole world. So don't be deceived.

This brings us to Chapter 3, and Paul explains how we are to live while we wait for Jesus' return. Let's read 3:6-12.

First of all we are to work hard and live healthy productive lives. Paul gave similar advice in his first letter. 1 Thes 4:11-12. *"Live quietly, mind your own affairs, work with your hands, so you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one."* Our work ethic should reflect our Christian values. How hard we work, how we treat our boss, our coworkers, our customers, all should demonstrate our Christ centered values. Believe me, people are paying attention to how we live and how we treat others, especially if they know we are Christians.

Paul used his own work ethic as an example. When he came to Thessalonica, he set up shop making tents and worked hard to earn a living and pay for his own needs so that he wasn't a burden to anyone. He even goes so far as to say, if someone is unwilling to work, they don't get to eat.

Now, I look around this room, and I see a bunch of hardworking people, hardworking families, and people who worked hard for long careers and planed carefully for retirement. I know that I am preaching to the choir. I also know that we have a young generation of people who are very frustrated with the job market and disillusioned with the "American Dream" and are wondering what the point is of working hard when it feels like they are never going to be able to afford life or buy a house. Today Paul reminds us that we work hard to provide for ourselves so that we don't become a burden on others, and because it is good to provide for ourselves and our families and to be generous. Not so we can get more and have more and keep more for ourselves.

Secondly Paul warns his readers to "avoid idleness and anyone walking in idleness." Verse 11 says: "*Some among you walk in idleness, not busy with work but busybodies.*" What an interesting verse. Evidently there were some in the church who had nothing better to do than to cause trouble for others. Now this may have been a reaction to the news that Jesus had come and they missed it. Maybe these busybodies had just given up on life and were trying to convince others to do the same. Maybe they were employed by one of the wealthy households to be rabble rousers and

cause mischief in town for their employers enemies. We don't know the reason. But we see Paul's response. This is not the way we are to live.

Do any of you have that co-worker who never seems to have enough work to do, so they talk all the time and stir up gossip and make it harder for everyone else to get their work done. Know anyone like that? Paul says, don't be that person. Avoid idleness and even avoid anyone who claims to follow Jesus but walks in idleness, it's their lifestyle.

Now to be clear, being unemployed and doing everything you can to find a job is not the same as idleness. Needing some assistance because you lost your job and your are struggling to make ends meet is not the same as idleness. Having a disability that keeps you from working is not the same as idleness. I don't want anyone to think they shouldn't come to the church and ask for help when they are struggling because they will be judged as a busybody. That's not what Pual is talking about. He is addressing people who have made it a lifestyle to take advantage of the church and the generosity of others. Does that make sense?

One other point of clarity. If you are a stay-at-home mom or stay-at-home dad, caring for your family and running your household, also not the same as idleness. In fact you are probably working harder than your spouse who goes to work every day. And when the kids grow up you have the time and space and opportunity to volunteer and serve and give in amazing ways that support the church and community. That is not the same as a lifestyle of idleness.

We occasionally get people that come into the office asking for assistance. When we ask a few questions about their circumstances we get a list of excuses why they don't have a job, why they can't manage their finances, why they are in a tight spot. It becomes pretty clear that this is a lifestyle. And it makes it very hard for us to help them. On the other hand we regularly have people come in that are literally doing everything they can possibly to do make it, and because of difficult life

circumstances they have fallen behind and need some help. It is so exciting to come along side them and help them in those seasons of life.

There is no place in our lives as Christ followers, as born again believers, to be lazy or to take advantage of others or to cause trouble for others. That is not the life God has called us to. Amen?

Paul's last instruction in this letter, is an encouragement to all of us. Do not grow weary in doing good. I sometimes ask the question, what difference does it make anyway? The world is full of struggling, suffering, people. Everyone around us seems to be trying to cheat at something. Wars continue to rage across the world, Europe is on fire from angry mobs of protesters, it seems like things are getting worse, not better. Even Paul said its going to get really bad before Jesus returns. So what's the point of trying to make things better, what's the point of doing good. Why should we keep trying?

Jesus answered that question in Matthew 5:14-16 "*You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.".*

Ephesians 2:10 "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*"

Part of our very identity as image bearers of God is to do the good works that he created us to do. And through those works, to point people towards a Father in heaven who loves them. This is why Paul is so serious about a lifestyle of idleness and stirring up trouble for others. It is contradictory to our nature as children of God.

Again, I know I'm preaching to the choir. You are an amazing church full of hardworking people who love to serve and care for others and do the good things set before you. Let's not grow weary in doing what is good. We are in this together. Amen? Amen.

These two subjects this morning "Don't be deceived about the coming of the Lord and don't be idle or associate with idle people." They seem completely separate form each other but they aren't. Let me tell you a story about how these fit together and how things can quickly go wrong.

In 1831, during a time known as the second great awakening, a time of spiritual revival in the United States, a Baptist preacher named William Miller predicted the return of Jesus would happen in 1843 or 1844. He had spent years studying Daniel and Revelation and calculating the 70 weeks and the span of the genealogies and he did all the math and decided that Jesus was coming soon. He spent over a decade traveling and preaching across the country and gathered a huge following. Thousands of people joined the movement and they called themselves the Millerites. Miller further refined his prediction down to a window of time between March 21 and October 22 of 1844. His followers began to prepare for the Lords return.

Many of them, full of zeal, gave away their belongings to their neighbors. They gave away their money and gold. They quit their jobs. Farmers chose not to plant crops in their fields or store up the harvest. Why would they need to store grain if Jesus was going to rapture them? They even used their free time to try and convince others that Jesus was coming soon. There are reports of families waiting on their rooftops or climbing the nearest hill and staying up all night on October 22nd to be closer to Jesus when he came. This event became known as the Great Disappointment. Millerites were ruthlessly mocked for their beliefs when Jesus didn't come. Miller himself went into hiding, emerging a few months later with a revised date, but still Jesus didn't come. His followers

splintered into various groups, the largest of them later becoming the Seventh Day Adventist denomination.

Paul gives us to important instructions: Do not be deceived about the returning of our Lord. And do not become idle while we wait for his return.

A few questions to wrestle with this week.

1. Do you know Jesus so well that you could spot a counterfeit?
2. Are you listening to God through his word and prayer or are you listening to what others are saying about God and his word?
3. What is the good work that God has called you to in this season?

Let's be ready while we wait for Jesus to return.

Let's pray.