Well, good evening. It's good to be gathered together to hear from our great God this evening as we continue our worship service through the preaching of the word. If y'all have your Bibles, I would encourage you to turn to 1 Thessalonians 5. Tonight we're going to be looking at verses 1 through 11. Again, that is 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 1 through 11. I'd left my sermon outline up here, and it is not here.

Okay, here we go. Oh, there we go. There we go. Thank you. It's all good. It's all good. Well, you know, people, once I get going, I usually don't even, like, I don't look down at that much, so I'd probably be okay, but I like my safety blanket. This is helpful.

All right, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, beginning at verse 1. In our sort of big picture outline, we've been talking about our last couple of headings, exhortation and consolation. In this section in chapter five, the two begin to start to blend together.

Because in reality, consolation, Paul's consolation he's offering, is really sort of in the form of exhortation. He's been telling them, hey, I don't want you to be uninformed. I want you to be able to comfort one another. So his consolation is really motivated by, his exhortation is really motivated by this consolation. He wants them to be able to comfort one another.

Now he is moving from comforting one another in regards to those believers who have passed away to now speaking to believers who are alive. If the hope for those who have fallen asleep is so great, then what is the duty of those who are not yet asleep? What should we be doing as Christians now? So be on lookout for that as we look at this text, especially that last verse, comfort and build one another up with these words.

Before we read this text, let's ask God's help in prayer. Our Father and our God, as we open up this text, we pray that you would open our eyes and open our ears, that we might behold wonderful things in your law. In Jesus' name, amen. 1 Thessalonians chapter five, beginning at verse one.

Now concerning the times and seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, there is peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a woman who is pregnant, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief, For you are all children of light, children of the day.

We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love. and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with him. Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. This is the word of the Lord, and may he add his blessing to it.

Doomsday prophets are nothing new. They've been a feature throughout Christian history. Ever since the New Testament, from the early days of the church, there were plenty of people who thought they knew exactly when Jesus was going to come. And it motivated a lot of very important historical events. A lot of the Crusaders went on the Crusades because they thought that Christ must be just around the corner because they'd seen some signs in the heavens. There were other times where great revivals were spurred on, in part because people thought that Christ's coming was right around the corner. You can read about that when you read about the 1800s.

But what's new now is social media. Doomsday prophets have now hit social media. If you didn't hear, last year around this time, there was a one particular doomsday prophet went mega viral all over the world. His videos were spreading abroad. He knew, he knew for a fact from a vision from God that Jesus would be coming in October of 2025. And then in October came and went. And he said, well, you know, I re-crunched the numbers and it's November of 2025.

You know, we laugh at this. It's funny enough, he's back again this year. And he says, I got it this time, guys. Like, we laugh. But, you know, there are some who will say, don't laugh. I mean, at least they're watching for Christ. At least people like that are looking for him. They're obeying the text of scripture to watch for Christ. Or are they? Is that what Jesus and what the apostles meant by watching for Jesus coming? How do we watch for Jesus coming? That's the question I wanna wrestle with tonight. How do we watch for Jesus coming? And we're looking at that under three major headings.

And I wanna warn you ahead of time, the first heading's gonna be a little bit longer than the other two, so if you're looking at the clock and you're like, oh, he just finished point one, And there's a couple more left. Don't worry. I promise the first one's a little longer. You will be okay. But three major headings. The first is, we are to watch for him eagerly. We are to watch for him eagerly. Look with me at verse one of chapter five. Now concerning times and seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

Now, this phrase, times and seasons, is a phrase that the New Testament often uses to speak about Jesus coming. It's what we call a hendieties, if you want to get all technical about it. Basically, it means a two-for-one. Times and seasons is referring to a particular time in a particular season, that is, the time of Christ's coming. And his point is, you have no need for us to write to you about the particular time of Christ's coming. Why is that? Well, he goes on to explain in verse two.

For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. This is a reference, remember Paul in the previous section has said he speaks according to a word from the Lord, and we said that Paul was likely referencing Jesus out of the discourse. And one particular parable that Jesus talks about, in Matthew 23, in Matthew 23, which is in close proximity to that, actually directly uses this metaphor of a thief in the night. Jesus tells the parable about how someone in a house, if he knew a thief was going to come at night, he knew what time the thief was going to come, especially, then he wouldn't be surprised when he showed up.

He would be able to borrow his house, be able to protect himself. In the same way, he said, that's how I'm going to come. I'm going to come And it's going to surprise you. The Son of Man will come at a time you do not expect. Therefore, watch. Therefore, watch. He will come at a time that you do not expect.

Friends, we do not know the time that Jesus is going to come. We just don't. And Jesus has made it abundantly clear that we will not know the time he's going to come. Now there are passages that speak of how we won't know the time or the day or the hour, but we will know the season. I used to think when I was little, I was like, does that mean that we're gonna know it's gonna happen in the fall or in the spring? Yeah, kids are cool. But yeah, but that's not what Jesus means. The season there is what era, what era of time.

And what era of time is Jesus going to come? He's going to come in the last days. And when are the last days according to the apostles? Well, we just read in 1 Peter, as Mack was walking us through, brothers, it is the last day. We are in the last days. The last days, the last era before the final era, before Jesus comes.

That's the point. And so we know Jesus is going to come in this era. We're not looking for another era. Like there's gonna be another era after this one, another prophet's going to come, another major spout of revelation before Jesus comes. No, he's gonna come in this era, so it could be any day now.

That's the point of what Jesus is saying. And because we don't know the time of Jesus coming, that is why we wait eagerly. Remember what Jesus says in the parable in Matthew 23, 44. He says, you do not therefore watch because you do not know the hour. He will come at an hour you do not expect. Jesus actually treats this as a reason to be eager.

We can get up every morning and think, I wonder if it's gonna be today. I wonder if I'll even get a chance to brush my teeth. I wonder if I'll be tucking my kids into bed tonight or whether we'll all be in glory. I don't know. And there's a wonder to that. There's an eagerness to that that we ought to cultivate. So we're to wait eagerly because Jesus coming is mysterious to us all. But we're also to wait eagerly because it is the end for this world. Jesus coming is the end for this world. Look with me again at verse two. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

While people are saying there is peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman and they will not escape. This reference to peace and security has two possible reference, two possible things Paul might be referring to.

On the one hand, he might be pointing back to the Old Testament, to the time of the prophets, particularly to the prophet Jeremiah. On one of the most famous passages in Jeremiah, the false prophets in Jerusalem, as God has now promised through Jeremiah, he's going to bring destruction on Jerusalem because of their sin.

The false prophets instead say, no, Jeremiah, that's not going to happen. God would never do that. Peace, peace. And Jeremiah says, but there is no peace. And this kind of mentality represents the kind of person who says, well, I don't believe in a God who would come to bring judgment. I mean, judgment, that's a sin. Jesus said, thou shalt not judge or something like that, I think. Therefore, God would never come to judge the earth. No, no, no. There's no second coming or anything. It's going to be fine.

It's the sort of laxity that treats God's mercy as license, not knowing that God's kindness, in the words of the Apostle Paul, is meant to lead you to repentance. They're the kind of people that Peter writes about in his second epistle. who say, where is the promise of his coming since the fathers fell asleep? Everything has continued as it has for the foundation of the world. And they forget. They forget that Jesus will come.

So that's one possible referent. We can learn something from that. An additional referent is probably the Roman Empire itself. One of the common things the emperors would promise to their people, things they'd put on their currency, things they'd put on their inscriptions, is how the Roman Empire gives peace and security. We think of the Pax Romana, the Roman peace, where if you were in the Roman Empire, you were protected from the chaos of the barbarians. You had security because Rome was powerful. And this particular referent would probably have meant a lot to the Thessalonians. After all, as we saw in our very first message, the Thessalonians benefited a lot from the peace and security the Roman Empire offered.

They were a trade city. More than that, they were a free city, a city that experienced a lot of rights compared to other cities within the Roman Empire. They were the good boys. They loved the Roman Empire. And they loved the peace and security the Roman Empire afforded them. But what Paul is saying here is, well, everyone is bragging about the peace and security that empires like Rome offer.

Sudden destruction's gonna come upon them, and they will not escape. This could be compared to many today. Those who trust in this world and the securities this world offers as though that's going to protect them in the long run. Those who might trust in their riches, like the rich farmer that Jesus tells that parable about.

The one who had a bumper crop, who suddenly realized that there was so much wheat he couldn't store it in his barn. So he decided, well, I'll build bigger barns, and I'll put that grain in there, I'll get my retirement sorted out, and it's gonna be great. He went to bed that night, And God said, you fool, this very night, your soul will be required of you. Then who will own all that you have laid aside?

Is that any of us? Trusting in your 401ks, in your Roth IRAs, and the interest that's building up as though that is ultimately what's going to give you security. You can't take it with you. There is no carry on or personal item on the plane to heaven.

There are others who might trust in their governments. This is very palpable right now as we're on the verge of midterm elections. And many hang their peace and security, their idea of how they're going to find their peace on the results of elections like this one. As long as we get the right people in government, as long as the United States stays strong, as long as we can beat down Iran, then we'll be okay. Then we'll have peace and security. But that's ultimately where we find security.

And all of those bits of security will fall apart at the day of Christ's coming. They'll be worthless then. They're part of this age, not of the age to come. Doesn't mean that they're of no value whatsoever. but they're of no ultimate value. Peace and security.

But we can take, but this actually motivates us to be eager for Christ's coming, why? Because while we might trust in some of these things for security, you know who else trusts in them? The wicked. How many evil, corrupt people are able to game the system and protect themselves from justice by using government and by using riches. A lot. I don't know what's on the Epstein files, but I'm sure there are many people on there that would surprise us. The sorts of people that seem untouchable, that operate above the law, but they won't operate above the law on that day. And that day, every bit of peace and security, everything they hid behind, every power, every bit, every dollar that they used to keep themselves insulated, will be stripped away. And they will stand naked before God's throne of judgment.

And ultimately, that's good news. Because God's justice is good. It is righteous. So we await this day eagerly because it is the end for the world, and that end's going to come quickly. Paul uses the metaphor here of a pregnant woman, one whose labor comes upon her unexpectedly, and suddenly she's powerless. That's what it'll be like. And so we wait this day eagerly because it's mysterious to us all, because it's the end for the world. but also because it is the beginning for us. It is the beginning for us. Look with me at verse four. But you are not in darkness, brothers, that that day should surprise you like a What's Paul mean by this? Well, he means that we're not like the world.

What is the thing that most terrifies us of the thought that someone is in our house in the middle of the night? Someone's banging around in our kitchen. What's the biggest deal? We think, who are they? What do they want? Am I safe? Are my kids safe? That's what's disturbing about a thief in the night, right? But Jesus' coming won't surprise us like a thief in the night.

Why? Because we know who he is. We know why he's come. And his coming is good news for us. His coming is not a threat like a thief. Yes, we won't know when it happens, but when it happens, we will know what is happening. We can await this eagerly because it is our beginning. Now, Paul uses a couple of metaphors here to describe describe our relationship to this coming Lord.

Look what he says in verse five. The first metaphor he gives is of light. He says, for you are all children of light. You are children of light, not darkness. We saw this kind of language in Colossians. We talked about being transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. And there we talked about how darkness is associated in the New Testament with confusion.

How the world is confused. They don't understand themselves. They don't understand their problem. They don't understand who God is. And they don't understand about, they don't understand salvation. They understand Jesus. It's a place of confusion, of moral confusion as well, of wickedness. It's also a place of concealment. John talks about in John 1. that men love darkness rather than the light. Why? Because their deeds were evil. Whoever is of the light comes to the light in order that his righteousness might be shown. That is the kingdom of darkness. But that is not who we are. We are not in the kingdom of darkness. We are in the kingdom of light. We live with the light of the world.

Thus we live in His righteousness. We're united to Him. Everything that is His is ours. We're righteous in His sight. Therefore, we have no shame. We lay it all before Him. We are like the tax gatherer in Matthew who stands before God and says, God, be merciful to me, the sinner, who came to the light in order that his deeds might be exposed because he knew that God would forgive him. That is who we are. We live in the kingdom of light. Therefore, when Christ comes in judgment, when he comes to judge the living and the dead, we can be confident because we know our verdict. The verdict will be righteous in Christ. So we're in this kingdom of light.

The other metaphor he uses, which I think is more unique to this passage, you are children of light, children of the day. children of the day in contrast to children of the night. Now, at first glance, you might think, well, these are sort of synonymous. Well, not quite. To talk about light, let's talk about a state. To talk about days, talk about time. Day and night are temporal distinctions.

What Paul is talking about here is the two eras, the two ages, how there is this present age. He talks about this all the time in his epistles. The present age, the age that this world exists in, the age before Christ come, the age of this world, the age of the old creation that's doomed because of sin, that's doomed to pass away. The age that is in rebellion against God, the age that is in Adam. What Paul is saying is that you Christians, You Thessalonians, you members of Second Presbyterian Church who are in Christ, you are not of this age. You are of the age to come.

You are of the day, not of the night. We are living in the twilight now, in the time just before the dawn. But when that day dawns, it is our day. It is the day that we belong to. We will more belong to that day than we belong to this night. Because that is who we are. We have been grafted into Christ. We've been made members of that day. We are made members of the Savior who is coming on that day. We are part of his kingdom, not a part of this one. Therefore, when the day of the Lord comes, when Jesus Christ comes again, we shouldn't think about it as the end of the world. It's the end of this world, but it's really the true beginning for us.

I think of C.S. Lewis in The Last Battle, the final chapter, where the children and all the people of Narnia, after the end of the world in Narnia, come to be with Aslan. And C.S. Lewis writes, and as far as what adventures they have, They were far greater than the adventures I've written about thus far. These adventures were, the adventures I've written in these last seven books are really just the foreword, the title page. Now they begin chapter one.

That's how we should look into Christ's coming. That's why we await it eagerly. So we await Christ's coming eagerly. We watch for it eagerly. But we also watch for Christ's coming Obediently, obediently, look at verse six. So then, let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. So what must we do according to this passage? We must keep awake and we must keep sober. Now Paul is not speaking here in physical terms. I don't know about you, but since I was feeling under the weather this weekend, I definitely got more sleep than I usually do. I let myself sort of sleep in, slept all the way till eight one morning. It was great. It was amazing.

But yeah, Paul is not arguing that Thessalonians need to be chronic insomniacs. Rather, what he's saying is that we need to be spiritually awake, and thus we need to be spiritually sober. Now, what does it mean to be spiritually awake and to be spiritually sober?

Well, let's think through the metaphor. To be asleep is to be insensible. To asleep is to be at rest. To be insensible to what's going on around us, to not be at work. And that is what Paul was saying. He said, now is not the time. to be at rest. You are not children of the night. It makes total sense for the world to be at rest. They don't know about Christ coming. They're in darkness. They're of the night. You're of the day.

You should be at work. You should be active. You should be active in your spiritual life. You should be thinking about spiritual things. Don't just consider the physical world. Think about your soul. That's what he's saying. And the same goes for a second metaphor, spiritually sober. What does it mean to be drunk? It means to make yourself insensible physically. So to be spiritually drunk is to make yourself insensible spiritually, to distract yourself, to never think about spiritual things because you're too busy entertaining yourself. You're too busy filling your time with your Instagram reel, or your Snapchat reel, or whatever reel you might be watching. With the news. With your Facebook page. With TV.

Not that any of those things are wrong in and of themselves, but when they so crowd in that they make you insensible to spiritual things, when they distract you from the important things, you're making yourself spiritually drunk. Now, why is it so important? Why is it so important that we keep spiritually awake and spiritually sober? Well, we don't have to wait long, Paul tells us in verse, Verse 7, for those who sleep, sleep at night. Those who get drunk, get drunk at night. Verse 8, but since we belong to the day, let us be sober.

Paul's point is, it makes total sense for the world, for those who belong to the night to be asleep, they're dead. Spiritually, they're dead. Of course they're insensible. Of course they don't think about their souls. Of course they don't think about spiritual things. That's for them.

But for you who've been made alive in Christ, you who know the thief, who know Jesus is at the door, could come any time. Does it make sense for you to be asleep? Does it make sense for the servant, the slave, who knows his master could come any minute to fall asleep, to get drunk? No. It doesn't make sense at all. It's not who you are, you are of the day.

So this is why we must do this. But how can we do this? How can we keep spiritually awake and spiritually sober? How does this actually happen? Well, look at verse eight again. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. So how do we keep spiritually awake and spiritually sober?

Well, we put on the three cardinal Christian virtues. These keep coming up in 1 Thessalonians, faith, hope, and love. Now, since we've covered these before, I won't digress too much on them. But just as a review, remember, faith is primarily about our relation to God. Our relation to God is defined by faith, trusting in him, living out our faith in him. It covers the first four commandments, You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make thyself a graven image. You shall take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, keep it holy. Love. Love is a reference to brotherly love. Love for one another. Love thy neighbor as thyself.

How do we do that? The other six commandments. And then hope. Hope is that forward looking. Christian heart that longs for Christ's coming, that lives in light of Christ's coming. Faith, hope, and love. But notice how Paul

characterizes this faith, hope, and love. He says, you should put on, you should put on, in verse 8, the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. This should sound oddly familiar, not just because it shows up with more armor pieces in Ephesians, but Paul is likely making reference to a passage in Isaiah. It's one of my favorite passages.

In it, God is looking down on the sons of men, and he sees that there is no one righteous, there is no one to save. The very people that he has redeemed, the very people he's called his own, They're in sin, they're in wickedness. And there's no one who can bring salvation. And then it says, then his own arm brought salvation to him and his righteousness upheld him.

He put on righteousness like a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head. So this armor that we're to put on, it's not our armor. It's not something we muster up. We put on the armor of Jesus Christ. Isaiah 59 is a description of Jesus coming to save his people from their sin. He puts on that armor to go to the cross of Calvary. And we are to put on that same armor as we await his coming.

What we're really doing is we're putting on Christ. We're putting on Jesus. To put on Christian virtue is not to put on some abstract principles, it's to put on Jesus. Paul says as much in Romans, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. In Galatians, whoever who has been baptized in Christ has clothed yourselves with Christ. That is what we do. What does it mean to put on Christ?

Let's put legs on that just a moment. Well, it means to trust in his power, to trust in his Holy Spirit, to not try to do it by your own merits, by your own strength, to trust in Jesus, to do it by the means he's given, by his word, by his sacraments, by prayer. That's where we find our power. We find our power in Jesus. And it means to live with him as our example. Yes, Jesus is more than an example, but he is certainly no less. To live for Jesus is to live like Jesus.

So we're to put on Jesus, we are to await Christ's coming. How are we to watch for Christ's coming? We're to watch for Christ's coming obediently, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. Third and finally, we are to watch for Jesus' coming confidently. confidently. Look with me at verse nine. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with him. How can we await Jesus coming confidently? Well, because we're predestined. Because of where God has destined us for, why is Jesus coming in the first place?

He's coming, yes, to judge the world, but he's also coming to get his bride, the bride promised to him before the foundation of the world, the bride that he shed his blood to save. That's the significance of verse 10. Who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might be with him. That's why Jesus came the first time, and it's why he's coming the second time, to bring his bride.

His coming is good news and we can come confidently. We will not share in the wrath of that day. That wrath, yes, will come justly on this age, the age of night, because it is in rebellion against God, because like Adam, in Adam, it continues to rebel against God. It continues to hate God. to serve idols. And that's where we were. At one time, were we not? At one time, we were a part of that age, the age of night, the age of darkness. We were serving ourselves. We were, in the words of Ephesians 2, children of wrath, just like the rest of mankind.

But God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ. In the words of Colossians, he took us out of the kingdom of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son. And all of that was by the predetermined plan of God. It's a plan that's been in place before the foundation of the world. before any of us drew breath, before God said, let there be light, that plan was in place. So we do not need to fear that day, that we can approach it confidently.

We are bought. That final verdict of righteous has been given to us now, and the final wrath That last day wrath that is coming upon this world was transferred to Calvary. So we've seen as we approach this great day, as we watch for Christ's coming, how do we do it? Well, we do it eagerly. We don't know the day or the hour when he will come.

We know it's the end of this world, but it's the beginning for us. We do so obediently, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, making no provision for the flesh. We live sober and awake spiritually. And we approach it confidently, knowing that we're covered in the righteousness of Christ. One final point before we close this evening. Look again at verse 10, second part of verse 10. Who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might be with him.

What's interesting is that the word asleep there that Paul uses is not the same word he used earlier to talk about those who sleep in death. He's using the same word he used to speak of those who are asleep in terms of being spiritually asleep. Now obviously, Paul does not mean that regardless of your spiritual state of Christ's coming, you're gonna be with him. We're not universalists. That would go against everything Paul just said. Rather, what he means, I think he's getting at the kind of phrase that we hear from workaholics, I'll sleep when I'm dead.

In other words, while now is not the time for the Christian to be asleep spiritually, to be at rest, to be not at work, there will come a day if the Lord tarries when that will be true. Those who have gone on to be with Jesus before he comes, they are at rest.

They await Christ's coming just like we do, but they don't await in activity. They don't await in the struggle. They don't await sober and awake. They await asleep. They await at rest with Jesus. So brother and sister in Christ, stay awake. Now, as long as you draw breath, as long as you are on this earth, God still has work for you to do. Don't fall asleep on the job. Let's pray.

Our Father and our God, as we await your coming, our hearts yearn for it. We, like many Christians before us, wonder Will we see it? Will we be alive when you come? And we hope we will be. But we know we will see it. We know that we will be there. Father, help us to live in that anticipation. To live even this week in anticipation of your coming. putting on the Lord Jesus Christ in his name. Amen.