

**#FixThis**  
***The Final Fix***  
**January 24, 2016**

**PRELUDE – Your Grace Is Enough**

**Your Grace Is Enough / Good, Good  
Father**

**Announcements – Video**

**Feature – Time (Hootie) / Offering**

I think that's a really good way to start this third message in our series *#FixThis* ... which, as you know if you've been here the past two Sundays, literally came from the front page of a newspaper. Following the terrorist attack and massacre in San Bernardino last month ...

**... the cover of the New York Daily News proclaimed “God Isn’t Fixing This.”**

... which was meant (according to the editor) to be a criticism of politicians who (in their opinion) were choosing the meaningless platitude of offering prayers over the more effective strategy (in their opinion) of legislating better gun control laws.

But, as I said in the first week of this series, as important as the debate might be over how gun control and Second Amendment ought to work together, that’s not what got my attention.

Instead, I felt like the declaration that “God Isn’t Fixing This” was, on its own merits, a statement worthy of consideration

especially for those who are Christians (and those who are thinking about becoming Christians) because, after all, our fundamental message to the world isn't "try to be good and try to be nice to everyone." Our fundamental message is that *God is in the fixing business.*

*God is in the fixing business.* That's the Gospel – the good news – of Jesus that his followers have been proclaiming for the past 2,000 years. God is in the business of *redemption*; of taking what has been damaged and destroyed by the curse of sin (a curse under which all of us are victimized but also a curse which we ourselves propagate) ... God is in the business of taking what has been damaged and destroyed by sin and setting it right; making it whole. *Our God is a fixer.*

And that means, obviously, we have some questions to answer as believers – especially in light of events like those in San Bernardino and, more recently, Jakarta, Istanbul and Cairo.

- First of all, if the coming of Jesus 2,000 years ago was supposed to bring peace on earth and goodwill among humanity, why does that kind of thing keep happening (to say nothing of the incessant tensions between world governments and even the “regular crimes” we see in our own community)?

That’s what we looked at in the first message of this series, *The Christmas Fix*.

- Secondly, what is the relationship between action and prayer? Does prayer actually accomplish anything beyond a pious expression of care and concern?

That's what we talked about last Sunday in *The Prayer Fix* which included a look at one of the most incredible prayer-driven "fixes" to ever happen in human history – the Civil Rights Movement in this country led by Martin Luther King, Jr. who was, as he himself often put it, first and foremost a pastor and a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As always, I want to encourage you: if you missed either of those messages, you can

watch, listen to or read it using our app or our website.

## **Awaiting “the Blessed Hope”**

But we were talking about time and why that classic song was a good way to start.

“Time is punishing,” Darius Rucker sang (back when he was a member of *Hootie and the Blowfish*).

And for those who are waiting for God to fix things in this world permanently ... ultimately ... finally ... time can feel a bit punishing. It’s discouraging to wait while we see so many bad things keep happening even if there are good things coming out of both prayer and human activity.

**As King David of Israel once  
expressed in Psalm 13:**

*O Lord, how long will you forget  
me? Forever?*

*How long will you look the  
other way?*

*How long must I struggle with  
anguish in my soul,*

*with sorrow in my heart every  
day?*

*How long will my enemy have  
the upper hand?*

*Psalm 13: 1-2 (NLT)*

It's discouraging to see the spiritual forces of the Kingdom of Darkness waging war against and, at times, having the upper hand over the Kingdom of God that Jesus inaugurated in his time on this earth.

Remember, as we learned in the first week of this series, that even though Jesus broke the power of the Enemy and his demonic

forces on the cross and in His resurrection, there is still a battle going on in this world with real victories and real losses that affect real people. And this is a battle that will not end until The Day when Christ returns and, in the words of the Apostle Paul, destroys all dominion and authority and power that is current held by the forces of evil and puts all of God's enemies under his feet – including the final enemy of death.<sup>i</sup>

Until then you and I live in a time where the Kingdom of God is present and we can through faith in Jesus be part of it and enjoy its blessings ... but not fully and completely. You and I live in a time of waiting; waiting for what the first Christians called “The Blessed Hope.”



## **That's how Paul described it when he wrote to his protégé Titus:**

*We wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. Titus 2:13-14 (NIV)*

By the way, notice that word again: *redeem*. Jesus gave himself to fix us – and everything else in this creation; a process that has already begun and will be fulfilled when Jesus returns.

And that, friends, is the ultimate end game – the return of Jesus in glory. That is where all of history is going. Over 300 times, the writers of the New Testament speak of the

second coming of Jesus, and this time not as a humble infant but as a king taking his rightful place as ruler and judge.

The Apostle's Creed sums it up neatly when it says that after his resurrection, Jesus "ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead."

## **The Right Question**

Now, since we're waiting ... and since this is part of a Christian response to anyone who thinks "God Isn't Fixing This" ... one of the questions we need to answer is "What exactly are we waiting for?" In other words, "What is the world going to look like after Jesus returns to fix things? What is

the Final Fix?”

But notice, that’s not exactly the question that a lot of Christians (and even non-Christians) tend to focus on when they think about the Second Coming of Christ. That’s because most people believe *they already know* what it is we’re waiting for. It’s pretty simple:

*Jesus is going to come back in the sky one day and take all the true believers on earth up to Heaven with him (to join with all the believers who have died and who are already in Heaven). And that’s where they’ll be for all eternity.*

*Problem solved.*

And since we believe we already know what the Final Fix is, what we focus on instead is

*how history is going to get to that point ...*  
which means that we want to know  
answers to questions like:

- Are we living in the last days right now? Do current events in the Middle East mean something? Is the rise of ISIS a sign?
- And if we are in the last days (and many believe we are), who is the Anti-Christ? Is it the Pope? Is it Barack Obama? Or maybe Donald Trump? Or Vladimir Putin?
- Will “the Rapture” be at the beginning of the tribulation? Or the middle? Or afterwards?
- What about the millennium – the 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation? Is it symbolic or literal? Does Jesus come at the beginning or the end of it?

- Do all dogs really go to Heaven?

Now, the problem with that is ... if you pay any attention at all to Christian literature and art, you know that for almost 2,000 years, very dedicated and intelligent followers of Jesus have attempted to answer these questions – and many others like them.

And they're all over the place in their answers because, quite frankly, a lot of the source material in the Bible that speaks of “The Day” and “The Blessed Hope” is symbolic and difficult to interpret ... a fact which, at one point in his life, led to the great Reformer Martin Luther (the founder of Protestantism, not the Civil Rights leader) ... Martin Luther after studying the book of Revelation threw up his hands and

said “Revelation reveals nothing!” – unless you were living in the time it was written.<sup>ii</sup>

That conclusion is a bit extreme but the frustration is not. Trying to figure out the exact details of how it’s all going to go down is impossible.

And the thing about that which has always puzzled me (and sometimes frustrated me) is that so much energy is spent speculating and debating *those* kinds of questions (which, I guess in and of itself is OK. I mean, there’s nothing wrong with trying to determine the connections between Daniel and Revelation and what Matthew 24-25 records Jesus as saying) ... HOWEVER ... (and this is what’s puzzling and frustrating) ... we focus on *that stuff* while getting the answer to the first question, the most

important question, the question of “what it is we’re waiting for” ... *wrong*.

And what the world hears from us is a confusing debate over *how* it’s going to happen while the vision of *what’s* going to happen is, quite frankly, not all that compelling because it’s wrong. And in a few minutes, I’ll explain why I say that and talk about a more accurate vision of what God’s going to do (the Final Fix, so to speak).

But first, if you really do want to know about the “how and when,” I suggest you begin with Matthew 24 where Jesus talks about it. His disciples ask the question that a lot of us want answered. But when you read Jesus’ answer – and it’s a very long answer – *don’t go beyond what’s plain and clear*.

For instance ...

- Jesus says that the “Abomination of Desolation” that’s prophesied by Daniel will happen before he returns. There are lots of different interpretations of what that means so it’s not clear. I wouldn’t build a whole theology on it.
- But Jesus also says “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” That’s pretty clear.

Oh, and it hasn’t happened yet.

- He also says “Nation will rise against



nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” That’s clear, too.

However, as I mentioned in the first week, in spite of what we see and read in the media, that is happening less today than ever before in human history. Not that it couldn’t change but we’re not there.

- And Jesus says there will be persecution of Christians before he comes. “You will be hated in all nations and handed over to death.” Hard to misunderstand that.

And that *is* clearly happening in the Middle East and in many parts of the Western world *but* in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, just the opposite is

happening. A dramatic acceptance and spread of Christianity is taking place. According to one analyst “during the past 50 years, the critical centers of the Christian world have moved decisively to Africa, to Latin America, and to Asia.”<sup>iii</sup>

In spite of our experience, it’s not all persecution and death for Christians.

Now, I realize what I just said might seem somewhat demotivating: “Gee, Rick, you tell us that part of the fix God has planned for the world is the return of Jesus and then you tell us stuff that makes it seem like it’s probably not going to happen any time soon. Well, thanks a lot. That’s real encouraging.”

And I get that. But remember what we read in the first message?

*A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.*                    2

*Peter 3:8-9 (NLT)*

And that's what's happening right now, on a very small scale in this room as some of you are getting to hear the Gospel of Jesus and respond to it. But it's also happening on a gargantuan scale as *millions* of people in Africa, Latin America and Asia hear about Jesus and receive Jesus. *The Lord is being patient, literally, for the sake of millions at this very moment.*

I don't know about you but I'm OK with that. Yes, I long for the day when Jesus returns but knowing what's at stake for those who haven't heard and will believe, I can be patient.

## **An Accurate Vision**

So, what is an accurate vision of the return of Jesus? What is it that we're waiting for? If it's not God whisking away all true believers to spend eternity in Heaven with him then what is it? What does the Final Fix look like?

Well, there's a whole lot that could be said by way of description (and I will say some of it!) but I think it all comes down to what Jesus taught his followers to pray for

(which we talked about last week).

**“Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.”**

In the final fix, that prayer – a battle prayer which has been prayed by millions for centuries – will at last be answered. God’s Kingdom *will come* on Earth in all of its fullness, meaning that everything that happens on Earth at that point will be completely 100% according to the intentions that God has for his creatures and his creation. (That, by the way, was the original plan before disobedience to God and the curse of sin infected everything).

And in the process of that vision becoming reality, the Bible repeatedly describes two basic things that are going to happen when Jesus comes back. These two things will

lead to God's Kingdom being established on Earth as it is in Heaven. And, again, all of the nitty gritty and the sequencing of details on these things is debatable among Bible scholars, but the reality is not.

For example, one day the disciples were having an intense conversation with Jesus about how hard it is for a person to humble themselves and declare their need for God's grace and mercy so that they can be saved. And they were overwhelmed by the discussion.

So, Peter says to Jesus:

*“We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?”*

In other words, “is it really worth it to

believe in and trust in You as Messiah?”

And Jesus responds by talking about what’s going to happen when He returns ... and he mentions two things.

**The 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew’s gospel tells us that ...**

*Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*

**Furthermore, Jesus continued ...**

*“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as*

*much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.”*

*Matthew 19:27-30 (NIV)*

... which speaks to a broader judgment that will affect everyone.

**So, the two things that will happen are *renewal* (or, in many translations, *regeneration*) and *judgment*.**

And if you can understand these two concepts, you'll have a pretty good grip on what God is planning to do to #FixThis permanently and ultimately.

Now, to most people, the idea of renewal and regeneration sounds really good. Really positive. And judgement, well, we don't like that idea too much because it sounds so ...



judgmental. It seems negative. But in reality, it's actually very positive and quite necessary if there is going to be renewal. It's almost like these are two sides of the same coin.

**Think of it this way: Renewal means “making things new.” Judgment means “making things right.”**

Both are important because one – judgement – looks backwards in history (and deals with that) and one –renewal – looks forward (and deals with that).

## RENEWAL

But let's talk for a bit about renewal first, since that's the easier concept – at least for most of us.

What does it mean for God to “renew all things” as Jesus put it? To understand that, you have to go back to the big story of the Bible which is, in short, that:

- Human beings were created in God’s image to reflect God’s glory by living according to His intentions.
- But collectively and individually we fell short of that intention (which is the literal meaning of the word “sin”) and *everything* got messed up. Sin entered the world and death followed for creation and for us.
- But God so loved the world that he took our sin on himself in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and died on the cross.

- And then, an amazing thing happened. Jesus rose from the dead. God raised him to new life in a new kind of physical body that can never die. This was the initial act in God's renewing and regenerating the cosmos.

**Paul describes it like this:**

*Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

*1 Corinthians 15:20 (NIV)*

**John, in the Revelation writes that ...**

*Jesus Christ ... is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Revelation 1:5 (NIV)*

The idea of firstfruits and firstborn here means that Jesus is the first in a long line of what God is going to do for his creation and for those who love him. The renewal and restoration literally and physically began with the resurrection of Jesus and God will complete it when Jesus returns.

**That's why the Apostle Peter once said:**

*He [Jesus] must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. Acts 3:21 (NIV)*

The question, then, is what will that final renewal look like and for what purpose? The answer is not as complex as you might think.

When I was in high-school, my father started a business rebuilding old pianos. Every couple of months, he would rent a big truck, and I and a few of my friends would spend a whole Saturday driving all over metropolitan Washington, D.C. helping him haul these huge upright pianos back to our garage where he would rebuild them. He'd pay like \$50 for these pieces of junk that were out of tune, with strings broken, keys broken. They looked bad and they smelled worse.

But one by one, he would go over those pianos and he would fix whatever was wrong. Sometimes he'd replace strings, sometimes he would put in a whole new set of strings better than they had back in the day it was built. Sometimes he would have to put the pins in. Sometimes he would

actually have to rebuild the soundboard. But when he got all the inside right, he would strip off all the old finish and repair the woodwork and then he'd re-stain and varnish it.

And when he was done the result was incredible. It was like a brand new piano. But, of course, *it wasn't*. It was still that crummy old piano we hauled into the garage weeks before, but renewed and regenerated – made even better than at was in the beginning.

And, all that work he did didn't change the purpose of the piano. We didn't try to cook with it. We didn't wash clothes in it. We didn't burn it to heat the house. That renewed and regenerated piano did what a piano was meant to do in the mind of

whoever invented pianos, but better than ever. It made beautiful music that would fill our house (as long as my mom was the one who played it!)

That's what's going to happen to our world, friends. This is where it's all going. This broken-down, out-of-tune, bad-smelling creation and creatures are going to be renewed and regenerated so that it can be what the creation was meant to be in the mind of the Creator.

*And I mean that quite literally.* Those who have chosen to believe in Christ and receive his salvation are going to be physically renewed and regenerated so that we can be and do what those created to reflect the glory of God were originally intended to be and do.

## **John writes ...**

*We are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him ... 1 John 3:1*

i.e., what happened to him in the resurrection is going to happen to us, too.

So ...

*Let me reveal to you a wonderful secret [Paul writes] ... we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown.*

*For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we*



*who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.*

Just like what happened to Jesus.

*Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 (NLT)*

And this renewal and the end of death goes beyond what happens to humans.

**On that day, Peter says:**

*... God will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with [God's] promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 2 Peter 3:12-13 (NIV)*

And the author of Hebrews adds ...

*We are looking for the city that we will have in the future.  
Hebrews 13:14 (GW)*

And all of these – the heavens, the earth and the city – are what John writes about in the Revelation:

*I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven*

*and earth had disappeared, and the sea was gone. Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, dressed like a bride ready for her husband.*

*I heard a loud voice from the throne say, “God lives with humans! God will make his home with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There won't be any more death. There won't be any grief, crying, or pain, because the first things have disappeared.”*

*The one sitting on the throne said, “I am making everything new.”*                      *Revelation 21:1-5 (GW)*

Wow!

I think from all of that we can say (as one author puts it) that ...

“The end of all things is not the emigration of the righteous to heaven but the reintegration of heaven and earth, when God will remake the world and ‘raise all his people to new bodily life in it’.”

And I think the implications of that are staggering.

- What we experience in that day will not be totally dissimilar to what we experience in this one.
- We’re going to be the same people as we are now but with bodies that don’t

wear out and die

- We're going to be given responsibility to co-create with God (just as we are now) but ...
- Evil and the curse of sin will be gone.
- God's presence will be visible in some way.

I could preach a whole sermon on this! (and I have in the past!)

But I can't today in the interest of time, so let's talk quickly about the other side of the coin: *judgment*.

## JUDGEMENT

Remember that judgment means "making things right." It means carrying out justice. And justice can happen in a lot of ways.

Making things right can mean a lot of different things.

For one thing, it means Jesus being given the throne over his creation as is his Divine right. Judgement day will bring that about. And this is a good thing.

Justice also means being rewarded for the things we have done to advance God's Kingdom – serving, giving, and sacrificing – like Jesus was talking about to Peter. And on Judgment Day, that's going to happen. Over and over again, Jesus promised his followers it would. And so judgement is good because it makes that right.

And justice also means avenging once and for all every terrible, cold-hearted, mean-spirited deed that has injured God's

creation and God's creatures.

And this is what we long for isn't it when we see stories of what ISIS is doing to women and children? When we see governments abusing their power? When we see the strong taking advantage of the weak? And the list could go on.

Every single one of us longs for the day when the things that are just not right in this world are declared wrong and judged and then set right.

And on Judgement Day, that's going to happen. Every wicked evil deed will be exposed and dealt with. And that's good. We don't want to live in a world without that kind of judgement because that means there is no justice. And that means nothing

in this life matters. At all.

And so Judgement Day – even the judgement that punishes sinners for their evil deeds is a good and glorious thing. It deals with the past so that the future can be all that God intends for it to be.

However, because God's judgement and justice at the return of Jesus is going to deal with all sinfulness and all sinners, that means that you and I have a problem with only one solution. And that's to receive the forgiveness and grace and mercy God offers to us in Jesus; to trust in Him and not our own attempts to be righteous.

And this is not a trivial matter for as the scripture says:



*When the Lord Jesus appears from heaven. He will come with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power.*

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9  
(NLT)

And in our tolerance obsessed world that seems so harsh. But it is just. It is right. After all, why would God force any person who doesn't want to receive Jesus to be with Him for all of eternity? And so, even in this extreme application of justice, judgement is good. It is righteous.

And I know at this point some will say,

“what about those who have never heard of Jesus? Are they judged this harshly?”

Honestly, I'm not sure about how that is going to work but I am sure that whatever God will do will be just. It will set things right for them. If getting an opportunity to hear the Gospel and respond accomplishes that, then I trust God will bring that about. If it will not and God says what is right is separation from Him, then I will trust that decision, too.

I'm really not sure how it's going to go for people who haven't heard. But I am sure about people like you and me who have heard.

**And in the words of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews ...**

*What makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak?*

*Hebrews 2:3 (NLT)*

What makes us think that it would be right for God to say to us, “I made it possible for you to hear what I did for you through Jesus of Nazareth and you rejected it ... but that’s OK?”

That would just be wrong – unjust – in so many ways.

So, bottom line, there *might* be another opportunity for people who have never heard, but if you ignore what you have heard, you’re really taking your chances. And why would you – other than

stubbornness or hardheartedness or an overly self-centered sense of guilt that says “no way God could forgive and accept someone like me?”

And my prayer for you this morning, if you have not turned to Jesus as your savior, is that you will.

In fact, would you pray with me right now?

<sinners needing Jesus>

<believers needing encouragement>

## **Feature – There Will Come a Day**

### **CLOSING COMMENTS – Rick**

The celebration of communion is something Jesus asked his followers to do to remember his death until He returns. The Apostle Paul also recounts the request

in a letter to the church at Corinth.

*The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”*

*In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”*

Then Paul adds ...

*Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.      1    Corinthians  
11:23-26 (NIV)*

Communion is a look back and a look forward.

As you leave this morning we invite you to participate. We'd appreciate silence until you reach the commons.

## **Communion Exit / CD Track (There Will Be a Day – Jeremy Camp)**

### Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:25-26

<sup>ii</sup> Cited on Page 132 in A Handbook of Theological Terms: Their Meaning and Background Exposed in Over 300 Articles

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/10/the-next-christianity/302591/>