

Living In the Last Days – Hebrews 10:23-25

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *The Forecast*

1. Last week before I left for Dallas I checked the *Weather Channel* and Internet to see what the weather forecast was for Texas.
2. I wanted to be prepared and know what to pack.
3. If we all lived in the Midwest chances are we'd stay tuned to the weather for *tornado alerts*.
 - a. when I was a youngster living in the suburbs of Chicago, a tornado ripped through our neighborhood late one night.
 - b. earlier that evening the news had been filled with tornado alerts so people had plenty of time to prepare by bringing in those things from outside that needed to be protected.
 - c. it was only the foolish and those who refused to heed the warnings or take the time to turn on the news who were unprepared and suffered the greater loss.
4. In the same way we listen to the weather forecast so we can be prepared, God has given us a *forecast of the future* so we can be aware of the age in which we live.

B. *Jesus's Warning*

1. In Matthew 16:1-3 we read this interesting story from the life of Jesus –
¹Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. ²He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; [meaning with a calm, cloudless sunset] ³and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.
2. Jesus held the religious people of His day *accountable* because although they had ample warning from the prophets, they refused

to pay attention.

3. He told them that even more clearly than their ability to forecast the *weather* by looking to the skies, they ought to have been able to discern the *signs of the time* and known they lived in the days the Messiah would come; in fact, He stood before them at that moment.
4. They had asked for a sign to prove Who He said He was.
5. Jesus told them—they already had a sign from heaven = the prophetic word given hundreds of years before.
6. Indeed, these men *did* know they lived in the time foretold by the prophets.
 - a. when the Wise Men came from the East to worship the young Jesus,
 - b. they went to Jerusalem and inquired of King Herod where He was to be found.
 - c. Herod had no idea, but he knew who did; so he called for the scribes.
 - d. they came and told him the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.
 - e. you see, they knew all about these things because they were contained in the prophets whose words they had committed to memory.
7. And Jesus held them accountable because although they *ought* to have recognized the season in which they lived, they willfully neglected to pay attention and prepare themselves.

C. Us Too

1. Just as Jesus held the people of *His day* accountable for discerning the times in which they lived, so God holds *us* accountable.
2. And just as the prophets foretold the season of the Messiah's *First Coming*, so they have given us a clear forecast of the season of the *His Second Coming*.
3. Prophecy serves two important purposes:
 - 1) it reminds us that God is the Lord of History &
 - 2) it allows us to see where we live in relation to His Plan for the ages.
4. Even the most basic student of Bible prophecy is aware that we live at a unique period of history.

- a. whereas previous ages might have *thought* they lived in the last days,
 - b. they always had to *spiritualize* prophecy and bend it in order to make it fulfilled in the events of their time.
 - c. what's unique about *our* age is that we don't have to do that at all.
 - d. recent developments in technology and the global shifts in politics, economics, and religion have resulted in a world stage that's ready and ripe for the return of Christ.
 - e. we don't have to spiritualize the word of prophecy – the potential for literal fulfillment is at hand.
5. In light of that, what we find in Hebrews 10 is highly instructive . . .

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 24-25

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

1. Take careful note of that last phrase.
2. By “The Day” he means *the Day of the Lord*;
 - a. that period of time yet future when God *intervenes* in the course of human affairs in a clear and manifest way.
 - b. the Day of the Lord *begins* with the Tribulation, sees the Return of Christ in the Second Coming, and is consummated in the Millennium.
 - c. it's called, “The Day of the Lord” because it's the time marked by His judgment & rule.
3. What we need to take note of this morning is how the author assumes his readers *know* the signs that point to the fact the Day of the Lord is drawing close and that they will come to pass in a way that is clear.
4. This goes contrary to many modern day scoffers who say that Bible prophecy is *purely symbolic* and that it's fruitless to try to

- find the fulfillment of prophecy in contemporary events.
5. If that were true, then what we find in these verses would be meaningless!
 6. No – the author of Hebrews understands that the things foretold in scripture about the Last Days would be signs God’s people could *read* and realize the Return of Christ was drawing near.
 - a. if you drive on a stretch of Freeway for the first time,
 - b. you pay careful attention to the signs because you don’t want to miss your exit.
 - c. fortunately, CalTrans places mile-markers on the freeway to warn you of upcoming exits.
 - d. they tell you of an exit 3 miles out; then a mile & a half, then a ½ mile before the exit.
 7. Bible prophecy is like a set of signs on the highway of history.
 - a. God didn’t mean to *confuse* us with them,
 - b. but to help us understand the time in which we live in relation to His coming.
 8. Just as it’s possible for a person on the freeway to zone out and fail to see the signs and so miss their exit, it’s possible for us to lose attention to God’s prophetic signs and fail to discern the approach of the Day of the Lord.
 9. This is the error the Pharisees & Sadducees in Matthew 16 made; and Jesus *rebuked* them for it.
 10. The writer of Hebrews assumes that his readers *won’t err* in this regard.
 - a. he takes it for granted they know the signs that precede the return of Christ
 - b. and that they will come to pass in a way people will be able to see them and say –
 - c. “Okay, Jesus is coming again very soon.”

B. Here It Comes!

1. Pastor Bill Holdridge of CC Monterey kicked off our Prophecy Conference in September with a message titled, “*Are We Living In The Last Days?*”
2. He listed several prophetic signs that have to be in place for the last days to commence.
3. All of them have either *been* fulfilled or *are being* fulfilled right

now.

4. Mark Eastman showed us how the world is being set up for a campaign of spiritual deception the likes of which stagger the imagination – just as Jesus foretold in Matthew 24.
5. Tommy Ice closed out the conference with a review of the rising threat of global anti-Semitism, which is one of the major themes of the Book of Zechariah and of Revelation as they look forward to the last days.
6. If you weren't here, get a copy of the tapes or a CD of the whole conference.
7. The point is this - the stage is well set for the events of the Tribulation.
 - a. the actors are on their marks –
 - b. all we await is the rise of the curtain on the last act.
8. If we're paying attention, then we ought to see that the Day of the Lord ***IS*** approaching –
9. And that means we need to pay *special attention* to what we find here in Hebrews 10:24 & 25-

C. Consider One Another

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

1. "Let us consider one another."
2. The Greek word translated "consider" means quite a bit more than what *we* mean when we say to someone with a suggestion, "Well, I'll *consider* it."
 - a. that's often just a polite way of saying, "Fat chance."
 - b. in Greek, this word takes the word meaning *to think about something* and adds an *intensifier* to it.
 - c. we could say, "investigate, bend earnest attention to," or "apply the most diligent focus on."
3. Where are we to direct this intense mental energy? To *one another!*
4. If we're honest, we'd probably have to admit we spend most of our time considering who?
 - a. ourselves!
 - b. in fact a great deal of our most focused attention is spent on self.
5. Here we're told to turn our attention, our focus on *one another*.

- a. by “one another” he means *fellow believers*.
 - b. what’s remarkable is that we find the words “one-another” some 80 times in the NT.
 - c. and nearly all of them refer to the unique relationship Christians have toward each other.
6. Take a moment to review what occupies your attention throughout the average day.
- a. when and if we’re not thinking about ourselves, we’re thinking about the news we’re listening to on the radio in the car.
 - b. or we might be thinking about our relationships at home.
 - c. we think about our job, or schoolwork, or our friends.
7. But - in the average week, how often does your mind turn to think about your brothers & sisters in Christ?
- a. now, I don’t just mean people here at CCO –
 - b. I mean fellow believers – PERIOD!
 - c. how often do you turn your attention to other believers at work, at school, neighbors, on the mission field?
8. The writer of Hebrews tells us to *consider* each other; to take careful thought to one another as brothers & sisters in Christ.

D. To Love & Good Works

1. This consideration is to have specific direction – He says . . .

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

2. Our attention is to be aimed in the direction for how we can stir up love and good works.
- a. some versions translate “stir up” as “provoke.”
 - b. I like that because it presents the challenge this passage presents to us as a local church.
 - 1) as we live, worship, and serve alongside one another,
 - 2) what do we *usually* provoke one another to –
 - 3) love & good works -or- envy, anger, frustration, & exasperation?
 - c. when we hear the word “provoke” we usually think of it in a *negative* sense
 - d. but the writer tells us to provoke one another toward love; in the direction of good works.

3. We all know that God loves us – His love resides here because we’re His people, His redeemed ones.
 - a. while God loves ALL people, those who respond in faith to Him become the object of His *special* attention and affection.
 - b. so much so that we’re called the “Beloved.”
4. What we need to realize is that God’s love *toward* and *in* us is so complete, so extensive that it fills and then *overflows* us. 1 John 4:7-8

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

5. The overflow of God’s love is meant to be poured out on others, not hoarded by us for ourselves.
 - a. indeed – God intends His people, His *beloved* to become *manifestations* of His love to others.
 - b. the revelation of God’s love isn’t to be left on the pages of the Bible –
 - c. it’s to find expression in the way we treat one another. **1 John 4:11-12**

¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

6. Paul, Peter, John and James make it clear in their NT letters that the things we’ve received from God we’re to give to others – Jesus said, “Freely you’ve received, now freely give.”
 - a. the proof we’ve received grace is that we are *graceful*.
 - b. the evidence we’ve received mercy is that we’re *merciful*.
 - c. those who have grasped the truth become *truthful*.
 - d. Jesus made it crystal clear that the forgiven are *forgiving*.
 - e. and all agree that those who’ve embraced the love of God are *loving*.
7. The early Church understood that *love* is the *primary badge* of identity for the followers of Christ.
 - a. Jesus said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” [John 13:35]

- b. the early church saw themselves as a family bound together by love.
 - b. the Book of Acts reveals the deep commitment of love the early disciples had toward one another.
 - c. we even know from extra-biblical sources that the first Christians gained a *reputation* for love.
 - d. in fact, so unusual was their affection for and devotion to each another, their critics began accusing them of being *unnatural*.
8. But understand something – the love that marked the early church wasn't *automatic*; it was something the Apostles had stirred them up to because Jesus had told them to.
9. Love in the Body of Christ is no more automatic today than it was then – the imperative to love one another is just as necessary.
10. These words are for US!
- a. we need to take careful thought for how we can provoke one another to love & the good works this kind of love produces.
 - b. you see, the love we're called to provoke in one another isn't some kind of mushy sentimentalism that smiles warmly and mouths empty platitudes,
 - c. it's the kind of love that Jesus portrayed at the Last Supper when He rose from the table, laid aside His robe, girded His waist with a towel, took a basin and washed the disciples feet.
 - d. in 1 John 3:18 we read –

My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

11. How can we provoke love & good works in one another?
- a. first – by being an *example* of love & good works in our own lifestyle.
 - 1) truth be told, we learn how to live the Christian life by watching others.
 - 2) prayer, worship, service, evangelism, mission – we learn all these things, not simply by having someone tell us about them –
 - 3) but by seeing them DO them.
 - 4) if parents want good manners out of their children, they can't just demand them – they have to model them.
 - 5) in the same way – love and good works have to be modeled

by those who are the elders and more spiritually mature in the church.

- b. second – we can stir up love & good works by *being friendly*.
 - 1) it's not likely that we're going to grant each other the right and privilege of influencing one another unless there's some level of amiability between us.
 - 2) if we're going to stir one another to virtue, then there has to be more than just a casual and distant relationship between us –
 - 3) there has to be some bond of friendship.
 - 4) I have to tell you that I'm a little confused because over the 20 years CCO has existed, people have told us we are such a friendly church, while others have said we weren't!
 - 5) I've asked other pastors about this and most say they hear the same thing.
 - 6) I'm not sure what the solution is but I think we get a hint in Proverbs 18:24 says -

A man *who has* friends must himself be friendly.

- 7) that's a wise saying that I think all those who find this or any church to be unfriendly ought to meditate on.
 - 8) I shouldn't go to church looking for who's going to be friendly to me.
 - 9) I should go looking for whom I can be friendly to!
 - 10) about this passage in Hebrews 10, Warren Wiersbe writes,
It is interesting to note that the emphasis here is not on what a believer *gets from* the assembly, but rather on what he can *contribute to* the assembly.
- c. third - we can stir up love & good works by turning away from the love-killers;
 - 1) things like gossip, envy, bitterness -
 - 2) and an orientation toward living that puts *self* at the center of everything.

E. Assembling

- 1. Then in v. 25 we read . . .

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,

2. The writer reminds us of the priority of Christian fellowship.
3. It comes as a bit of a surprise to realize that the word translated “church” in the Bible originally had no religious connotation.
 - a. the Greek word means – a called out assembly.
 - b. it was the title given to the citizens of a Greek city-state.
 - c. these citizens met regularly to talk about the problems their city was facing, and together they would find solutions.
 - d. the common bond that tied them all together was their *citizenship*.
 - e. their goal was the well-being and safety of their city.
4. It’s interesting that this is the word Jesus chose to identify His followers as a corporate group – an *ekklesia*, a called out assembly.
5. The church is a group of people who have been called out of this world to be the citizens of the Kingdom of God.
 - a. we may live *in* the world, but we are not of it
 - b. and our citizenship in the Kingdom of God means we’re more concerned with advancing it’s cause than in perpetuating the values and goals of the world.
 - c. when we gather as the church – it’s a meeting of citizens of the Kingdom.
 - d. we gather to do Kingdom business!
6. When Cortez landed in the New World, he planted the flag of Spain and claimed it for the King of Spain.
 - a. when the US Marines took Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima, they raised the American flag and claimed it for the US.
 - b. when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, he planted the US flag and claimed it.
 - c. when we meet together here, or in our small groups, at the park for an outreach, or down at the beach for a baptism – we plant the banner of King Jesus in our prayers and praise.
 - d. we are laying claim to it in His name – recognizing that because of the Creation and the Cross – this world is twice rightfully His, and one day He will come to take possession of it.
6. You know, the world is all about competition and vying with one another for position and a larger slice of glory pie.

7. God intends the Church to be an alternative to the world, not just a religious version of it.
 - a. while the world keeps angling for more *personal* glory,
 - b. the church is a group of people *giving* glory, to God alone!
 - c. it's sad when the church just becomes one more manifestation of the world and people use it to advance their own agenda to grab fame or wealth.
 - d. sad to say, much of the modern church is little more than a religious version of the world.
8. When we gather together – we must use this time to stir up love and good works in one another.
9. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” [Mat 5:16]
10. The aim of the works we do is not to draw attention to ourselves and show people how holy or loving we are, but to give evidence to the power of God to change us.
11. Notice something here in v. 25 – he says some were forsaking assembling together.
 - a. we tend to idealized the early church and think that it was the Golden Age,
 - b. hardly! They had their problems, and one of them was that just like today, there were some who neglected the priority of fellowship.
 - c. they were Lone Rangers who thought they could live the life of faith without the support of fellow believers.
 - d. either that or they lived compromised lives and didn't want to face the conviction and grief being among the dedicated would produce.
12. I've noticed over the 20 some years I've been a pastor that there are those who only come to church when they're in trouble.
 - a. they see the church like an Emergency Room.
 - b. once they get patched up, then they bail!
13. That mentality is so contrary to what we find expressed here – the assembly isn't a place to come with a mindset to “get” but a heart to “give.”
14. We've all met people who seem to think their calling and role in the church is to stir up love & good works *in you* by being a *jerk*

themselves.

- a. they seem to have the idea that by being hostile & ornery it will provide *you* the opportunity to be patient & gracious, and so they're doing good.
 - b. that's not what the author means here.
 - c. God gives no one the gift of obnoxiousness; He calls no one to the office of jerk.
15. Just a couple weeks ago, in keeping with my task as pastor to protect the flock, I had to ask a man to leave and not return.
- a. he's attended on & off for several years but is a complete loner.
 - b. many of the ushers and elders have approached him over the years and attempted to welcome him – but he's always remained aloof.
 - c. recently, his behavior became increasingly hostile and angry; so much so that it began to trouble some who tried to approach him.
 - d. when he *completely* rebuffed someone recently, I pulled him out of the service and talked with him.
 - e. I asked him *why* he'd been so unfriendly. He said he was unique in the Body of Christ and was *called* to be the way he was.
 - f. it was clear he was self-deceived and not at all open to correction.
 - g. seeing the direction his recent behavior was taking and how disruptive to what we ought to be about when we meet he'd become, I had to ask him to leave and not return until he repented of his un-Christ like-behavior.

E. Exhorting One Another

1. Look at v. 25 again -

not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting one another,

2. The word he uses for exhort is from the same word Jesus used when speaking about the ministry of the Holy Spirit who would come alongside them to help them live the life of faith.
3. When we hear the word “exhort” we may get the picture of someone who kind of yells at us

- a. like a drill sergeant at boot camp.
 - b. the word carries kind of a harsh connotation for us.
 - c. but that is not at all what the word *meant*
 - d. it speaks of the most careful kind of diligence in coming alongside someone to assist them in whatever way is necessary to help them in their time of need.
4. A better word for today would be “encourage.”
- a. we need to put courage into each other because we live in a world that wants to do nothing if not *discourage* us in our walk with God.
 - b. we need courage if we’re to make it – not that we face much persecution where *we* live
 - c. but we do face enough hostility that it can dampen our devotion to the Lord and our witness for Him.
 - d. courage is faith with work boots and gloves on.
 - e. we need to in-courage one another!

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Gathering*

1. Of course, this supposes we’re assembling, that we’re in the habit of meeting so we *can* encourage one another.
2. V. 25 ends with

“and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

3. The writer knew that the generation that lived in the Last Days would need, even more than previous generations, to be meeting and encouraging one another.
4. He knew this because prophecy said those days would be marked by widespread deception and immorality.
5. Jesus said that because sin would abound, the love of many would grow cold.
6. That’s why the author of this letter writes with such fervency and passion here.
 - a. if we don’t take heed to these words, we won’t make it.
 - b. we need to be in the habit of regular attendance at church and in small groups.
 - c. and when we met, we need to be purposeful to not just stage a religious version of all that the world’s in to.

- d. no – we are the church, a called out assembly of citizens of the Kingdom of God.
- e. we need to remind each other of our citizenship and provoke each other to live by the values and rules of our King.

B. Culture

1. Romans 12:2 says

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind . . .

2. Let's face it, we spend most of our time in the world, yet we're told not to let this world mold and shape us.
3. The only way to counteract the influence of the world is to spend time among fellow Christians who share our commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
4. Whenever we take trips overseas to do missions work, we spend most of the day out in the city or village ministering to the people.
 - a. one of the hardest things to deal with is the different culture you're in
 - b. its just plain *tiring* dealing with the different language, diet, laws, and social rules.
 - c. I've noticed something interesting about every missions trip I've ever been on –
 - d. every night, the missions team gathers together in one of our hotel rooms and sits around and renews our American culture.
 - e. we break out the snacks and goodies we've brought from home, and sit around and joke, using our own language and idioms.
 - f. it's like we've established a little beachhead of American culture there in our hotel room.
 - g. those nightly gatherings are often difficult to leave, even though you may be dead tired.
 - h. they give you the internal strength to go on ministering in a foreign setting.
5. That's a really good picture of what the church should be like when we meet.
6. We out to be an outpost of heaven.
 - a. when people visit, they ought to see what heaven is going to be like.

- b. the Church is the porch of eternity!
- 7. It's interesting that the only other time the phrase, "the assembling of ourselves together" is used is in 2 Thess 2:1 and refers to the *Rapture*, when Christ comes and gathers us up and takes us to heaven.
- 8. In anticipation of and preparation for that great event, we need to be in the habit of assembling together now.
- 9. If you've ever barbecued you know that coals will only start if they are placed together in a tight heap.
 - a. if a coal rolls away, it will quickly cool.
 - b. charcoal only stays hot by lending it's heat to the whole.
- 13. And so it is in the Body of Christ – we *need* each other, we *need* to be in touch.
- 14. We need to be meeting together regularly for corporate worship and instruction in God's Word. – Provoking & Encouraging