



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

81 – Soon AND Delayed

Announcements:

8/16 @7:30 -

Prayer

8/17 @6:30 -

Grace Group

8/20 @8:30 -

Sunday School

8/20 @6:00 -

FAMILY NIGHT

Large Group!

ICE BREAKER: Is there a phrase or something that people say that drives you crazy? What is it and why?

READ: Matthew 25: 14-19

For the last three weeks now (and continuing on through next week!), we have been looking at what is really the fallout from the statement that Jesus made in Matthew 24:36, that “concerning that day and hour no one knows.” In this particular parable we noted that the emphasis was about being diligent doing the work that God has set before us. But in knowing that we are to work we might be led to a question that Jayden asks me anytime I ask him to get to work: “How long?” Here is where our difficulty lies, because there are really two answers: Soon and Delayed.

We will start with “delayed”. We just read this in the parable of the Talents as Jesus said “After a *long time* the master of those servants came.” (25:19) Before that in the parable of the 10 virgins the thought was that “the bridegroom was *delayed*” (25:5) and this was the same exact thought of the servant in the parable of the wise and wicked servant when the wicked servant said: “my master is *delayed*.” (24:48). And here we are, some 2000 years later thinking that possibly Jesus has delayed his return. Honestly it has been a long time, and we have no idea how much longer it is going to be. But here there are two important thoughts for us. The first is to misquote one of the best movies ever, *The Lord of The Rings*. When Gandalf the wizard is accused of being late his response is “A wizard is never late, neither is he early. He arrives precisely when he means to.” The point here is that the same is true of God. Though from our point of view he may be delayed, that is really an “us” problem. Because this leads to thought two: possibly there is a reason for the long “delay”.

DISCUSS: READ 2 Peter 3:9. How does this verse help us in understanding the “delay”? What is our comfort and consolation here?

On the other hand, we hear often that he is returning “soon”. In fact, I would say that he has been coming “soon” since he ascended to heaven. So what are we to make of this thought? Again, I have two thoughts for us that I feel will be helpful. One of the reasons that we are to believe he is coming soon is to counteract and fight against any feelings of complacency that we might have. This is the thought we read over and over (and over) again in the Olivet Discourse. Matthews 24:44: “Therefore you must be ready.” Similarly, we see Matthew 25:13: “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day or the hour.” In other words it is “soon” because it could be any second now, we don’t know. “Soon” here can be read as a mindset rather than a measure of time. But there is one more reason we can say that he is coming soon. It is because we are living in the last days. Truthfully all believers since the days of pentecost have been. To say that he is coming “soon” is to say that it is the next thing that we look forward to in God's plan for all of creation. Soon in this sense means “next”. Together we have the full answer: We are to live in the anticipation that the next and final movement in God’s plan is just around the corner (because it is!).

DISCUSS: How can we live in these ideas of “soon”? How does (or should!) this impact our day-to-day living?

As we contemplate living in the thoughts of “delayed” and “soon”, the important thought is to live in the work and will of Christ. To that end I would like to end with a quote from David Garland. “When Christ returns, he will not ask if one had the right date but rather ‘What have you been doing?’”