

Sermon on 5.7.2015 notes

- **Context:** Paul wrote his first letter to the church in Thessalonica – which is situated in modern day Greece - to help strengthen their faith. He'd established the church on his second missionary journey in about AD 51. It was probably written only about 20 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus – so this letter is probably earlier than the gospels. He wrote this first letter a short time afterwards to assure them of his care, his love and to remind them of their hope in the midst of persecution.
- The church needed to hear that for the new Christians were being persecuted for their fledgling faith. New in age, only established for about two years, as a church they needed help to mature and to grow.
- 2 Thessalonians is a continuation of the themes of the first letter which dealt with some of the issues that needed to be corrected in the church – lots of which were questions about when the Lord would return. ...
- It's a tricky passage... and even later in the New Testament Peter reflecting on what the day of the Lord may mean – when Jesus returns says this of St. Paul's writings on the subject: *"¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:16)"*

Whose voice do you hear the most?

- That was the challenge for the new church. They'd been some false teaching ...some teachers were going round claiming that the Lord had already returned ... teachings were unsettling the church –
- Could the rest of Paul's teachings be trusted etc?

Whose voice do you hear the most?

- It's a valid question in New Testament times, it's an even more valid question today.
- The world we live in today and what it believes...
- Today, we are disciples.
- And our call is to listen to the voice of Jesus. The call of God the Father – over every other competing distraction, the voice of God over the voice of the world. Over public opinion. Over fashionable thought. Over what is safe to say and think and do. To know the truth – because that sets us free!
- And that's sometimes hard – I saw this on the internet this week and it made me think...

**"Most people want Jesus as a consultant rather than a King and he does not come that way."
(Tim Keller)**

The church in Thessalonica was listening to alternative voices and that was causing their foundations to be shaken. Could the same be said about the church in the UK here and now? Perhaps that quote is true for us, dare I suggest, for me as well as you – perhaps we want a Jesus who suggests rather than commands, because that would be an awful lot easier! Tough huh?

Whose voice do you hear the most, whose voices firms the foundations of your life? Let that be Jesus.

- Paul set about to reassure them with a timetable of events, as it were, or by describing what he thought would happen before Christ returns again. (v5-12)
- All but 4 of the 27 books in the New Testament talk about the Return of Jesus Christ. We should not be afraid to learn about the Last Days ... as long as we are learning it from God's Word.
- The point is that God doesn't want us to be DECEIVED. We need to know the difference between God's Word and people's opinions. We need to know the difference between Bible and blather!

- My Passport story
- Harold Campling story
- It will come like a thief in the night. Even Jesus said he did not know the hour or the day.
- The Bible contains 453 prophecies about the Coming of Jesus. 196 of them were fulfilled in his First Coming. That leaves 257 signs left to be fulfilled for his Second Coming.
- In the meantime, be ready. Be watchful .Be careful about the voices that you listen to. Remember that God's truth sets us free.
- I don't know what that will look like, but as St. Paul describes it – the time will come when we are going to have to be able to discern the counterfeit from the Godly – when we will have to believe the truth and not lies – so hang on in there says Paul. Concern yourself with truth. Make sure you know whose voice you hear... hear Jesus. Listen out for the truth, be watchful for these things and don't worry, God is in control!
- Now if that's the only thing you remember this morning, remember that. Don't worry, God is in control!
- If all this mention of The Man of Lawlessness freaks you out – remember we have faith in the One who has already Won!
- If talking about evil makes you tremble – stand firm – because we follow the one who holds the keys to death and hell and all the schemes of evil will never ultimately prevail. Because God is in control.
- St. Paul says this: “. 2 Thessalonians 2:15: **“So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.”**
- Stand firm, lovely people of God. Stand firm. God is in control. Amen.