

Sermon ✝ November 13, 2022

Luke 21:5-19

Frank H. Maxwell

A woman went with her husband to the doctor's office. When the checkup was over, the doctor asked the man to wait outside so he could talk to the wife. He had a very somber look on his face and asked her to sit down, "*Your husband is suffering from a very severe stress disorder. If you don't do what I ask, he is not going to make it.*"

Here's what I want you to do. Get up early each morning and fix him whatever he wants for breakfast . . . pancakes, French toast, omelettes . . . whatever. Make him a hearty lunch and deliver it to him at his office. And, of course, prepare a really special dinner every night. Be pleasant at all times. Let him watch whatever he wants on television. Don't burden him with chores or discuss your problems with him. You will need to do all of the work around the house. And, you can't nag him about anything. If you can do this for a year, your husband will completely regain his health."

As they were driving home, the husband turned to his wife and asked, "*What did the doctor say?*" To which she replied, "*He said you're going to die.*"

Okay, a bit of dark humor to begin the day, however, the point being the man's wife was not interested in doing *all* the work. The same was true of some of the people in Thessalonica. Which is one of the reasons that Paul wrote a second letter to this young congregation. The people were slacking-off. Laziness is, of course, one of the *classic* seven deadly sins.

In a world of smart phones, Facebook, Twitter and refrigerator calendars with no white space left, we have difficulty believing that laziness is a sin that we need to seriously deal with in our lives.

We will admit to being proud. We will confess to gluttony only if someone threatens to take away our chocolates. We might even be willing to agree to a lustful thought or two, but never laziness.

Is it possible for a person who is chronically sleep deprived, and who longs for a moment to put his or her feet up and relax, to be lazy? Should the sin of laziness be a concern for those who are working longer hours, facing endless commutes, and struggling with diminishing leisure time? The short answer is, "*Yes.*"

The congregation at Thessalonica had a problem. Several members of the fellowship had stopped working. These people believed that the return of Jesus was imminent. If Jesus was coming soon, they saw no reason to work. They didn't need to save for a retirement, they were just kind of hanging-out. The attitude and idleness of these people created problems in the congregation.

Rather than devote themselves to the study of Scripture and prayer, the "lazy" folks became busybodies and interfered with the lives of others. And the people of the congregation, being nice, Christian folks were kind of enablers. Because they supported the lazy lifestyles of these people, it drained the resources of the congregation so that it could no longer properly care for the poor,

hungry, and needy.

This was a lifestyle that Paul did not want anyone else to emulate. The laziness of a few people hindered the outreach of the Christian community and prevented them from accomplishing God's will.

This was a gross misunderstanding . . . the lazy people in Thessalonica misunderstood why God had shed grace and love upon them and gathered them into God's family. They thought it was all about them.

But God had moved in their lives, just like God moves in our lives, for greater reasons than our personal salvation. God touches us so that we can be God's shining lights in the world, salt to the earth, and witnesses of God's love and glory.

When God called Abraham and told Abraham that God would make him a great nation, God also told Abraham that God would bless him so that he would be a blessing.

Blessings are never meant to stop with us. Blessings are always intended to flow through us.

In a scene from the end times that is found in Matthew 25, Christians are judged by what they have done with their blessings and how they have ministered to the needs of other people.

Laziness is not limited to idleness. Laziness is a lifestyle that prevents us from using our gifts and talents to accomplish God's will in our lives.

This brings us to the path of service. The opposite of the sin of laziness is the virtue of service.

Jesus lived, died and rose again from the dead **not** so that we could be lazy and **not** worry about things physical and spiritual . . . **but** so that we could serve.

And there are some things that we can do . . . some steps that we can take that lead us away from laziness and toward an abundant life of service:

- † Take time to discover your gifts, talents and passions.
- † Discern what area of ministry God is calling you to — Hints at what God wants to do in and through you . . . may be through open and closed doors, gut feelings, and the advice and counsel of others.
- † Learn to say "No." Keeping busy is not the antidote for laziness; purposeful living is.
- † Find out the things of life in which you find rest, refreshment and renewal. Make those a part of your life and shun those activities that are simply a waste of time.

† Celebrate that you are God's chosen people. God has moved in your life so that you cannot only be God's daughter or son, but also God's servant, God's ambassador, God's prophet and God's priest.

Is the sin of laziness a part of all of our lives? Can I, or anyone else, tell you when are and are not being lazy? Probably not. That's something you must address in your relationship with God.

The gospel reminds us that God has touched our lives . . . so that we can plunge deeply in to a purposeful, meaningful life of service.

We can be a blessing to others because we have been blessed. Amen