

The Last Day Image of Christ (Video)

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being the light of the world in a society that is increasingly rejecting truth and embracing evil. It calls for individuals to allow God to work through them, to be a visible representation of Christ's love and compassion in a dark world. The message highlights the need for humility, surrender, and a willingness to be used by God, even if it seems foolish or small in the eyes of the world.

Scripture: Matthew 5:14, Ezekiel 2:1, Isaiah 6:5, Haggai 1:7, 2 Corinthians 3:18, James 1:22, Acts 1:8, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Being the Light", "Humility and Surrender"

Description

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Transcript

God bless you, those that have made the effort to come out here and be part of this service today at the Summit Campus Church. And for those that are joining with us online today, there's a deep abiding sense of God's presence in the sanctuary here today. And I've found throughout my life that whenever the Lord is about to speak about something dear to his heart, close to his heart, he will always confirm his word before it's spoken.

I'd like you to turn in your Bibles, please, to Matthew chapter 5 and Ezekiel chapter 2. Matthew chapter 5 and Ezekiel chapter 2. I want to speak this morning about the last day image of Christ, the last day image of Christ. Father, I thank you, God, with all my heart. I thank you for your presence here in this sanctuary.

I thank you, Lord, for speaking to us in a profound way. Week after week, Lord, you're preparing us to be your bride in this final hour of time before your return. Thank you for the men and women and young persons that you've gathered together here today as your church, as your beloved bride.

And Lord, we invite you to speak to us. We're not afraid of your presence. We're not afraid of your word.

We want you to challenge our hearts. We want you to speak to us about our own futures. Give us the grace, Lord, to receive you.

I ask you for the anointing of your Holy Spirit. My God, I recognize that without your anointing, we're just a noise. It's all we are, Lord, with thoughts about you, but no real living relationship with you.

And so, God, I'm asking you for the anointing of your Holy Spirit to be able to speak this word and anoint our ears, every one of us, to be able to hear it. Help us, my God, to understand the day that we're living in and how you are calling us to play a vibrant role, God, in this last day testimony of who you are. And God, we thank you for it and we praise you in Jesus' name.

Amen. Matthew chapter 5, we're going to begin there at verse 14 to 16. It starts with these words, you.

I just want to stop there for just a moment and just meditate on that. Not somebody else, not pastor so-and-so, not such-and-such a ministry, but you are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

If our hearts are set on honoring the Christ who went to a cross for our sin, then the testimony of his life inside of us cannot be hidden from this generation. If our hearts are set upon the victory that was won for us, the giftings that God said he gave to us when he rose from the dead and took captivity captive, if we are fully set on that hill to say, Lord, I want my life to glorify you in this generation, then the promise, in a sense, or the end result of that kind of a heart is that the light that's in us cannot be hidden from this generation. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

The light of Christ in us is to be visible, it's to be displayed, it's to be public, it's to be in a place, not a hidden place, but it's to be in a place where all can see it. Now, we recognize that some are not going to appreciate in this generation the light of Christ in us. As much as they didn't appreciate him, they're not going to appreciate you or me as we stand and fight for their eternal soul, even though they fight against their own salvation.

In verse 16, he says, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Let this presence of God within your life so shine in this generation that people who live in darkness, it won't be so much that they hear what we have to say, because I'm going to talk about that a little bit this morning. I think we're in a generation where people are not going to listen necessarily to the words of God any longer, but they're going to see this inner presence of Christ in each of our lives doing through us what only God can do, and it will bring glory to God.

I mean, even perhaps the most jaded sinner will look and say and look at the true church of Jesus Christ and say, only God, it has to be something other than what this world produces that is doing what I see in the life of this particular person. Now, throughout history it's been proven that people can become so hardened in their direction and their thinking that even words from God cannot turn them. It's a sad reality, but I do believe that in our society and in the western world today, particularly in this country, we have come to the place where people are no longer able to receive truth.

Truth doesn't matter anymore. Truth is as something subjective. Truth is, there is a new concept in America today.

It's called my truth. If I think this is the way it should be, it doesn't matter what truth is. I have my truth, and therefore my truth becomes truth.

And that is exactly what happened in the Garden of Eden. That's what the devil sowed in fallen humanity. He said you can be a determiner of what truth is, of what is good and what is evil, and that's exactly where we live today.

That's the moment that our society is now living in. In the days of the prophet Ezekiel, that's why I wanted to go to Ezekiel, if you'll turn in now in Ezekiel chapter 2, we see a pattern in the kingdom of God. When a crisis moment like ours arrives, as they have throughout history, the response of God quite often is to draw somebody into His presence that becomes a, not only a voice, but an expression to their generation of who He is.

And maybe you're feeling that this morning. Maybe you are one of those persons that God is drawing into His presence. Now let me tell you, if that is happening, you are starting to feel undone.

You've become aware of your frailty. You've become aware of your failings. This is always the pattern throughout Scripture.

It's the Isaiah 6 moment when God calls Isaiah into His presence in a crisis time of judgment in the nation. Jeremiah's moment. Daniel's moment.

John on the Isle of Patmos. Paul on the Damascus Road. When you're, if you truly are being lifted into the presence of God, you become completely aware of your otherness.

You become aware of the lies that come from your lips and the thoughts that flow through your mind. You become aware of the boastings in your life. You become aware of issues of character in a sense that maybe you weren't aware of before, but suddenly because you're being drawn into the presence of God.

See, I want to make that point today for those that are sitting here and you're feeling undone. You're saying, what could I possibly do to make a difference in this generation? Well then, if that's the way you feel, you're feeling exactly the way Isaiah did in his day. When he's drawn into the presence of God, he saw the holiness of God.

And in seeing the holiness of God, he became aware of his otherness from God. And his words were, woe is me, I'm undone. I dwell, I'm a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the people, amongst the people of unclean lips.

Now he's speaking of the most religious culture on the face of the earth at that time, the nation of Israel. He recognized that if God dealt with us in the manner that we deserve, none of us can stand. And I do believe that if God is going to use any of us in a significant way in the future, we have to go actually through that pathway.

To come into proximity with God means that we become aware. So don't let the devil condemn you. God already knew what you and I were when he saved us.

And he's already covered us. He's already declared us to be righteous. But if he's going to use us, lest we should be lifted up in pride, he will draw us into his presence and show us what we really are, without him.

So that when he does what only God can do, he gets all the glory. We get none of it. We take none of it.

We don't reach out and try to touch it. We don't say, look what Jesus and I have done. Our testimony is really just, he is the light of the world.

He has chosen to shine his life through me at this time. And I am a recipient of great grace. And that becomes our message to the fallen masses around us.

In Ezekiel's day, the Lord drew Ezekiel into his presence, because the society of Ezekiel's time, now Ezekiel, Israel was going into captivity. Babylon had already come in that the captivity had already begun. There was a certain group of people who were already taken into captivity.

Ezekiel was among them. But they did not believe that the judgment they were now experiencing was going to become more severe than it was. There is something in every society, there is something in our society today that says yes, we are in difficult days, but better days are coming.

We are going to get back to where we used to be. We are going to one day be a righteous people again. And we sing our patriotic songs.

And we think about our history. And we just don't believe that the judgment could actually be total. And God was trying to speak to his people of that time, saying, Jerusalem is going to fall.

Judah is going to be taken captive. But there were other voices being raised up among those who were already captive, or already experiencing the judgment of God. And they were telling the people, no, everything is going to change.

We are going to go back. Everything is going to be the way it was. And God raised up Ezekiel to tell the people, no, it's not going to be the way it used to be.

As a matter of fact, it's going to get worse, and the captivity is going to be very, very longstanding. In chapter 2, in verse 1, the call comes to Ezekiel's life. And he said to me, Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you.

Then the Spirit entered to me when he spoke to me, and set me on my feet. And I heard him and spoke to me. In verse 3 of Ezekiel 2, he says, Then he said to me, Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me.

They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day, for they are impudent and stubborn children. I'm sending you to them, and you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord God. As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they are a rebellious house, yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.

And in chapter 3, verse 26, the Lord says to Ezekiel, I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be mute, and not be one to rebuke them, for they are a rebellious house. In other words, the people of that time, the rebellion against God's ways and God's thinking had become so deep in them that they would no longer respond to words. They had their own truth.

So truth didn't matter anymore. And folks, whether or not you recognize that this is the moment we're now living in. I was sitting with a member of Congress just about a year ago, and the particular person said to me, How do you have a discussion with people who have no basis, no foundation for truth? I want to reach out to others around me, but they're stuck in this concept of your truth and my truth.

There's no parameters of truth anymore, because we have forsaken the ways of God. Therefore we've lost the foundation of our nation. And every man's way is now right in his own sight.

And there's a point where people can't be reasoned with anymore. You can't speak, because they won't hear, because they don't believe that the foundation of truth is the Word of God, and the kingdom of God, and the person of God Himself in Jesus Christ. They've literally cast it off.

And so there's a point where God said to Ezekiel, I'm going to stop you from speaking to them anymore. But something interesting happens now in chapter 4 verse 1. He says, Son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem. So, and he says, lay seeds against it, build a siege wall against it, heap up a mound against it, set camps against it also, and place battering rams against it all around.

Moreover, take for yourself an iron plate and set it as an iron wall between you and the city. Set your face against it, and that shall be besieged. You shall lay seeds against it, and this shall be a sign to the house of Israel.

So, bottom line, because they wouldn't hear His words anymore, God said, the last thing I'm going to speak to them is in a picture. I'm going to give them a picture of who I am, a picture of their own future. I'm going to set before them an image because they can't be spoken to anymore.

You can imagine, I think it was 390 days Ezekiel had to do this. People are coming in and out, doing their, whatever they had to do throughout their daily lives, and here's the prophet of God, and he's laying on the ground, he's cooking his food with cow manure, which represented the siege and the hardship that's going to come into that, Jerusalem and Judah, and he's built this little cardboard city, may I put it that way, on a slate, and he's laying siege against it. It's just almost like a cartoon in a sense, but they have to pass by it every day, and he's not speaking anymore because nobody's listening, but God said, this is the last warning I'm going to give is going to come in a picture, and we're living in a moment like that in America today.

The pictures that are heart-rending, the pictures are heartbreaking. Here are just a few examples. Just a couple of weeks ago, a star camera in New York City at about 11 58 p.m., almost midnight, captured an image of a mother crossing the street, and her little toddler, four years old, is trying to keep up with her behind her, and she just left the toddler.

The toddler stops in the corner, the mother just keeps on walking, and literally just abandons her at midnight in New York City. This toddler was picked up by the police department, taken to social services. It took four days to find the mother, and of course everybody is horrified, right? Everybody's, the police, she's charged now with willful neglect and abandonment and all these things, but people fail to realize this is God setting a picture before the nation, a nation that has walked away from 60 million of its babies, and it's a picture of the fathers who walk away from their families.

They're not raising their children. The fathers are because of the lust of their own heart, and the lack of the lack of ability, as Paul says, the loss of family affection is one of the signs of the last days, and you see it's a picture, but just like when Nathan came to the King David, and he talked about this man who came, he had a whole bunch of sheep, and he took one, he took this one man's little lamb, and sacrificed it for his own guest, and David was angered, and David was, yes, this man's going to pay fourfold for what he has done. He declares judgment on himself, really, without even knowing it.

Nathan turns and says, you're the man, David. You see, this is what God's trying to do. Everybody's horrified that this mother would walk away from this little four-year-old at midnight in New York City, but

how many have done that? How many fathers have walked away at midnight from their families? How many mothers have walked away from their children? This is a picture of what American society has become because we won't listen anymore.

It can't be spoken to. You see, we have our truth, and you have your truth. We call all of these things we do medical necessities.

You call it, you call it murder for the sake of convenience, but that's your truth, but our truth is we have the right to do what we're doing. I woke up this morning to pictures of riots in three of our major cities last night where people are now carrying pepper spray and bear spray and hammers and saws and axes and weapons. This is a picture of what's going on.

This is a picture of the lawlessness that's starting to invade our society, and it's not going to get better. It's going to get worse in the days ahead. We have pictures every day of corruption, corruption at the highest levels of religion in this nation, incivility in our political systems, the inability to speak civilly, the inability to have a discussion with one another.

It's a picture that God is presenting. You see, because the nation is under judgment whether anybody wants to believe it or not. The nation is under judgment.

God has been setting the pictures very, very clearly because He's a God of justice, a God of righteousness. He doesn't judge without warning. We're living in a society today that's glorifying evil and vilifying good.

A pastor a week ago in a sermon, a decent good man, he got up and he basically talked about various forms of sexual attraction and practice, and he said it's not right according to the Word of God. Now this morning he's got a huge demonstration outside of his church, a picture of what we have become. I was thinking this morning of Sodom and Gomorrah when the crowd gathered outside the door, pushing against the door, trying to get the messengers of God to become partakers of their sin.

Oh beloved, let me tell you, there's a line you can't cross with God, and we've come there as a society. Do we even know how close we are? The prophet Haggai cries out in chapter one, consider your ways. He cries out twice, consider your ways to the people of God.

But yet we've come to a point where we're no longer as a society willing or able to even consider our ways. A little over a year ago I was walking across the street in New York City with one of our staff members, and at this point our essentially the leaders of our city and the leaders of our state and others are saying COVID is not coming here, no reason to worry, go out to restaurants, eat, enjoy your life, carry on as usual. I turned to my friend and I said, I want you to order 1,500 medical masks for our staff.

He says, well, they're saying that there's not going to be a problem with COVID. I said, no, they're wrong. COVID is coming and it's going to be problematic.

He said, are you afraid of COVID? I said to him, no, I'm not afraid of COVID. What I really have a trepidation about is what's coming after COVID has run its course. COVID is going to come, but something after COVID, much more sobering and much more serious is coming our way.

I don't honestly know what it is, but I know that I have a churning inside even when I think about it. But now, even in these dark times, just as with Ezekiel, there is one final picture, one final picture. You know,

we have all these other pictures, the mothers and fathers abandoning their children, the religion being exposed for the corruption at some high levels that's always been there.

Our political system breaking down, the incivility and divisions becoming almost, not almost, they are irreparable apart from an intervention by God. But even in this dark time, just as with Ezekiel, there's one final picture through which the grace, mercy, and goodness of God can still be known. And that final picture is you.

You are the light of the world. You are the city set upon a hill that cannot be hidden. You are the lamp that God says, I will put it on a lampstand and it will give light to all who are in the house.

But you see, you have to want the light. You have to want this life. You have to want this picture to be displayed by the power of God through your life.

He's not going to impose it on you. He's not going to impose it on me. We can live our lives just hiding in church or we can say, God, I want my heart set upon that hill.

I want a new heart. I want a new purpose. I want new giftings.

I want the enablement of the Holy Spirit in my life to make a difference for this generation. I am just done. I'm not going to lay down and let the children of this time be given over to evil.

I'm not going to lay down and let our families be destroyed by the power of evil. And I don't know what it's going to cost. And I don't care anymore what it's going to cost.

But by the grace of Almighty God, put me on the lampstand. Set me on a hill. Put something in my life.

Put something in my voice. And this is a call to every saint of God. It has to be.

Everyone who calls themselves by the last line of defense. We are the Ezekiel that's outside a city about to come under judgment. We are the only ones that can make a difference now.

The society is too broken down. There will not be another political leader. There will not be another superstar events.

All these days are over. It's now you are the light of the world. You, not somebody else.

You. And so for you and I, it's to say, God, where would you place me? What do you want to do through my life? It's that prayer of Paul when he had that encounter with the living God. And he said, Lord, what do you want me to do? It's no deeper than that.

God knows you. God knows the plan He has for your life. He knows how to get it done.

He knows how. You see, we, Paul said, as we beheld Him, we are changed from image to image and glory to glory, even as by the Spirit. We are changed.

We're given a new heart. We're given a new mind. We're given a new purpose.

We're given new passions. We're given new compassion. We're given the ability to get outside of ourselves and start living as we teach at this school for the benefit of others, because that's where the power of the gospel is actually found.

I had the privilege of being at the Midwest Food Bank this week and being part of their dedication service in the sense of the opening up of a food center that's going to feed thousands and thousands and thousands of people in the tri-state area and here in Pennsylvania as well. And I heard a story. Actually, a young lady was there who wandered in about, she wandered in about two weeks ago, and she said, who are you people and what are you doing here? And they said, well, most are volunteers, and we are feeding people that are hungry.

She said, for real? You do this? You do this just out of the goodness of your heart? And the lady and her husband that were talking to her said, no, we do it because Christ, the love of God is in us, and we do it because we are in relationship with God. And he has called us clearly to give food to the hungry and to give clothing to those that have no clothing and to receive those that have no family. And they just started sharing with her.

And as they were sharing with this lady who was about in her late 30s, maybe early 40s, she said, I want that in my life. I want to receive Christ. And so they led her in the prayer to receive Christ.

And she went home, and she said, and she had been deeply involved in yoga and all this stuff for a long time. And her testimony this week was, I didn't light a candle. I didn't dim the lights.

I just said, oh God, I can talk to you. And as she started talking to God, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and started speaking with other tongues. She didn't even know anything about it.

Praise God. You see, the point is she saw something. She saw a huge warehouse.

She saw, oh, I don't know how many people were there at that, maybe 20, 30 people just giving of their time, filling bags and boxes and loading trucks and putting stuff on shelves. She saw an image of Christ in people. And it became attractive.

And she said, I would like to be like that. I would like to do that. I would like my life to be like that life.

And see, it was an image. And you see, we are the last day image of Christ. We are.

So we're not called to be an argument and said to say some are going to be relegated just to throwing rocks over the fence, and they throw rocks back, and we throw more spiritual rocks at them. There's people who are going to do that. They're just going to be argued as a doctrine.

But our calling is to be a light. Our calling is to be a lamp. Our calling is to have our heart set upon a hill where a Savior went to a cross to be given for.

This is my body, which is broken for you. Do this, she said, in remembrance of me. I've allowed my dreams to be broken.

I've allowed my plans to be broken. I've allowed my self-image to be broken. I've allowed my lust for my own convenience to be broken.

And I'm out there, and I'm, you see, this is the point. Not everybody has to be an evangelist. Not everybody has to have a high-profile ministry.

But every one of us are called to be set on a candlestick. And we're called, and so everybody in that warehouse that day, let's say there were 30 people there. Everybody in that warehouse had a part in this

lady's conversion.

Everyone. Because everyone was a light. Everyone was a lamp.

It's like she walked into a candle factory. Instead of lighting one candle and doing a yoga exercise, she walked into a candle factory and saw the light. And saw people doing something that she knew instinctively she couldn't do unless there was a power source in her life greater than herself.

This is the light. As we reach out and as we just say, Jesus, in whatever way I can. See, so this is for everybody.

It's not just for high-profile people or just preachers of the gospel or those that know every Hebrew meaning of every word and Greek meaning in the New Testament and the Old Testament. It's not about that. It's about you and I saying, Lord, set me on a hill.

Let your light be seen in me because people won't listen anymore. But they will still. See, this is a generation now, as we're told, has an eight-second attention span.

Can you imagine? And so that's the news media picked up on this. That's why they'll put a false headline and then the real story will be underneath. They know that most people don't read beyond the false headline.

So they can form public thought and opinion. And they can say, well, the truth was in the article, but they know that the people, the majority don't read the article. They just read the headline.

So they can form and, may I say, warp public opinion to their purposes. So this is the cry of my heart, and I'm hoping that it will become the cry of yours, if it's not already. And I'm going to go back to where I started and finish where I started, that if you're being drawn into the presence of God, you feel unworthy.

That's a good thing. See, a proud person can't represent Christ. A proud person will touch the glory.

A proud person will get involved in the work of God and add that leaven into what God is doing and poison the whole thing. No, God needs people who know, I'm nothing, Lord, without You, and You're everything in me. So let Your light so shine before men that they may see Your good works and glorify Your Father, which is in heaven.

So the prayer we need to pray, every one of us, is, Lord, what would You have me to do? It doesn't have to be grand. It just has to be God. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Father, I thank You, God, for giving us Your Word today. What else can I say? You've been here the whole service, Lord.

There's been a weight in the sanctuary of Your presence. And You're calling us, as You called Ezekiel and Isaiah and Jeremiah, Esther, Deborah. You're calling us.

You're calling us to be the last. You said the gospel will be preached in all the world in our generation. I've never fully understood.

It's not necessarily with words any longer. It'll be preached by Your presence inside of Your church. A glorious, glorious, glorious bride.

A bride whose heart is in tune with Yours. You who so love the world. God, thank You.

God, thank You. God, thank You. All I can say is, I'm in.

And the rest is up to You, Lord. Lead me, guide me, show me, open the doors that need to be opened. Give each of us the courage to go through the doors You set before us and to do what You call us to do.

Whether it's grand or whether it's small, whether it's visible or whether it's hidden, it doesn't matter. All that matters is that it's You. Even if we feel foolish.

How foolish Ezekiel must have felt some days, just lying in front of his little cardboard city as people went in and out among their business. But he knew it was You. He knew it was You.

So God, give us the grace to not consider something too foolish or too small. We want to be the image of You, Your heart, Your will, Your way in this last moment of time. God, have mercy on this wicked society.

God, have mercy on the moms and dads that have abandoned their families. God, have mercy on the sexually depraved people that are gathered protesting outside the church today. We're not asking for judgment.

We're asking for mercy. Help that congregation to be an image of who You are. God, have mercy.

God, have mercy on our government. God, have mercy on the religious system in America that is sick. God, have mercy.

God, have mercy. And raise up a testimony in us one more time before You come. And we thank You for it in Jesus' name.

Just as we worship for a few moments, if it's in your heart, we can't give altar calls because of COVID and such like, but if it's in your heart to say, I'm going. I want to be, God set me on my candlestick, wherever that is. I'm going to go.

I'm not going to say no to You. And if it looks foolish, I'm still going to do it. And if that's in your heart as we worship, just stand where you are and as we worship and make it like a, it's an Isaiah moment when there was this silence in heaven suddenly when God says, who will go and who shall I send? Who shall we send? And nobody answers.

And I've always seen it this way, that there's this awkward silence. And suddenly this one man stands up and says, I'll go. I'll go.

And he's the most unworthy one there. He's the one that feels undone. He's, everything else there is holy.

Everything else is, doesn't even need redemption except for him. But he says, I'll go. If nobody else will go, I'll go.

And that's the way it's always been. That's the way it will always be.

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