

# The Urgency of the Hour

by Erlo Stegen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of redeeming the time and spreading the gospel, as we will be tested by God and will have to give account for the souls of those we were supposed to reach.*

**Scripture:** Ephesians 5:15

**Topics:** "Faithfulness To God", "Second Coming"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being faithful to the calling of spreading the gospel. He warns that the day of the Lord is coming and everyone will be tested on their faithfulness. The preacher highlights the evil times we are living in and urges believers to redeem the time and shine their light in the world. He shares a personal story of a minister who had a dream about the second coming of the Lord and was unable to account for the congregations and young people under his care. The sermon serves as a reminder to be diligent in our mission to spread the gospel and be prepared for the return of the Lord.

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## Transcript

Let us pray once again. Lord, as we are together here as your servants, may it not be in vain. But may we meet with you, have fellowship with you.

Please be in our midst, walk amongst us. Touch our hearts to your holy word. Amen.

The theme of this conference is the urgency of the hour. May God show us the true meaning of this. The urgency.

The urgency, the importance of this hour, of this time. And we find this verse, this word in Ephesians 5, verse 15 and 16. See then, that you walk carefully.

Not as fools, but as wise. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. And then also from John chapter 9. We must work the works of him who sent me as long as it is day.

Night is coming when no man can work. I'd like us to have a closer look at these words that we have read. In this portion that we have read.

It speaks to us as servants of the Lord and saying we should not be fools. In this time that is evil. The Bible makes it quite clear to us that we are living in evil times.

And that we should redeem the time because time is passing very quickly. Time is running out as we see depicted here on this clock. That it is close to twelve o'clock.

Now we could say, oh but we've got much time left. It's not the case. We heard brother Michael referring to my day when I was born.

And I wondered what he was getting up to. I thought well it's not really necessary to just talk about everything. These could be like just household matters which you don't speak in public.

Home affairs. But now it's not such a big problem to me because I'm not a woman. It's usually the women that are afraid to make their age known.

So I'm now in my 75th year. I'm starting that today as the Zulus would say. And I'm not ashamed of that.

We need to redeem the time because I could die any time. But remember there may be someone a lot younger than I in this audience who could die before I do. Now the Lord here says to us I need to work the works of him who sent me for the night is coming.

I need to work while it's day. I must work. Many translations put it in that way.

Many different languages where it says I must work while it is day. But if you do. We that includes you as much as it affects him.

In the Greek translation it refers to we. We must work. So it includes you as well as himself.

The night will come. To him it came. To you and to me it will come as well.

That's why we shouldn't live as fools even if we are preachers of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we are not allowed to be influenced by these evil times and adjust and compromise with the world. I remember many years ago.

I was at a funeral of someone who was very well known around here. And famous in this world. But after his death his wife was tormented.

On a daily basis he would appear to her. His ghost would come and say my wife I cannot enter. It said I cannot enter because I worshipped money.

Money was important to me. Yes I preached but all the time what was driving me was the money side of things. Jesus said you cannot worship two gods.

You cannot worship God and money. It's impossible. Dear servants of the Lord let us listen.

Let it not go in here and come out there. But let God's word go deep into us and transform us that we will be new people. It will be tragic if we proclaim the gospel and then we will be disqualified in the end.

Paul said I don't want to preach the gospel and one day myself become disqualified. I don't want to preach the gospel and one day myself become disqualified. Let us examine ourselves.

Lest we one day stand before the Lord and say Lord we did great things in your name. We drove out demons we did wonders in your name. And the Lord denies us and says I do not know you.

Whether I'm from South Africa Zambia Zimbabwe or Congo wherever I'm from what does it help if I claim to know him and then he denies knowing me. Now brethren we are people that preach the gospel. Whether we are men or women in the Bible in the Psalms we read that the Lord will send out a great company of preachers.

And there it refers to female preachers. In Hebrew it doesn't refer there to the male but to the female. In Hebrew it doesn't refer there to the male but to the female.

We know that the devil sin came in through the woman but allow now God to once again work through you woman as you brought the Lord into our Savior into this world so may he be able to work through you again. Remember the great commission that last command of the Lord where he said go into all the world preach the gospel to all the nations. We need to preach the gospel that is of the greatest urgency.

Yes it's dark in the world. It's pitch black out there even though the sun shines during the day. I remember years ago Duncan Campbell visited us here in South Africa.

He is the man of God. God used in revival power then the Hebrides. At that time he said if God doesn't send us heaven sent revival from above we will get a revival.

Revival from the bottomless pit. That's England. He says if England doesn't get a genuine Holy Ghost revival from on top it will get one from below and it didn't take long and the Beatles came on to the scene.

Rock and roll and up to this day the world and the young people are soaked in this thing of hell. And hundreds of thousands of so called Christians got together because of rock and roll and the children of the Christians listened to it. And you don't do anything about it.

You don't do anything about it. In spite of the fact that they clearly stated that people who listen to their music and the beat of their music they sell their souls to the devil. And look what has become of England.

And look what has happened even in our country. You see the young people walking around with their headphones. They've got these ear pieces in their ears all the time listening to this music moving to it.

But it doesn't bother you. These are evil times. I remember when I was a child.

When I was a child when we went to town to Meritsburg or Durban and you'd walk down the street. And then you'd meet someone in the street and someone would say to you you know that person doesn't go to church on a Sunday. Everyone would turn around and look at him or her wondering what a person looks like who doesn't go to church.

And one thought wow that is a heathen. But what's it like today? And maybe you make an effort to get to church maybe in the morning but the rest of the day you spend in front of the TV set. In the evening we don't even go to church.

And one wonders what times we are living in. I read something about a Dutch politician. And this is what he says and what he's written.

He says there are now thousands of mosques throughout Europe. And some of these mosques have larger congregations than the churches. And in every European city there are plans to build super mosques.

Many European cities are already one quarter Muslim. He says just take Amsterdam or Marseille in France. In many cities the majority of the under 18 population is Muslim.

The Lord Jesus didn't send us out to proclaim the Muslim gospel but his gospel. And he said the name Mohammed is now very well known. A total of 54 million Muslims now live in Europe.

Now I don't know whether this is true but this is what this Dutch politician says. He says that they've calculated that a staggering 25% of the population in Europe will be Muslim just 12 years from now. And that trend is continuing in spite of the fact that the Christians should be on the march but the opposite is true.

It's also reported that half of French Muslims see their loyalty to Islam as greater than that to France. If that trend continues what will it become like? Some Muslims claim that Africa is theirs. They say the greatest revolution that is still going to take place in Africa, that is their revolution that they want to still see happening.

That the Muslims take over. I don't fight the Muslims. I love them.

And I pray that God will reach them too. We have been called to preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. But the question is what are we Christians doing? What are we proclaiming? What are we busy with? We'll never reach all the nations if we go at the pace that we're going at now.

Because some congregations are no longer growing. Churches that have been built long ago but they are never filled. The gospel is not going forward.

We as Christians should ask ourselves what are we busy doing in these evil times? Jesus said we have to do the work. Now if it says we have to do it, it's not optional that we can do it if we like or we can leave it if we don't want to. Just ask yourself how many people have you won for the Lord in these last years? How many white people have you won? Or how many coloreds have you won? Or Indians? Maybe you are just busy with your own nation.

What about the other nations? But maybe even if you have to answer the question about your own nation, you wouldn't know what to say. These are evil times, but the advantage is that when it's dark, the darker it gets, the brighter the light shines. Remember the story of the rich man and Lazarus? When the rich man saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, he said, Father Abraham sent Lazarus to my five brothers to preach to them that they do not come to this place that I'm in.

He prayed there as he was burning in the flames of hell, praying for his brothers. I don't know whether you pray for your people, for your brothers. But the people burning in the flames of hell, like that rich man, they pray for their brothers.

They pray, Father Abraham, let Lazarus be raised from the dead to go to my brothers that they don't end up in this place. And Abraham said, but they have Moses and the prophets. Do you hear that answer? They have Moses and the prophets.

In today's language, one would just simply say, they have you and they have me. And they should listen to what we tell them. Now let us take ourselves and put ourselves in their shoes, Moses and the prophets.

Do those brothers hear about the message through you? Woe to you and to us if the five brothers that we are meant to go to end up in hell and we haven't warned them. The Lord said to Ezekiel, if the wicked perish and you have not warned him, I will require his blood of your hands. What does that mean, if he requires their blood of your hands? It means you are guilty of murder of that person.

It means you are guilty of murder of that person. What will wash away the blood from my hands? That's what he called out when he had murdered Lady Macbeth. When she murdered her.

Sorry, when she murdered her. And then, who will cleanse me of the blood on my hands? So if God requires their blood of your hands, you are the murderer. I've spoken of the Muslims.

And it's not just the Muslims, there are many nations here on earth. Let me just share with you about a Hindu child. Because we have many Hindus around here as well.

In KwaZulu-Natal, there are more Hindus than white people. In 1993, they wrote about a Hindu woman. Alila was her name.

She was standing on the banks of the Ganges River, that they regard as a holy river. She was holding her tiny infant son close to her heart. An Indian missionary watched her as she slowly approached this huge river until she got to the water.

And she walked in until she was in about knee deep, waist deep. Now remember, they regard this as the holy river. They go and they bathe and wash in this river because they claim it washes them clean, cleanses them of their sin.

So she went in waist deep, and she stood there for a long time, watching the water flowing past. Then all of a sudden, in a quick movement, she threw the six month old baby to his watery death. And this native, this Indian missionary, saw her coming out of the water, and then she knelt on the bank with a broken heart, kneeling in the sand, crying uncontrollably.

And he came and knelt beside her, and asked her why she was crying. And then through her sobs she said, the problems in my home are too many, and my sins are heavy upon me, on my heart. So I offered the best I have to the goddess Ganges, my first born son.

It's referred to, it refers to the Ganges as the goddess. And she says, this is what I'm offering, I'm sacrificing to the goddess. And then this missionary said to her, you know that someone died for you on the cross, so that your sins can be forgiven.

He loves you too, and wants to forgive you of your sins, and set you free from them. She looked at him strangely, she couldn't believe it, big eyes. And she replied, through her tears, why couldn't you have come 30 minutes earlier? If you did, my child would not have had to die.

30 minutes. Millions of people go to that river, go there to cleanse and wash themselves in this river. Especially the Hindus, they go through this ritual.

Many missionaries come too late. I'm a missionary, I figure it's cutthroat to leave. Simply because too many of these servants are slack, they are lazy, they don't get there in time with the gospel.

We don't all need to go to India. Even here, right here where we are, we can proclaim the gospel. Do we realize this commission God has given us to proclaim the gospel, to spread it? Jesus said, I send you to all

the nations.

And he said, just as the Father sent me, so send I you. Are you noted for that, that one can see that that's what drives you, that people hear the gospel? Another missionary in India, Dr. Diff. He returned home to Scotland because of an illness.

When at home, the Presbyterian church had a conference. And they asked Dr. Diff whether he would be a speaker at this conference. He agreed and spoke.

As he spoke though, he lost consciousness. As he fainted, a doctor came forward. And one of the leaders of the church, they quickly went to him.

When the doctor examined him, he noticed that he had had a stroke. But then Dr. Diff regained consciousness. He said, where am I? What's happened? And the doctor and the moderator said to him, we're in a church, you were busy speaking and addressing us.

And he said to them, can you please take me back to the pulpit? The medical doctor said, that's the wrongest thing we can do now. You just mustn't move. You just need complete rest.

And he pleaded with them, he said, please take me to the pulpit. So the doctor and the moderator took him on either side and took him to the front. And then he spoke.

He said, friends. When Queen Victoria asked for volunteers to go into battle for her, many responded. They said, now it's not Queen Victoria, but King Jesus is asking, who will go for us? There is no response.

Because he had challenged them about who was going to go and spread the gospel. No one was prepared to go out. And he said, then rather just take me.

In the sick state that I am, even if I've had a stroke, take me back to India. Just lie me next to the Ganges River, that I can there, even if I'm in the hot sun, at least speak to the people about Jesus. Let me challenge you who are parents.

Have you offered your children to the Lord's service, that they can serve the Lord and be active in his service? And they were challenged at that time as well and said, we realize now that all we've been busy with is our children's education and their well-being here on earth. We had never thought of encouraging them to dedicate their lives to the Lord's service. Maybe you think, well, there's Earl O'Steegan, there are all those white missionaries, they can further the gospel.

And you forget that the matter actually concerns you personally. What have you done for the Lord's kingdom? The Lord Jesus, when he was 12 years old, he knew. And when the mother challenged him, he said, but don't you know I should be about my father's business? He was 12 years old and conscious of the fact, what he came for in this world.

You men, you women, do you realize what you've come to this earth for? Are you busy with the work of our Heavenly Father? That you forget about everything else and that you're conscious of this one thing, I must do the work of my Heavenly Father. Let me close with this story. There was a minister in England.

This is no fairy tale. It's a true story. This minister was about to be pensioned.

He was about to retire and he had been in four or five different congregations. One morning he awoke and he felt sick. His wife noticed that he wasn't feeling well.

And she asked him, what was wrong with him? He said, no, nothing. After a while she asked again, she said, what's wrong? Again he said, nothing. But his wife persisted.

Eventually he said, I had a terrible dream. She said, what did you dream? He said, I had a dream that the Lord was returning. It was the second coming and all of a sudden I found myself before His throne.

And then he said, the Lord asked me, He said, tell me, where are the congregations that you had under you? He said, I couldn't answer him. And the Lord continued, He said, where are the young people? Where are the youth leaders of those congregations that you were in? And he said, I didn't have an answer for the Lord. And eventually the Lord said to me, and where are your children, from the eldest to the youngest? And also those people that worked for you in the house, and your secretaries.

And he said, I didn't know how to answer the Lord. I had no answer for Him. And then the Lord said to him, just look here on my left.

And there he saw a long line of people. And there he saw the elders of the churches, the prayer woman. The young people.

Old and young, all the people that had been in his congregations, from the first to the last one. Then he saw his wife, and all of his children. And then he said, now look where they are heading to.

And as he watched, he saw them all heading towards the bottomless pit. One after the other, falling headlong. And he said, I cannot describe their screams as they went over the edge, and falling into this pit.

And the bottomless one too. And then he said, then the Lord said to me, now you join them as well. And as he said that to his wife, he fell over backwards in his bed.

And he passed away. Now dear brethren, whether you are black or white, that day of the Lord is coming. And the Lord Jesus will test you, he'll test me, whether we've been faithful to our calling.

You see how many people there are in the world. And the Lord Jesus will ask you about their souls. It's not enough just to be a minister.

Just to be a preacher. God will call us to account for these souls. And it won't help to say, but Lord, these were evil times.

The people don't want to listen. The Lord will test to see whether you have been faithful in spreading the gospel. You and I will still have to stand before the Lord.

And that day will reveal whether we have been faithful in this evil time. Whether I'm at home with my wife, with my children, my family, or with the congregation, the people that I'm preaching to, God will test us in regard to all those things. These are evil times.

A political leader challenged me personally over the phone. He said, why are things the way they are in the world? He said, how can things be in the state they are when you are busy, you ministers of the gospel, are preaching the gospel? You know the state of things there where you come from, whether it's in

the Congo or in Zambia? Is your light shining there where you are to all people? These are evil times. But are we redeeming the time? May God help us.

That we'll be faithful that when we have to appear before him on that day that we will not be ashamed. On that day when each one will give account before God. Let us bow our heads.

Lord, we hear and we know that these are evil times. You came into this world of sin. And you have also sent us into this evil world.

And you expect us to continue with the gospel, to spread it like you did. You know what things are like there where we come from. And you also know whether our light is shining there for the other people.

Yes, Lord, we preach the gospel. But will you one day be able to say to us, well done, good and faithful servant? Help us, Lord. Even in this night, that we will see ourselves as you see us.

Work through your Holy Spirit that we will be found faithful to our heavenly calling. That your gospel will spread throughout the earth. Amen.

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