

Hastening the Lord's Coming

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of hastening the coming of the day of God by living a life that counts for God, praying with intensity, and recognizing our responsibility in hastening the day of God.

Duration: 56:06

Scripture: Genesis 6:13-14, Genesis 7:7, Genesis 7:23, Matthew 24:37-39, John 14:6, Hebrews 11:4, Hebrews 11:7

Topics: "Second Coming"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a sense of urgency in doing the will of God. He uses the example of Noah, who dedicated his life to building the ark and fulfilling God's purpose. The speaker encourages believers to be persistent in their efforts to spread the gospel and help those in need, even when faced with challenges or setbacks. He also highlights the need to seek God's will and be obedient to it, rather than being consumed by worldly concerns.

Transcript

...frequently referred to in the New Testament, relation to the second coming of Christ, and that is Noah. I want you to notice the number of places his name comes. First of all, in Matthew 24, Jesus Himself said concerning the coming of the Son of Man, verse 37, Jesus said that the coming of the Son of Man will be like the days of Noah.

For as in those days they were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not understand until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. They didn't understand means they didn't understand and believe what Noah preached.

And there was a reason for that because the Bible says that there was no rain on the earth in those days. It says in Genesis 2, in verse 5, the Lord did not send any rain upon the earth. In verse 6, a mist used to rise from the earth and water the surface of the ground.

So for nearly 1500 years it never rained on the earth, as far as we know. Some other way a mist used to rise up and water the earth like we read in Genesis 2, 6. And therefore when Noah said, it's going to rain, that was something that had never happened before. People thought he was crazy and he started preaching that when he was 480 years old.

So I can imagine that people must have thought he's really gone nuts now. He was okay till now but he suddenly went crazy. He's talking about something that's never happened before.

Rain has never fallen on this earth, they've never seen such a thing. And he continued preaching, they didn't believe, they didn't believe that any such thing, they didn't believe that something that had never happened would happen. And the other thing Noah preached, as we know, was that there was only one way of salvation, into the ark.

Saying that people don't believe today, it's becoming more and more popular for people to accept that all religions are the same. And even Christians, many Christian preachers and leaders and bishops are afraid now to say that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. Because in some places people can attack them if you say that.

If you say there's no other way of salvation. If you preach like Jesus said in Mark 16, verse 15-16, that he who believes not will be condemned. See, in some states of India you could be arrested for preaching what Jesus preached.

And so it's easy for Christians to compromise, move away from what Jesus said. In other words, when a person says that there is some other way of salvation, he's actually saying that Jesus is a liar. Because he said, I'm the way, no one comes to the Father but by me, it's so clear.

So that's what Noah preached. And I see Noah there as an example of a man who was not ashamed to proclaim exactly what God said, even though he himself had never seen rain. He had to preach what he had not seen just because God had said it.

And he continued to preach even though nobody believed on him. And it says here, the coming of the Son of Man is going to be like that. You know, all of a sudden, we read there back in the Old Testament that one day it started to rain.

And there was no time to escape, it was too late. So before it started to rain, all those who were to be saved were inside the ark. And if you turn to 2nd Peter, chapter 2, you read there about the rising among the people.

If you read the context of what is said there in the following verses, it says, in this false teachers, verse 1, there'll be false teachers among you that secretly introduce destructive heresies. And one of the things false prophets say is that if you're a child of God and you sin, it's your salvation. It's a very popular doctrine.

More than 50% of believers around the world believe that. Believers, I might as well tell you that. Here, it speaks about God not sparing the angels, verse 4, that sinned.

They were holy, they were in God's presence, and they were sinned, they were cast out. And not spare the ancient world, sin was serious. And preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness, the Bible says. That's why he had so few in his church, because he never lowered his standards. And it goes on to say, just like, you know, the patience of God waited in Noah's time.

I want you to see in chapter 3, verse 20. 1 Peter 3, sorry, 1 Peter 3, 1st Peter, not 2nd Peter. 1 Peter 3, verse 20.

There's a phrase there, it says, the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah. I just want to point out, there's a number of occasions where Noah is presented in scripture as someone who was a witness for the Lord just before the flood. And there's a picture of those who will be the Lord's people on earth just before the second coming of Christ.

It says in verse 20, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah during the construction of the ark, until the ark was complete and everybody had got in, God kept waiting, waiting, waiting. And in 2nd Peter 3, it says in similar words, verse 9, 2nd Peter 3, verse 9. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. So that's again, the patience of God waiting in our time for all those whom He has called to come to repentance.

And once that number is complete, the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will melt away, pass away with roar. The elements will be destroyed with intense heat and the earth and its works will be burned up. Now that's something that's never happened before.

Noah preached about rain and we preach about fire. And that type of fire has never happened. A fair fire has fallen from heaven to earth.

Occasionally in Sodom and Gomorrah and the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu were killed with fire. The soldiers who came to capture Elijah were killed with fire from heaven. So judgment by fire from heaven has taken place, but it's very rare.

And now, just like the mist that watered the earth, and Noah said the whole earth is going to be covered with rain. And we're saying here that the whole earth is going to be destroyed by burning with intense heat. People don't believe that.

It's not going to happen, they say. But what's the Lord waiting for? Just like in that day, the Lord waited because the ark was not complete. In our day, the Lord is waiting for all those whose names are in the Book of Life to be saved.

The Bible says that our names were written, Revelation 13, 8, in the Book of Life for the foundation of the world. It means the Lord looked into the future for thousands of years. And He knew all those who would respond to the gospel in all the thousands of years.

And He wrote their names in the Book of Life. And a lot of them have already been saved. They're already in heaven.

I'm sure more than 90%. And many are saved, they're on the earth. But there are still some names in the Book of Life which are people who have not yet been saved.

And the Lord's waiting for them to be saved. And once the last person is saved, whose name is in the Book of Life, that will be like the last nail put in the ark, family in. People will be taken up and a brief time of judgment on the earth returns.

So in this connection, what is our responsibility towards the coming of this day? That's the question. Do we just sit and wait? Okay, He'll come. There's an expression here, I want you to notice.

In verse 12, 2nd Peter 3.12, it says, Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. Looking for the day of God. That we can understand.

That we look forward for Jesus to come and establish His kingdom on earth. But what does it mean to hasten the coming of that day? It means to hurry up, to somehow hurry that day along. To hasten something means to make it come faster.

How can you make the day of God come faster? Christians have this idea, God's dealings with man on the earth, that whatever will happen, will happen. Prayer changes anything. Whether we pray or not, it will happen.

That's exactly why so many things don't happen. Like I said the other day, when we get to heaven, we'll discover a big list of things we could have received on earth if we had prayed, but which we never received, which we missed. Because we felt, well, if it'll happen, it'll happen.

And it didn't happen. But it would have happened if we had prayed. Because the Bible says very clearly, you do not have because you do not ask.

So it's possible there's something I'm supposed to have, which I don't receive because I don't ask. And Jesus always spoke about asking with intensity. The only two parables that he ever spoke about prayer were of the widow who kept on asking and the man who went to his neighbor's house and kept on knocking till he got.

If that, the point of those two parables is basically one thing, if that widow had not kept on asking, she would have been, continued to be harassed by the enemy like a lot of believers are being harassed by the enemy, defeated by sin because they accept that as normal. You know, that widow, we read in Luke 18, was being harassed by her enemies. Harassed, harassed, harassed.

And she knew that she was not supposed to be harassed. She knew that legally she had a right over her enemy. But her enemy was taking advantage of his stronger power, this poor widow, and harassing her illegally.

And the point of the parable is that Satan is harassing us illegally. There's no need for you to be harassed, there's no need for you to be defeated by sin, there's no need for you to live in fear. But that harassment will not stop unless we go to the judge, unless we go to our Father and keep on knocking, keep on asking.

And I believe the vast majority of believers are being harassed unnecessarily. They have a legal right which they don't claim. And they don't get.

And so many believers seem to be perfectly happy to die as a defeated, money-loving, world-loving Christian. I mean, they started out like that, that's all right. But they seem to be happy to die like that.

And when they get to heaven, they'll discover what they missed. There are a lot of things other believers got, which they could have had, if they had asked. But, you know, we live in a country, in India, the vast majority of people, the religions they follow, teach what is called fatalism.

Fatalism means whatever will happen, will happen. And it's that religion that allows a lot of people in this country to remain poor and to accept that as their lot in life. Okay, that's what we're supposed to be.

We'll be like that. And we never feel that they should improve their circumstances for their children. Some do, but the vast majority don't.

They just accept, for example, bonded laborers in many parts of this country, just accept their lot in life, that we shall always be slaves to the upper-class people. Our forefathers were slaves for generations, and our children and their descendants will be slaves for generations. This is fatalism.

We'll never seek to be free from that. And that attitude, you know, a lot of attitudes that we have as Indians, which are not Christian, they are heathen. The lack of fellowship between husband and wife is an Indian thing.

It's not a Christian thing. The average Indian husband, he doesn't talk to his wife about anything very interesting in fellowship. They don't laugh and joke together.

That's all strange for Indian husbands. We've got that too. A lot of Christians are like that.

And this is another thing which we have got from Indian culture, fatalism. Whatever will happen, will happen. And we apply that to our Christian life, and I believe that's why many, perhaps many sitting here, have accepted a substandard, defeated Christian life, saying, OK, that's normal.

It's not normal. If you went like the judge, like the widow to the judge, you could be different. The same thing with the man who went to his neighbor's house, kept on asking because he wanted to bless somebody who came to him with need.

We also have people around us whom we need, whom we seek to minister to, who are in need. And after trying a few times to help them, we're not able to help them, and we give up. We say, OK, what can we do? That's exactly what that man could have done.

He knocked a few times at his neighbor's house. He tried to get some food for his friend, didn't get it. He said, OK, what can we do? Let's go to bed.

Whatever will be, will be. But the point of that parable is that fellow didn't starve till he got something to bless his friend with. And Jesus was saying, you've got to pray like that, that you don't starve till you have something from God to bless your friend with.

Now, one of the very, very few stories that I believe are true concerning the raising of the dead, I mean, there are lots of people who tell stories about raising the dead, but one of them, you see, when a charismatic or Pentecostal talks about raising the dead, I don't usually believe it, I'll tell you honestly, because they've got a wild imagination. But this story was written by a Baptist. Baptists don't believe in any type of miracle.

They don't believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They don't believe in speaking in tongues. They don't believe in any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And there's a book by a very famous Baptist pastor called John Rice called Prayer, Asking and Receiving. He died many years ago. He was a godly man.

I met him when he came to India about 40 years ago. He writes in that book about a woman whose husband died. He was an unbeliever, I think, if I remember.

And when she came and found people around her husband's body, she pushed everybody out of the room, locked the door and knelt down and prayed and said, God, you can't take away my husband. It's not possible. And I don't remember how long she prayed there for many hours, more than 24 hours.

She said, you can't do it. The interesting thing John Rice says there is, he says, But you may say such events are rare, such faith is also rare. That's the thing that struck me.

Such events are rare, but such faith is also rare. Now I'm not saying that God raises everyone who's dead back to life. But I'm glad that when Jairus was sick and dying, they sent a message to Jesus.

What would have happened if they had not sent a message to Jesus? When Jairus's daughter was dying, I'm glad that he went to Jesus. Supposing he had not gone. Supposing he had not gone.

Just think of that one event. Supposing the father had not gone. Suppose he was going to him and my daughter is dying.

Think what a difference it made to that family because he went. And I believe there are a lot of things that could have been different in our family with our children if he had gone to the Lord a little more. So is there something we have to do? That's my question.

How can I hasten the coming of the day of the Lord? Because it says here, I've got to hasten it. And I think one way is to recognize that perhaps some of those names in the book of life of folks who are not yet saved, maybe you're supposed to reach one of them. Maybe you're supposed to reach one of them.

I'm not talking about a million of them, one of them. And if you do your part, one more name gets ticked off in the book of life and you can hasten the day of God. But if you sit back lazily with the idea that whatever will happen, fixed date, whether I do something or don't do something, he'll come.

See, the cleverer we are, the more our logic works that way. But if we use logic, then we never need to pray. Why do you need to pray? I mean, God already knows what you're going to say.

He already knows what is best. Whether you pray or don't pray, it doesn't really matter. That's usually the problem with clever people.

Most of us in cities are clever. In the villages, people are simpler and that's why they pray more, fast more. Fasting also is absolutely illogical.

I mean, why in the world would God want us to go without food? It's just ridiculous to go without food. What's the point? I tell you honestly, I don't know. But Jesus said it, so we do it.

That's all. A lot of things in scripture are like that. Jesus said it, we do it.

What's the purpose of baptism? You don't need baptism to be saved. We know that salvation is not through water baptism. What's the point of water baptism? What's the point of breaking a bread? What happens when you eat that bread and wine? Supposing you didn't eat the bread and wine for five years, what will happen? You say, whatever will happen, will happen.

I wonder if we are missing out on many things in the Christian life because of logic. For such people, I would ask this question. Can you think of the last time you really got an answer to prayer? That's the thing.

And I'd say, are we supposed to live like this on earth? Hardly any prayer answered? Or do we have to imagine that our prayers are being answered? I thought of people who go to these pilgrimage spots. They go to Tirupati, they go to Vellangani, they go to Lourdes, they go to different, different places. And usually they go with some request from their God.

And you ask these people who come back from this pilgrimage, well, has your God answered your prayer? Well, they say, I hope so. I don't know. That's exactly the answer a lot of Christians give after they pray too.

Has God answered your prayer? Well, I don't know. Maybe He will. Maybe He won't.

If He doesn't, I suppose it's not God's will. If He does, I suppose it is God's will. So the Christian is no more sure than the fellow who's prayed to a faceless idol.

He's prayed to an idol that cannot speak or hear or anything. And we're supposed to be praying to the living God, but in terms of assurance, I don't have any assurance. He doesn't have any assurance either.

Because in the back of our mind, we're logical. We've got a fatalistic attitude. What will happen, will happen.

But here it speaks about hastening the coming of the day of the Lord. Paul had that sense of urgency. And any true Christian will have a sense of urgency, will have a longing that his life must count for God.

Every day of his life must count for God. He must hasten the coming of the day of the Lord. I can imagine how Noah worked overtime on the ark.

Because he knew the ark has to be completed. The rain can't come till the ark is finished. And Jesus can't come till the last person whose name is in that book of life is in there.

Noah could have sat back and said, Well, I suppose God's already decided the date when the rain is going to start. That's already fixed. God's fixed a date.

Like we say, coming of the Lord is fixed. He can say, God has fixed a date when the rain will come. I suppose it'll come, it'll come.

Whether the ark is finished or not, it'll come. No, it will not come till the ark is finished. Can you imagine what would have happened if the rain came before the ark was finished? And on whom did the ark being finished depend? On God or on man? It's a very interesting question.

I'm sure God helped Noah. It'd be impossible for Noah to get all those animals inside the ark if God didn't do it. That was the supernatural work of God.

You know, the two tigers walking in, the two lions walking in, lion and lioness, etc. That was God. So God did a great part of that.

But He depended on Noah so much. Because not one bit of that ark was completed supernaturally. It wasn't God who hammered the nails together.

It was Noah and his sons who hammered those nails together, put the pitch on the ark. And it took a long time to complete, over a hundred years. So, so is the coming of the Lord.

There is a part we have to play with a sense of urgency. It says here in 2 Peter 3, verse 11, Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in all holy conduct and godliness? If you really believe that all these things are to be destroyed, which we see around us, what are you going to live for? What did Noah live for? Do you think he was trying to beautify his house at the cost of neglecting the ark? There's nothing wrong in beautifying the house. It's good.

I'm sure there's a leak in Noah's house, he fixed it. That's okay. But it was not at the cost of the ark.

And if he had to spend money on the ark, and therefore spend less money on beautifying his house, he'd do it. He'd say, okay, never mind if my house is not so beautiful, let's get the ark finished. He was serious.

Because he knew that his house would be burnt up. We turn to 1 John 2, verse 17. Anyone who believes this verse can never live the way other people in the world live.

Impossible. The world is passing away, and also its lusts and its fashions, says in one translation. But the one who does the will of God abides forever.

Now we say, if you have accepted Christ, we abide forever. True. But then we'd have to say that the one who accepts Christ is the one who does the will of God.

Because here it says only the one who does the will of God is going to abide forever. A true disciple of Jesus is one whose whole life is gripped by wanting to do the will of God in his life. Not his own will.

And he knows that the world and all its fashions are going to pass away. How would you live if you knew that all the fashions are going to pass away? I mean, take an illustration. Supposing you knew that a particular fashion of clothes, maybe particularly for women, men's clothes, fashions don't change much at all.

Women's fashions seem to change very frequently. I mean, when I look at thirty years here in Bangalore, men's fashions haven't changed one bit in thirty years. But women's fashions have changed a lot in thirty years.

Now supposing you knew that a particular fashion is going to be changed next year. I mean, in six months' time it's going to be completely different. How many clothes would you stitch of this present fashion? Something like that.

The world and its fashions are passing away. He who does the will of God abides forever. How much is your mind occupied with things that are soon to pass away? It says in 2 Peter 3, one day is with the Lord is a thousand years, a thousand years is one day.

In a short time it will pass away. How much is my mind occupied with that? And how much is my mind occupied with doing the will of God? I want to know God's will. To know, Lord, what is your will? I want to do that.

We must, sometimes we can miss something by not seeking God's will. In my trip to the Gulf last month, I told the brothers and they should pray and see which places I should visit because I'm not sure when the war is going to start there. None of us can be sure.

It appeared pretty close in January. And so I said perhaps I should not, I will skip Doha this time because that's where the American base is from which the war is going to start. So let's all meet in Dubai.

But I said let's not decide right now, let's pray over the next four or five days. I see you brothers pray and I pray. And as we have faith we'll move forward.

So Brother Matthew wrote to me from Doha, Brother, we prayed and we believe the war can only start after you come and go. I said okay, if you've got faith then I'll come. So I changed my plan and I said we go to Doha first.

See if someone has faith, that's, I mean, and his faith plus my faith, that's it. The two wires join, it's okay. So I was glad that somebody there had faith.

That was important. And so I was very glad that we went to Doha because we had some wonderful meetings there to encourage the church and make some new contacts. And then came to Dubai.

We had some very good meetings there too. Except that I lost my voice because we had about 30 meetings in 10 days altogether. And so since I was going to pass through Bombay over the weekend, I thought, you know, maybe we can have some weekend meetings in Bombay.

And that also I wrote to some brothers there and they felt also that would be good. And so we had some wonderful meetings in Bombay, public meetings with about 400 people each night and we had full day meetings as well. I was just thinking that it was good that I got to pray with some other brothers so that we had a sense of what we should do before going.

And, you know, little things like this, it's not whatever will be, will be. Little things like this, if we had done according to our own wisdom, maybe somebody would have got left out who should have been saved. You know, sometimes people hear a word.

I got an email a couple of days ago from someone who said that he heard me preach somewhere a few months ago and was really challenged in hearing that. And some weeks later he was listening to the tape again and he got saved. A she, it's a lady, a Hindu.

So, that's in another country, not here. So, it's amazing how the Lord leads us. And I've come to see that if I'm not one day in the place where God wants me to be each day, I'm not hastening the day of God forward.

If I'm in a place where God doesn't want me to be because I went there seeking something on my own, I could miss God's home. So, anyone who says whatever will be, will be, it's not going to work like that. We must have a sense of urgency, the time in which we live, that I want to be each day where God wants me to be, so that my life can count for God.

And I can never be there if I don't, first of all, deny my own choice in everything. The whole secret of Jesus' life is described in John 6, 38. I came from heaven for one purpose, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.

It was the secret of Jesus' life, John 6, 38. And that's how we're supposed to live. And if we live like that, we can hasten coming in the day of the Lord because the one who does the will of God abides forever.

And everything else is going to pass away. Some things, you know, OK, we didn't get time for it. It doesn't matter.

Maybe there was an interesting movie that everybody talked about. You didn't get time to see it. OK, so what? You do the will of God.

Maybe there's an interesting sight somewhere, that other people say, hey, have you seen that? What's happening over there? No, I didn't get time to see it. So what? If you've done the will of God, that's it. Maybe there's some interesting book you didn't get time to read because there were other things that were more important.

How shall we hasten the day of the Lord? Think of Noah. Turn to Hebrews in chapter 11. Hebrews 11, verse 7. By faith, Noah, being warned by God of things not yet seen, he in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

The righteousness which is according to faith. It was not just Abraham, but also Noah. And how did he become an heir of this righteousness which is according to faith which we have? Not according to law.

There was no law in Noah's time. There was no law in Abraham's time. They were righteous by faith.

He says, we are also righteous by faith. He's comparing the people who lived before Moses gave the law with us who are living after the law has been abolished. You know the two periods in human history when there was no law.

One was before Moses, gave the Ten Commandments. And the other is after Jesus, after the day of Pentecost. So he says, we are living after the day of Pentecost.

Let's compare ourselves with those fellows who lived before the law. They didn't have any law either. Noah was one of those.

How did he become an heir of the righteousness by faith? It's written here. By condemning the world. How did he condemn the world? By his whole way of life showed that he had no time for a lot of things that worldly people were interested in.

I'm sure Noah had friends. Imagine a man living 480 years in the world not having friends. He must have had lots of friends.

And some of them call Noah for something. He says, Noah, I've got something to do. What's he got to do? He's got to go and put one more plank on the ark.

That's what he's got to do. Somebody else calls him for something else. I'm not saying he had no relaxation.

I'm sure he had some relaxation. Otherwise he'd go crazy. But there was a sense of urgency.

The relaxation was only in order to be refreshed again so that he could get back to work on the ark. To get back to work on the ark he needed to sleep, he needed to eat, he needed some recreation. Sure.

But the people in the world were not like that. And Noah condemned the world by the way he lived because he had been warned by God, verse 7. And he believed that warning. God has said it's going to take place.

Things that were not yet seen, it says, in reverence. Boy. You know, I'm sorry to say, I find in the present generation of Christians a tremendous lack of reverence.

There's a lack of reverence for God. There's a lightness and a frivolity and a lightness about the way they talk about things. There's so many jokes about God and hell.

The devil's got even Christians laughing at God and heaven and hell and all these things. And one effect of that you see is that you see a lot of younger people now, they don't have any respect for older people. Sort of gone.

It is an indication of the lack of reverence for God in their life. You go to even heathen people in the villages in India, they worship some unknown God, a false God. But because they do, they respect their elders.

But where reverence for God is gone completely, like in western countries, respect for older people is also gone. And wherever that western influence has come to India, you find these two things go, reverence for God and respect for older people. So, it says here that in reverence he prepared this ark.

There was a sense of seriousness about him as he went about doing the work of the ark, condemning the world. He says, sorry, I can't. I don't have time, fellas, for all the things you're busy with.

That's what Noah would say. If anybody called him and says, yeah, I wish I had time for that, but I don't have it. It says in Matthew chapter 24, where we read in the beginning.

You know, we saw that what were people in the world doing in those days? Matthew 24 and verse 38. I want you to look at verse 38 and see the things that people were doing in the days before the flood. And see if you can find anything sinful in that.

They were eating and drinking. They were marrying and giving in marriage. That's it.

And if you turn to Luke chapter 17, you see a few more things mentioned there about the last days. Verse 28, because Sodom and Gomorrah was also like that. And it is the same as happened in the days of Lot.

Luke 17, 28. Now, Lot was in Sodom. And you'd expect Jesus to be saying, well, the fellas were indulging in sex and homosexuality and killing people and all that.

No. He doesn't mention anything of that. He says they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building.

So you see there? Eight things. Eight things. In verse 27 and 28.

Eating and drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, buying, selling, planting, building. Now, which one of us hasn't done these things? Or isn't planning to do these things? We eat, we drink, we marry, we give in marriage, we buy, we sell, we plant, we build. That's all Jesus said.

It's not that they were living in sin. They were living in sin, sure. But I don't think our problem is that.

Jesus is warning about the preoccupation with a whole lot of things in the world. What was he trying to teach us here? Was he trying to teach we shouldn't eat and drink, and shouldn't marry, shouldn't give in marriage? Far from it. What he was saying was there are a lot of legitimate things in the world.

You can get so taken up with those things. The ark never gets built. You know, Noah was only eight people.

I'm sure his wife helped him hammer some nails in. I'm sure his daughter's-in-law helped him. Those eight people said, Oh, well, Dad.

Okay. Two out of eight means 25% of the workforce is reduced that day, and the work that should be done is slowed down and the ark gets delayed. He says hastening the coming of the day of God need a sense of urgency.

For one thing in these last days, to do the will of God. I want my life to count for God. There are a lot of things I can spend my life doing, but I want to spend my life doing the will of God, building the church.

If there is someone whose name is in the book of life, whom I'm supposed to witness to and bring him in, Lord, I just want to say I'm available. I know hundreds of people. I don't know which one is the one whose name is in the book of life, but if there is one, Lord, here I am, available.

I want to encourage all of you, my brothers and sisters, to pray to God that your life will really be a blessing to some of the people around you in the coming days of this year. There will be something about your way of life that convinces the people around you that you believe this world is passing away. Something that you do, the way you live, something that you do which convinces people this man believes this world is passing away, that this world is not everything.

I remember when I quit my job in the Navy 36 years ago. My colleagues in the Navy would have forgotten about it, but a few years ago I was at a naval function here for ex-officers, and I met an admiral who was with me in the Navy those days, and he said to me, Oh, Zach, I'm so happy to meet you after so many years. This is after, what, 30 years or more? He said, I can never forget how when you had all those prospects you just chucked everything.

He knew I was a Christian. He was amazed that for 30 years he never forgot it. I don't know how many others were.

You know, if you live in a certain way, he won't forget you for 30 years. He wasn't impressed by my cleverness. He saw that I didn't believe this world was going to last forever, that the greatest thing in the world was not to become someone big in the Navy.

Do the people around you know that? Do the people who work with you, live with you, your relatives, your friends, your neighbors who've talked to you, do they sense in you that you've got something far more important to live for, and the thing they're living for is just going to vanish like that? First of all, do you believe it? If you do, I want to encourage you to live as Noah did, condemning the world. He did not live for eating and drinking. He did not live for building and planting.

I'm sure he built, I'm sure he planted, but it was all secondary. He ate and drank, otherwise he could not have lived for 120 years. But his eating and drinking was all directed towards building the ark, building the ark.

He dreamt about the ark, and I can imagine while he was dreaming he dreamt about how to fix the planks and the floors and the ark, and this is what he was dreaming of. He wasn't dreaming about making more money. He was dreaming how to complete the ark.

How can I do? We are so few people, only eight of us in the whole world, and God's given us this tremendous job to do. And we think, Lord, we're so few people, so few people on the earth who are seeking to spread this gospel, this wonderful news that you can have victory over sin. So many Christians don't know it.

What are we doing?

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