

The End of Encouragement

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Well, today is the last day on encouragement and the series on encouragement.! Over the last couple of months, we've seen what encouragement is.

! We've seen that words are powerful. We've seen what happens when God speaks. When God speaks, the world comes into creation. When God speaks, people receive new hearts.

People are saved. We've seen how Christian encouragement works. It works with the gospel and with wisdom. We've seen how we say what we say, how to encourage the suffering.

And last week, we talked about possibilities, all sorts of possibilities. And I hope that you picked out one or two things that you could begin working on.

I don't expect anyone to go and grab a hold of everything that we said. But begin working on one or two things of how we can encourage in our families, in the church, unbelievers, our children.

[1:03] And if you haven't, if you haven't picked out those things, then you can start immediately following this Sunday school by finding someone else to sit by.

Someone that you normally don't sit by. Talking to someone that you don't normally talk to. It's easy to get in a rut where we say the same things and we sit by the same people and we talk about the same things.

But God's grace gets us out of ruts, doesn't it? We were in the rut of sin. We were enslaved to sin and God's grace came in and he broke that bondage.

And so we aren't left to our isolation, to our fear, to our anxiety about talking to others. God hasn't given us a spirit of timidity, of fear, has he?

He's given us a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. So think about that for a second. God's spirit isn't a fearful spirit.

[2:08] Romans 8 tells us that it's the very spirit of Christ. Christ himself comes in us. And Christ wasn't a coward, was he? He wasn't a coward.

He wasn't afraid. And so inside of you lives the very spirit of Christ. And that means you have amazing resources. Amazing resources of power. And of love and of self-discipline.

And so you can start encouraging. Not because you're a great people person. Not because you're a great speaker. But because Christ is in you.

That makes all the difference. And as you rely on him, you're going to learn to speak. And you're going to speak more. And so I want to encourage you, brothers and sisters, live on him. Trust on him.

Rely on his love. Obey in his strength. When you trust him, you're not venturing out onto thin ice. On Christ the solid rock I stand.

[3:07] All other ground is sinking sand. And so you can begin. You're inadequate and of yourself. But you are not by yourself.

Christ is in you. So today we are going to talk about the end of encouragement. The end of encouragement.

One of the most surprising things that the Bible teaches about encouragement is that there is going to be a day when you don't do it anymore.

When you won't have any reason to do it anymore. Encouragement will cease because it won't be needed. It's kind of like missions.

Remember when we talked about missions. Missions exist because worship doesn't. But one day God is going to fill this whole earth with worship. And so there won't be any need for missions any longer.

[4:03] And it's the same thing with encouragement. We won't have to do it anymore because it won't be necessary. It won't be needed. Now it's kind of like going to a race.

Every year in Plymouth there's the Blueberry Festival. And on that Monday there's always a blueberry parade. And attached to the parade there is a race. And so the runners run down the middle of the main street in Plymouth. They run down Michigan Street. And along the way are all these people. And all these people are shouting at the runners. They're cheering them on as they run. And people are screaming, Go Bob! Go Leah! Keep it up! Keep running! You're doing awesome! You know? Whatever. They're encouraging them. But then something happens. At the very end something happens. When the runners cross the line, people stop encouraging them.

[5:07] They stop cheering them on. Instead there's high fives. Instead there's congratulations. There's good job. But no one is saying, Run faster! Keep running!

Go Bob! Why not? Well, it's not because they don't love the person anymore. The race is over. They've crossed the line. There's no point in encouraging anymore. And so there's coming a day when the work of encouragement is going to be over. It's going to be done with. There'll be no more need to do it. There's not going to be any point in shouting, Run faster! Keep going! Because when the runner has crossed the line, when the runner has finished the race of his life, encouragement would be nice, but it wouldn't be necessary. It would be redundant. It would have been better long ago. And so, we need to remember the definition that we talked about so many weeks ago about encouragement.

[6:14] It's speaking the truth in love as we wait for the day of judgment. And that aspect is what we're going to talk about today.

Encouragement is always done as we wait for the day of judgment. Now, when the day of judgment comes, we'll have crossed the line.

We'll have reached the end. We'll run the race. And then there won't be any need for an encouragement. Now, don't you love that song?

We just sang it last week. Oh, church, arise. In the fourth verse, we sing, So, spirit, come. Put strength in every stride. Give grace for every hurdle that we may run with faith to win the prize of a servant good and faithful.

As saints of old still line the way retelling triumphs of His grace, we hear their calls in hunger for the day when with Christ we stand in glory.

[7:17] Do you see the race imagery? Do you see the parade imagery of people surrounding the race course? And we are running and they are encouraging and we are encouraging one another.

But there's coming a day that we hunger for when with Christ we stand in glory. So, standing in glory, hearing, well done, good and faithful servant.

That's the prize that we are running to towards. And that's the goal of encouragement. We're cheering each other on as we go along the way. The saints of old are retelling the triumphs of His grace.

And we're telling each other of God's grace. We're reminding each other. But there's coming a day when the race will be over. And we'll stand with Christ in glory.

We'll have the prize for which we ran. And He'll say, well done, good and faithful servant. And so, there's coming a day when we won't need encouragement because we will have won the race.

[8:20] in Christ's strength and His power and by His grace we will have run the race. Now, isn't that something to look forward to? As we press on, as we are seeking to encourage one another, we need to keep this in mind that we're not going to be about this race forever.

We're not going to be doing this forever. We will have won one day. And there won't be any need for encouragement because we will have won.

But also, there won't be any need for encouragement because there will be nothing to discourage us. You know, it's when the runner is tired, when he faces obstacles, that he needs encouragement. Last year, I ran in something called a mudathlon. and it's this horrible, terrible experience where you run for three miles and there's, you run through ditches of water, you run through mud pits 100 yards long that come up to your thighs and you're just slogging through it and you're climbing over hay bales covered with mud and there's points where you need encouragement.

Right? It's really discouraging when you're slogging through a 100-yard mud pit and you fall down and your face is covered with mud and you're tired and it's so exhausting and you need those people to cheer you on.

[9:55] But there's coming a day, brothers and sisters, when that experience that we see in life of discouragement and mud pits, there's not going to be any more mud pits.

There's not going to be any more bales of hay that you have to climb over. There's not going to be any more crawling through mud because it will be the end of all discouragement.

Isaiah 35, which I think we might get to next week in the morning service, says this, they will enter Zion with singing. Everlasting joy will crown their heads.

Gladness and joy will overtake them and sorrow and sighing will flee away. That's a picture of us crossing the line. We'll enter into Zion singing.

And as we enter, we receive a crown. Joy will crown our heads and gladness and joy will overtake us. And then at the finish line, something flees away.

[11:00] It's all sorrow and all sighing flee away. Now, what does that mean? It means that there's going to be no more discouragement. And we won't have to say keep on brother, keep getting ready sister, keep running because that day will spell the end of all things that are discouraging.

And so every regret, every disappointment, every struggle, every sorrow, every sadness, everything that grieves us, every sin, every wickedness, every evil, everything that we experience now that is discouraging will be gone.

It will flee away. And we'll ask, where is it? It's nowhere to be found. So think about that. What is the most distressing thing in your life?

What brings you the most heartache? What makes you say, sigh in the middle of night? What makes you wake up in the morning and you say, oh, well, on that day, that thing will flee away.

It'll be gone. God himself will be our encourager. Amen. So turn in your Bibles to Revelation 21.

[12:22] Look at verse 3 and 4. On that day, God will be our encourager. Look at verse 3.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne. That's God. In Revelation, God is always sort of looked at out of the side.

He's never really seen directly. And so John hears this loud voice from the throne saying, now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them.

They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes.

There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.

[13:24] Now, on that day, he will be our encourager. And he will do the final bit of encouragement when he gets rid of all discouragement.

When he wipes away the last tear. When he takes care of the last enemy. When he takes care of death and he throws death into the second death and it's no more.

And the whole old order of things. The whole experience experience that we have. This whole life of enemies and mud pits and obstacles.

It's all passed away. I read this a couple weeks ago at the end of Daniel when Aslan says, school's over, the term is over, the holiday has begun.

All that was preparation. And now it's time for the real world to begin. The real life to begin. School's over, the holiday's begun, and God will say that.

[14:32] And that will spell the end of discouragement. Now, remember the heart of encouragement is the gospel. It's not all that encouragement is.

We've seen that. But gospel gives, the gospel gives the framework for encouragement. We're going to talk about, you know, we've talked about wisdom and we've talked about, sometimes we have to say hard words to people or we enter into sorrow with people and we don't say anything.

But the gospel does give the framework for encouragement. And part of the gospel is this coming day of judgment when all evil things are judged.

And we ourselves will be judged. And the reason we can encourage at all, the reason we have anything good to say to one another, the reason we're not living in darkness and just this sorrow all the time is because the gospel is the gospel of the coming kingdom when God will transform everything, including ourselves.

And so there is hope. And part of that message is that the day of judgment is coming. And that isn't just a reason for people to repent. It is that.

[15:48] But that's a reason for us to rejoice. It's a reason for us to rejoice. So, back in Revelation 14, you don't have to turn there, three angels go out across the earth.

They leave the throne of God and they go across the whole earth and in the air they start crying out. And the first angel says this, he had the eternal gospel to proclaim.

So this angel has the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on earth, to every nation, tribe, language, and people. Now, listen to what the eternal gospel is.

He said in a loud voice, fear God and give him glory because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water.

So what's at the heart of the eternal judgment? That the day of judgment or the eternal gospel, that the day of judgment is going to happen and it is happened. And so, on that final day, God will be seen for what he is.

[16:57] You notice that. He's the maker. No longer are people going to worship created things and not the creator. That's what, that's what this whole world is about. It's exchanging the glory of God for created things.

And so, no longer are they going to worship the created things. They're going to worship the creator. And they're going to see God for who he is. And they will fear him and worship him for who he is.

And evil will come to an end. So evil will disappear in the world. And evil will disappear in my heart and your heart.

because every evil thing will be judged and destroyed one way or the other. And the wonderful good news is that we will worship and serve God in the way that we've always wanted to.

The way that we've wanted to since he's put that new heart in us. And we know there's more than what we've experienced. And we know that we could do better, but our hearts are so weak.

[18:01] And in that day we will. Now, it will be a fearful and terrifying day for those who haven't trusted in Jesus.

But for those who have, it's going to be like crossing the finish line. It's going to be entering into Zion with songs of joy and rejoicing. And all of our hopes will come true.

And so, as we press for that day, we're looking forward to when all sighing and sadness flee away. But we can't ever forget that it's good news, but it's also a day of judgment.

And that should make us somber. That should make us sober. That should have a profound effect on how we encourage one another today. first, it should make us careful.

It should make us careful. God, or Jesus warned his hearers, I tell you on the day of judgment, people will give account for every careless word they speak.

[19:13] And when I hear that, I think, how many words do I speak? How much do we all speak? How much talking we do?

And Jesus says none of those words will slip by the day of judgment. He's going to pull them all back. And they're all going to be accounted for. And that's why James says, not many of you should presume to be teachers.

Not many of you should presume to be teachers. My brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We're going to be judged more strictly because that exposes more of the possibility of being a hypocrite, of doing one thing and saying another thing.

But it's a stricter judgment as well because our tongues, James 3, goes on to say, they are dangerous. They are dangerous.

It's because teachers speak more that they're exposed more to the danger because the tongue is a reckless evil. It's a world of iniquity.

[20:20] It's full of deadly poison. It's set on fire by hell itself. Now, so that should make us careful about what we say.

But on the other hand, that shouldn't be a discouragement against, you know, a discouragement for not encouraging. A discouragement against encouragement.

If anything, it should make encouragement all that more important because if our words are going to be judged, every single one, every good word, every evil word are going to be judged.

Let's make them good words. Let's make them good words. Don't waste your words. You are going to speak. So make your words good.

Judgment is coming. Use your words wisely. So speak the truth in love. Speak the truth in love.

Now, secondly, judgment should make us all the more urgent.

[21:26] All the more urgent. Can we wait to encourage? No, because judgment is coming and our work is not in vain.

Your work is not in vain as you encourage. It has eternal value. And that's the amazing thing. We're not just living this life and it has no purpose. It has no meaning.

It has no end. We are all coming to the end. We are all coming to the day of judgment when everything will be evaluated. And so our words of encouragement have eternal value for those that we encourage and also for ourselves.

So the people that we encourage, they are going to face judgment. They are going to face judgment. And our words are preparing them to do that.

We don't have just trifling rolls in each other's lives. We are all sharpening each other, preparing each other for that day of judgment. And so when you see that, when you see judgment coming for your brother or your sister and you see judgment coming for you, then you see that encouragement matters.

[22 : 37] It really does matter what we say to one another because that day is coming. Now, it matters whether you turn up to church or not.

So whether you're here or not, Ashley matters. Whether you attend or you don't attend, Ashley matters. And isn't that what Hebrews says?

Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the day approaching. Think about that.

Your faithful attendance to church can encourage your brother or sister. And guess what? You can also discourage your brother or sister by not being here when you should be here.

None of us are an island. We're not an island to ourselves. None of us live solely to ourselves. And so think about that.

[23 : 46] As much as we'd like to think that my decisions have no effect on anyone else, it's not true. Whether you're here or not can encourage or discourage your brother.

And so think about that. Are you making it a point to be here on Sunday night? Are you making it a point to be here on Wednesday evening for prayer?

Because believe it or not, whether you're there or not, can encourage or discourage. It can prepare your brother and sister for that day of judgment or it can leave them unprepared.

So what are you telling your brothers and sisters by not being here? Maybe that TV or movies or having fun or playing around is more important than God's people, more important than God's day, more important than God's worship.

And so ask yourself, are you encouraging your brothers and sisters? Are you cheering them on the way? Because the end is coming for all of us. So are you helping them get ready for the day of judgment?

[24 : 51] When you stand before him, you're not going to be saying, I really wish I spent more time on myself. I really wish I would have done more of what I wanted to do.

So the day of judgment is coming and what you do spending time developing relationships, what you do spending time being here and encouraging your brothers and sisters and writing letters and visiting people and developing those relationships and loving the hurting and putting yourselves in those hard places where you're trying to encourage the suffering, it's going to mean all the world to you on that day you're not going to be saying, I wish I would have watched more TV.

You're going to be saying, I wish I would have spent more time loving my brother or sister. Because this whole order of things, of saving up for vacation, of buying new electronic gadgets, of having cool new phones, and of making your house just what you want it to be, and living for fun, all that is going to be passing away, it's going to turn to dust in your hands.

And so all I'm saying, all I'm asking you to do is to think about what you're doing. Think about it. Are you using your energy wisely?

Are you living for others? That's how Christ lived, and he didn't waste his life. life. So do you see how important it is for you to live a life of encouragement?

[26 : 37] It's going to mean all the world to you. Turn to 2 Peter chapter 3. 2 Peter chapter 3. Peter tells us what that day of judgment is going to be like.

And as we hear it, Peter is meaning for us to think about the way we're living now. 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 8.

Well, how about we get back up to verse 7. By the same word, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

But do not forget this one thing, dear brothers, dear friends. With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.

He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. No one expects a thief to break into their house.

[27 : 53] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? you ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

The day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

righteousness. The day of judgment is a day of fire. And so I ask, are you building a building, are you building a life that will endure the fire, that will last?

Are you living for the future? Because the future is forever. Now, this life, this present way, this present order of things, it's just a tick on the clock.

[29 : 05] done. And then we're into eternity. But there's a new home, a new earth, a new heaven waiting for us, the home of the righteous. And so we should be about the business of encouraging one another for living for that world, that day.

Not for this day. And so by our choices, the way we spend our energy, our time, and our money, we are encouraging one another either to live for this world that is passing away that's reserved for fire, or we're encouraging one another to live for that coming world.

So make your life worth something. Invest in people. And that's what Jesus did. That's how Jesus lived. Christ loved the church, and he gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Christ kept his eyes on the prize. He kept his eyes on what he was going to gain. And so for the joy set before him, he endured the cross.

So he wasn't living for this passing world. That's who you call Lord. That's who is inside of you.

That's who you are going to face one day as your judge.

[30 : 25] And he lived for the everlasting good of other people. And if he didn't, if he hadn't done that, what hope do you have?

What hope would we have? So Christ was working for eternity. So be like Jesus. Be like Jesus. Now, we've seen your work at encouraging others, investing in others, working on relationships, going out of your way to serve the suffering, is building a building, is working on a building that will last into eternity.

And so our words of encouragement are helping people to live with Jesus as Lord forever. And our words of encouragement are preparing them for the day when they will hear well done, good and faithful servant.

And when we see our brothers and sisters experiencing that, and when we hear that ourselves, it will make encouragement and the trouble that it is so worthwhile.

[31 : 32] And so take heart. Your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Keep your eye on the end. We're going there. We're not going to be stuck in the obstacle course forever.

It's going to come to an end. Now, as we come to close, I want to make you aware of a specific opportunity that you have to encourage someone.

About two weeks ago, our sister LaVangiarian moved out of her house. And she moved into the Miller's Assisted Living Place in Plymouth.

And we've printed out her address, her new address, and we put it on a card on some cards on the table, in the foyer. And so, I would encourage you to pick up one.

And, well, I went to visit her a few days ago. She's in good spirits, but you know, it's hard. It's hard moving. And so, you know, she's struggling through that.

[32 : 39] She has a lovely little apartment there. You know, and you can call her on the phone. She has a little kitchen there. You can bring her food. You can bring her flowers. You can write to her.

You can go down and visit her and eat dinner with her.

The food there is really good. It's not like standard nursing home food. It's very good. You can have very good dinner there with her. And so, think about that. Maybe you can call her up. Maybe you can send flowers to her, see how she's doing. There's lots of possibilities, but I want you to encourage, I want to encourage you to encourage her. our dear sister is coming near the end of the finish line.

I'm not saying she's dying anytime soon. I hope not. what I mean is that in less than two weeks she's going to turn 92.

And she's nearing the finish line. And so, let's cheer her on her way, brothers and sisters. Let's cheer her on the way because she's going to cross that line. And we want her to cross the line with joy, rejoicing that we loved her, rejoicing that we helped prepare her to hear that well done, good and faithful servant.

[33 : 50] So, think about that. Like I said, her address is on the car like this in the foyer. So, please encourage her, don't overwhelm her, but take advantage of this opportunity that you have.

We have a couple of minutes. This is the end of the series on encouragement. Is there anything that you'd like to say? Any questions that you have? Anything that you found helpful?

Anything before we wrap things up? Alright, we are dismissed. Have a good day. Thank you.