

Stay Awake 1/24/2010

Greg Boyd

All right, does anyone have a prophetic word about the game this afternoon? I'm just wondering. Has anyone heard a word from the Lord about this? [Laughter] If it's against the Vikings I don't want to hear it! I'm kind of like that bad king who just wanted to hear the *good* prophecies but let us hope it turns out for the best, which of course is the Vikings winning.

I'm Greg Boyd, I'm the Senior Pastor here and main teacher and things of that sort. Good to see you. Glad you made the choice to be a part of what God's doing here. Before I get into the word I want to just share something that's been so encouraging to my heart. We live in, right now, some really tough economic times. A lot of folks have lost their jobs and cutbacks and all sorts of stuff. OK, so it's just tough across the board. And so, when you take up a special offering in those sorts of circumstances you never know what you're really going to get. Last week we took up an offering for Haiti, to go towards the Haitian relief and the money will be used to help two organizations, two ministries, in Woodland Hills that are centered in Haiti, "COFHED" and "Providence" ministry and some beautiful things there. But we, last week, raised over twenty-five thousand dollars and I want to say thank you. [Audience applause] That is—that's fantastic! Yeah, praise God! That really so encourages me and I know that that is sacrificial giving. That's not out of our surplus; there's not a lot of surplus going around. But I really appreciate that. One of the things that we're doing with this money is supporting a doctor down there who comes out of Woodland Hills. Her name is Jen Halverson. I've spoken about her before. She's been to Haiti, done a lot of work in Haiti, and as soon as this earthquake happened she started looking for a way to get down there and was able to get on a plane and make it in there. Now she's working with a clinic, like her job here for a while, and she's working with one of these make-shift clinics that are down there and just doing some incredible stuff. She has a blog that I just want to tell you about, encourage you to read. If you just google "Jen Halverson" you'll find it, or she entitled this blog "This is *Not* Grey's Anatomy". It's kind of cool. And she's giving sort of a day-by-day account of some of the stuff that she and her team are doing and it's just a great way to stay connected with what's going on there. Some of it's just beautiful and marvelous...and horrific. She has photos on there that are just, oh [pained silence], infected arms that haven't been treated for seven days and it's nasty.

I'll tell you one of the stories that she shared. Actually in this one she links to another blog, Tara Livesay, where she's staying and Tara gives this full account. But there's a place, a part of Haiti, it's the poorest part of Haiti, called The Cite Soleil. I've been there and the level of poverty there is just unthinkable. I mean, Haiti on the whole is just oppressed with poverty but

Cite Soleil, it's really just a dump where some folks started living and it grew into sort of this make-shift shanty town. It's just unimaginable. And that was *before* the earthquake! This earthquake's happened and these people who had nothing now have less. And some of the folks that were injured there were too injured to try to make it—to walk to get transported to one of these clinics or to one of the hospitals and so Jen Halverson and the team that she was a part of went down to Cite Soleil to see what they could do medically. Among other things, they took eleven people, the eleven worst, most injured people they could find, who had been really just laying on the ground for six, seven days because they can't make it to these clinics, and they put them in two pickup trucks; these injured folks, just piled them into two pickup trucks. The hospitals are full and their injuries are beyond what their clinics can handle so they were asking the question, "What should we do here?" Now, they knew that this Navy Comfort ship was coming in, which is going to be—have all the best medicine and doctors and stuff like that. In fact Jen was initially trying to go down there on this Comfort ship. They didn't know when that ship was coming or when they'd be ready to take on people but they thought, "We have nothing to lose" so they just took these pickup trucks and started driving towards the coast in the area where they thought the ship would finally be docked. And as Tara Livesay tells the story, after two hours, more than two hours, of driving on un-drivable roads and going through crowds (there's just so much chaos there) they finally made it to the shore and they found that this team of doctors was just now setting up a tent to start taking in people and assessing them in order that later on they could take them on the ship. And the folks said, "We aren't ready yet to take in people" but Jen said to them, "These folks don't have any more time." One of the ladies was seven months pregnant that had a broken pelvis and so there was just really serious stuff going on there. So this military doctor got on the walkie talkie, he called the ship and before you know it there's a helicopter that comes and was able to just transport these eleven folks onto the ship. They were the first ones on the ship. In fact, some of you maybe saw on CNN that the baby was born on that ship. That was because of this team and it does my heart good, and it should do all our hearts good, to know that we're playing a part in things like this. For these eleven people, we're probably thinking they're going to die just left out there on these make-shift streets in Cite Soleil. Two hours earlier they're looking at death and now they're on a ship getting the best that western medicine can give them and that's just a "Praise God!" thing, a "Praise God!" thing. [Applause] So, if you weren't here last week and you still want to give you can do that on the website. We have a Haitian relief—a place where you can make a donation there or at The Hub in the gathering area there'll be some buckets there if you want to make a contribution to that cause as well.

We are studying the book of Luke, that's what we do here. This isn't church. You thought you came to church but we tricked you. This is really just a seminar and a worship time. Not just a seminar, it's a very *important* seminar. But we do training for church because *we* are the church and church starts when we *leave* this place. Amen? So, we study the Bible,

nothing very fancy, and we're studying the book of Luke right now in chapter 21. And I want to start by—oh by the way this message is entitled "Stay Awake" because I want you to stay awake during this message but also it's about staying awake, at least that's part of what it's about. And I'm going to open with a word of prayer.

Father, we really want to submit ourselves to your word which is a lamp unto our feet, it guides us if we let it. I pray for every person in this auditorium or who's listening through podcast, television, or any other means. I just pray Lord God that you'll help us to be open, and receptive to maybe hear things in a different way, to be challenged perhaps in some ways, but most of all Lord use this word to wake us up, to stir us up, to fan the flame, to rekindle our first love, to be people who live with our total trust in you, and a sense of confidence that your will will be done in us and through us. Holy Spirit, have your way. In Jesus name we pray and all of God's people said... [Audience: "Amen"] Amen.

Starting with verse 28, the last verse we read last week.

Luke 21:28-32

"When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

These things refer to the events that are leading up to the destruction of the temple and the decimation of Jerusalem, the scattering of the Jews out of the Palestine area. This whole passage, you'll recall if you were here last week, was prompted because Jesus said that the temple would be and the disciples said, "When will this take place?" and he's been answering that question all throughout chapter 21 from verse 5 on. So "these things" refers to all the events that are leading up to the destruction of the temple. The focus of this passage is on events that are going to occur in 70 A.D. when Rome sacks Jerusalem and destroys the temple. And so the passage, as I said last week, shouldn't be used as sort of a cryptogram that you look at to try to decode, to figure out how things are going to unfold at the end of history. That's not its purpose. Yet there are principles, as I said last week, principles and teachings that apply to Christians whenever we're in circumstances like this; when we're facing the end of the world as we know it. There are things that we have to learn from this. So what we're going to see now as we move on is that Jesus is going to tell a parable and then supplement what he's already said with some more teachings and so I'm going to break the section down into two separate parts; this is really a two part sermon. Part one will deal with verses 29-32. It says this,

"He told them this parable. 'Look at the fig trees and all the trees. [What's happening here is Jesus is saying, "Look at the fig trees, in fact you could apply this to all the trees.

Because the point we're going to see here, what I'm going to say here is obvious."]
When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.
Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is
near. Truly I tell you; this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things
have happened."

Now, "this generation"—when Jesus uses that phrase he's again anchoring his teaching in the 1st Century. He's not talking about the literal end of the world. Everything he's been talking about is going to happen in one generation. These folks will be alive when this happens. He couldn't possibly be talking about the end of history as such. And what Jesus is telling them is this, "If you're looking for it, then it will be obvious. When the trees start sprouting leaves you know that the summer is near." Duh! Well this isn't rocket science. Keep your eyes open and you'll know that this is going to be happening. And in fact, it was rather obvious starting in the 60s that things were going south very quickly between Rome and Jerusalem and things were heating up. And there were a lot of people who were saying that the judgment of God is coming; it was obvious. I just want to draw attention to that fact for this reason. There's a lot of doomsday preachers around who are always trying to tell you that, you know, "signs of the times" and all these sorts of things and their approach is anything but obvious. They spend a lot of time trying to figure out what does the "666" mean and "Who is the antichrist? Could it be Henry Kissinger, maybe it's Barack Obama? Or maybe it's this guy, or maybe that person. And what's this 'gog and magog' and these lotuses in chapter 7 and what about the bowls of wrath and do these come before or after the seven year rapture period? Blah, blah, blah, blah!" And it's just—they're reading the Bible like it's some kind of horoscope, or tea leaf reading or something like that and what Jesus is saying here is this, "You don't have to do that! It will be obvious, OK, if you're looking for it." That's just the opposite of the mindset that these secret "Bible decoders" tend to have. I really think that is a distraction and in fact comes close to practicing the sort of divination that the Bible itself forbids; trying to divine the future as if any of that could possibly happen, all the little details.

This destruction of Jerusalem and the temple brought an end to Judaism as they knew it. It brought an end to what's called "Temple Judaism", which is the Judaism which is centered on the temple. And then Jesus says that when that's happening you know that the kingdom of God is near. Now, what's that talking about? Realize that Jesus used that phrase a number of times throughout the gospels when he would do miracles and stuff. He says, "If what I'm doing is by the spirit of God you know the kingdom of God is near." And so he *doesn't* mean the end of the world. But what, then, does it mean? And this brings us to, I think, a very important foundational teaching that is frequently misunderstood, so *stay awake!* Take notes if you need to, this is foundational stuff. To understand what Jesus is getting at here you need to understand that the *old* covenant, which we call the Old Testament (testament and covenant

mean the same thing—the word “covenant” is a little more accurate), but the old covenant was a “nation and land program”, a nation and land program. The deal was this, God is saying to his people, “If you will obey me, walk in my ways, then I will give you this Promised Land and I’ll make you into a great nation. But if you don’t obey me then you are on your own and the land will be taken from you and you will not be a great nation. In fact, you’ll lose your national status.” It was a nation and land program.

The temple was at the center of this because the temple came to symbolize—this wasn’t the meaning that God gave it—but for the Jews it came to mean, for most of them it came to mean that this is *God’s house*, which means God lives *here* not *there*, God lives on *this* land not on *that* land, God lives with *this* people, us, not with *them*. It was a land and nation sort of program. Now when Jesus shows up, he doesn’t at all confirm any of that. When Jesus shows up he reveals what God is *really* like, the true character of God, what his will *really* is and he comes to set his people free and to win for himself a bride. Unfortunately his covenant people on the whole, instead of embracing him and receiving him, they reject him and end up participating in his crucifixion, which then evokes the ultimate judgment clause of the old covenant. God says, “If you reject me I will reject you and you’re on your own.” Just as they did centuries earlier when Babylon and Assyria attacked Israel, it was because God withdrew his protection. There’s a point where God says, “If you’re going to push me away, I’ll let myself be pushed away.” And now the judgment clauses of the covenant come into force and God lets these other nations have their way with Israel and it’s not pretty. So also he would do with Rome. “You want to reject me ultimately, well then you’re on your own”, as the covenant stipulates, and God withdraws his protection and Rome comes and does some nasty, barbaric, terrible, terrible things to the Jewish people and that includes destroying the temple.

Now it’s important to realize that God doesn’t make Babylon an evil nation, or Assyria an evil nation, or Rome an evil nation. God doesn’t make them do anything. God doesn’t say, “I’m going to now control you and you go in there and do these nasty things to the Jewish people.” God never makes any individual or a nation evil. He’s a good God; he’s always on the side of good. But when people reject him, there comes a point where God does say, “OK, if that’s how it’s going to be then I have to let you go your own way.” In fact we learn from Jesus that God cries when this happens because when Jesus was coming into Jerusalem he talks about this coming judgment, this coming destruction, and the Bible says he wails, he’s crying! This breaks God’s heart. But if our choice is to reject him he honors that choice. And that’s what the Bible means by the wrath of God, and the judgment of God; the judgment as a natural effect of the cause of rejecting God. Nasty stuff happens and that is an expression of God’s wrath. What was unique about Rome in this instance, as opposed to Babylon or Assyria, is that God would now use this judgment to demonstrate or to reveal, to manifest the truth that the land and nation program was now coming to an end. And just as the temple had symbolized for

the Jewish people that God lives *here* and not *there*, and God is in *this* land and not on *that* land, and God is with *us* not *them*, so also the destruction of the temple would manifest the truth that God is now forged in Christ a new covenant where God would not be especially on the side of one group as opposed to another. And God would not be in one parcel of land as opposed to every other parcel of land. With this new covenant that was forged in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God is doing a bear hug around the entire globe and saying, “Olly olly in free.” This is why Jesus, we saw last week, refers to the time after the destruction of the temple as the “time of the Gentiles, the “goyim”, the nations” because now the household of God will incorporate all different kinds of people; it won’t just be specifically for the Jewish people. So the kingdom that Jesus inaugurated was *now* becoming a visible reality and that’s, I believe, what Jesus was getting at when he associates the manifestation of the kingdom of God with the destruction of Jerusalem.

This end of the land and nation program explains a great deal. It explains why the message that Jesus brought was in many respects radically different from the message that you get in the Old Testament. Jesus knew, of course, as the Son of God knew that the land and nation program (part of the old covenant)—that that was coming to an end. And as we look back and read the Old Testament we could see that that was predicted. The land and nation program was always a provisional thing. It was there to lead us to something else, the new covenant. But where most of the Jewish people were at this point in history—they were interpreting the Bible in kind of a self-centered way and so they thought the land and nation program was permanent. So they wanted the Messiah to confirm all of that, to give us the land *back*, all of the land, and to make us a great nation as we were under David. They expected the Messiah to do that; they wanted a military, political Messiah. When Jesus shows up he goes, “Nope! Not going to happen.” Rather, he manifests, and teaches about, and embodies a very different kind of kingdom. You see it in the gospels and you see it throughout the New Testament that the kingdom that Jesus inaugurated, the reign of God, that’s what the word “kingdom” means, the reign of God that Jesus inaugurated into this world is not any longer about a particular ethnic group, or a particular nation, or a particular land. Rather, this kingdom is about the entire earth and it’s about *all* people, and it’s about *every* nation. It is God’s “olly olly in free”; whosoever will believe, whosoever will receive him, whosoever will bow their knee and submit their heart and come under the lordship of Jesus Christ, you’re part of the kingdom. No longer does it have anything to do with your nationality or ethnicity or where you happen to live. God still loves the Jews, of course, but no more or no less than he loves Americans, or Iraqis, or Russians, or Brazilians, or any other people group. The kingdom of God is an all-encompassing kingdom. In fact—and here is the most beautiful and radical and neglected edge of the kingdom that Jesus brought—in the kingdom not only is it all-inclusive of all peoples, but all of those distinctions based on how you look, or what your ethnicity is, or what your culture is, what your nationality is—all of those distinctions are rendered null and

void, they are completely abolished. The world under the oppression of the devil causes people and tempts us to look at the nations and the people through the grid of those categories. We assess things and file things and judge people based on all the different categories that we filter our perception of them through. So, in the world's way of thinking, it means something significant, at least in some context whether you're white or whether you're black, whether you're Hispanic or Asian. It means something whether you're American or Iraqi or Palestinian. It means something whether you're a male or you're a female. It means something whether you're well-to-do or poor. It means something what your last name is in some contexts, what your nationality is. It means something—the world invests in all those—it means something what color your skin is. It means something what your hair looks like, it means something how you dress. The world invests so much significance in these distinctions. But in the kingdom that Jesus forged with his death there's one new humanity, the Bible says, and all the walls of hostility have been torn down. In Christ there's neither male nor female. In Christ there's neither a bond nor free. In Christ there's neither rich nor poor. In Christ there's neither Jew nor Greek. In the kingdom all of those distinctions are to be completely denuded of their significance. All of those distinctions, the meaning and significance we put into them—the world puts into them—that divide us from one another have been completely abolished. We of course still notice the differences but rather than being an occasion to divide us in the kingdom it's something we celebrate because it just puts on display the multi-faceted wisdom and beauty and character of God. In the kingdom all of those kinds of ways of thinking and looking at people and assessing people and judging people are to be completely done away which means that in the kingdom there is simply no place for thinking along nationalistic lines. Nor is there any place for thinking along gender lines in ways that you would invest it with certain significance, or socio-economic lines. If we're thinking like the kingdom that means we can never say that God is more *here* than *there*, God is over *this* nation more than *that* nation, God is with America more than Iraq or Afghanistan, God is with Israel more than Palestine, all of those—that way of thinking is old covenant kind of thinking. It's land and nation kind of thinking and in contrast with the kingdom way of thinking.

We have to be vigilant to guard—ensure that we never get pulled in to the “us/them” polarities of the world; us/them, my tribe versus that tribe, God's here not there, God's with us not them, America versus them, my ethnicity versus that ethnicity. It permeates the diabolical pollution of the world but in the kingdom all of it, all of it, all of it is to be done away with. We are citizens of a different land. If you're a submitted person to Jesus Christ you belong to a different country that's not of this world! You're a citizen of heaven! You could say, yes, you're still a citizen of America or whatever nation you happen to belong to as you're listening to this, but that's in the most trivial sense of the word. Your citizenship, your heaven citizenship, trumps everything else and it is a beautiful country. And our job, the Bible says, is to be ambassadors of that different country which means we represent that different country and

we're to be putting on display the beauty of that country, that coming kingdom of God. And one of the central aspects of this beautiful country is that all of the ugly divisions and judgments that characterize the fallen world, we're to be free of! We look at the world through a totally different lens and that affects how we interact with the world and how we deal with the world. And the beauty of that is to draw other people into—attract other people into the kingdom.

Now one person said to me, in fact more than one person, but most recently—several months ago I guess it was—they said, “Well are you saying that we should never pray ‘God bless America’ because I got a bumper sticker that says that and I’m kind of proud of it.” And actually you can pray “God bless America” but right after that pray, “God bless Haiti, and God bless Afghanistan, and God bless Africa, and God bless the world!” We’re to have a global perception, no longer tied to the sort of parochialism where, “God bless America *as opposed to* them.” That is old covenant kind of thinking. I get on a regular basis, and this might be a little more dicey but please hear me out—I get on a regular basis cards, postcards or sometimes plaques, or sometimes chocolates, or sometimes plates that have something written on them along these lines, and they come from certain groups that are promoting this, “Pray for the peace of Israel” or “Support Israel” and they send those to pastors because they want us to, encourage us, to keep that agenda in front of our congregations. And I am pro-Israel, and I am all for that and I want to pray for the peace of Israel but in the same breath I want to pray for the peace of Palestine. In fact, you’re not going to have one unless you have the other. [Audience applause] Amen? God is pro-Israel, God is also pro-Palestinian, God is pro-America, God is pro-the world! “For God so loved the *world!*” And that parcel of land sort of thinking is just not part of the new covenant that Jesus made with us. If there’s any area where the church of America falls short I believe it’s right here. As I look at it, the church of America buys into the demonic conditioning of the world as much as the world does, and that divisive “us versus them” sort of thinking. We’re as nationalistic as everybody else it’s just that we do it with Jesus name! So it’s like nationalistic idolatry on steroids! And it clouds the beauty of the kingdom that we’re to be representing as ambassadors and citizens of heaven.

So the central point of this passage so far is that the destruction of the temple and the scattering of the people manifest the truth that the land and nation program has served its purpose and now we are entering a new covenant that’s not about any particular parcel of land and not about any particular nation. It’s about the whole land, the whole earth and it’s about every nation, which brings us then to the second aspect of this passage. Starting in verse 33 Jesus says,

Luke 21:33-38

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life, and that day [that will occur in your lifetime] will close on you suddenly like a trap [like an animal that’s in a trap, that’s how it’s going to feel—boom, it’s there—because you weren’t watching for it]. For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth.”

Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.

[And then Luke closes out the chapter by saying] Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple.”

Two things he tells his disciples to do as they’re looking for the trees to start sprouting their leaves: “Remember [he says] that heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away.” He’s saying, “The world as you know it is going to come to an end” and that’s why he uses the sort of end of the world, apocalyptic language. “The world as you know it is going to come to an end, it’s going to come to a violent end, and as it’s approaching people are going to see this and they’re going to start freaking out. But not *you*; not you. No, you’re going to lift your head high and be confident because your redemption is drawing near. And you can do that if, but only if, you remember that while heaven and earth will pass away, my words will never pass away. The temple, in all its grandeur, will pass away but my words will never pass away. And the Jerusalem that you knew and the religion that you knew, the nation that you knew, the program that you knew, but my word, *my words will never pass away.*” And so, they’re to be encouraged while everyone else is freaking out, they’re to be encouraged because their confidence isn’t rooted in the stability of the temple or of the religion or anything else. Their confidence is to be rooted in the invariant stability of the word of God, and so it is for us. We’re not looking for the temple to be destroyed; we’re in a different generation. We’re not looking for Rome to attack but we *do* know, don’t we, that our world, the world that we know, can come to a speedy end. It happens all the time. And knowing that if our identity and worth and significance and security is on *any* of that there’s going to be anxiety in our heart. Jesus is telling us to put all of our eggs in *this* basket; all of our worth, and security, and hope in the confidence that while everything we see—everything you see, everything we can touch, every material thing around us, it can—not only it can but it will inevitably pass away. While that is true it shouldn’t cause our hearts to trouble because what we know, what we’ve got to know and hold with full confidence, is that the words of Jesus will never pass away. Our nation will invariably pass away, democracy will pass away, our financial systems will pass away, and the well being of the whole earth will eventually pass away. God will create a new heaven and new

earth but this one is going to, in some way, shape or fashion, wind down. World peace as we have it right now will sooner or later pass away. The end is not going to be pleasant. And on an individual basis things can pass away. Our friendships can pass away. People die suddenly. Our health can pass away. Our own finances as many of us know can suddenly pass away. And if any of our hope and identity and security is in any of *that* then how can you not have a racing heart and anxiety because you know that it's all just a matter of time before it leaves us.

But we're to know that while all those things can pass away, the word of God can never pass away. The promises we sang about earlier, they'll never pass away. When God says, "You are my child", you can count on that one. Take that to the bank, that's *solid*. When God says, "You're forgiven", you can take that to the bank, that's solid. It will go on forever and ever and ever. When God says, "You're my bride. I've made you altogether lovely. You ravish my heart", and he says that in the Bible! That lasts forever and ever and ever. When God says, "You're seated with me in heavenly places in Christ Jesus and I've put my Holy Spirit within you and the love and the peace and the joy of the spirit is yours. You have an eternal inheritance that will never ever end." That is solid! No terrorist can get to that one. No financial collapse can get to that one. No flood can get to that one. No fire can get to that one. Heaven and earth can pass away but it doesn't touch *this*! [Audience applause] Amen? And it is so freeing, so incredibly freeing to the degree that that is your confidence; it's so freeing! You know, you still appreciate the things around you but there's a freedom there and now when disaster is coming upon you, you can lift your head up. Where the rest of the world is freaking out you can lift your head up because your redemption draws nigh. Be free. Be free. Put all your eggs and your trust in God and what he says about you, which leads to the second thing that Jesus says his disciples are to do. He says, "Be careful and pray. Don't let your heart be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and anxiety. Be careful and pray." Now, dissipation simply means being torn apart, fragmented. You're just torn in a lot of directions; you're dissipating. Drunkenness you probably already know what that means, careless revelry or drowning out your sorrows, escaping your sorrows through drunkenness. And anxieties are about the cares of this world, the stuff that can easily consume you if you let it. And what Jesus is saying is that if you're dissipating, torn in a lot of different directions, and if you're escaping your problems through alcohol or drug abuse and if you're weighed down by the cares of this world, you haven't been vigilant in guarding against that. Then when the world as you know it comes to an end (to his disciples that will be 70 A.D. to us it will be a different time, and it could happen tonight, you never know) but when that happens you're not ready for it. It gets you like a trap; you're an animal that just got caught. And it's very hard to respond to those things in kingdom faithful ways if you haven't been prepared for it. So Jesus says instead—instead of being torn in all these different directions and escaping the problems of the world through drunkenness and being consumed with anxieties, instead you pray. You be vigilant and pray. And then he says, "Pray so you can escape what is about to happen and be able to stand before the Son of Man."

Now we would like to believe that he was telling us there, “Gosh, if we are praying and are vigilant we won’t go through any of these problems!” Now this is our escape clause. And there’s a lot of Christians who think like that. The trouble is Jesus, we saw just last week, just a couple verses ago said, “You’re going to be seized, you’re going to be put on trial, and you’re going to be persecuted. Your family and friends and everyone’s going to turn against you. The world’s going to hate you and some of you are going to be executed.” So apparently he’s *not* saying that we’re going to *avoid* this. No, in fact the reality is that none of the disciples escaped this. They all die. John lived a couple decades later but he eventually died as well. But he wasn’t giving them a kind of insurance policy here; he wasn’t saying they’re going to avoid the trials that are going to happen. What he’s saying here folks, is that they’ll avoid the judgment, the *meaning* of these trials for other people. That’s why he says—we saw last week he says, “You’re going to die but not a hair on your head will be harmed”. And that was just an idiomatic way of saying, “You’re going to be OK. Of course you’re going to die, persecuted. It’s going to be really unpleasant, too, but don’t worry about that because right after that you’ll be standing before the Son of Man, the one who gave his life for you. Be faithful so that when you die—that’s your redemption drawing near. It doesn’t have the judgment meaning that it has for other people.” Now that applied to people in 70 A.D. but it also applies to us. We’re not looking for Rome to attack or for the temple to be destroyed but we do know that at any moment Jesus could return. Could be! God could decide to wrap this up at any moment. Or if not that we know that at any moment the world as we know it could come to an end. We know that at any moment the terrorists could strike. You don’t know for sure that the plane you’re going to get on tomorrow isn’t going to blow up. You don’t know that for sure. And if not that, diseases can strike and accidents can happen. The world as we know it could come to a quick end and so we’re to be vigilant and pray that this doesn’t catch us by surprise. We know how contingent, how transitory, how “iffy”, how uncertain everything is and so Jesus is saying, “Stay awake to that.” When we fall asleep now we start getting looped into the world and we find ourselves going in all these different directions; we’re dissipating. We’re full of anxiety and maybe we try to medicate ourselves through drug or alcohol abuse. So he’s saying, “Stay awake.” Remember the purpose of this whole thing—it’s driving towards a goal and it will come to an end and then God’s will will be done.

You find this refrain throughout the entire New Testament, “Stay awake. Be vigilant.” I find this, honestly, to be probably the most challenging aspect of being a kingdom person, to stay awake. What I find is that over time I can gradually get secularized. The fire grows a little bit dim. The sense of reality, knowing God’s presence and—it just kind of goes away. I don’t change any of my beliefs or my behaviors but something changes in me. I think anybody who’s walked with the Lord for any length of time will testify that there’s something about time in this fallen world that can have an eroding effect and your passion just sort of seeps away. Your enthusiasm seeps away. You’re way of looking at the world gradually becomes secularized and

before you know it you're basically a secular person, a pagan, it's just that you have Christian beliefs and your faith becomes routine. The Lord here is saying, "Stay awake! And maybe if you're asleep, it's time to wake up. It's time to wake up."

So, I'm going to end by asking the Holy Spirit to do a work here in us. In fact, I'll tell you my sense is that not only some of us individually but we as a people, as a congregation, have somewhat fallen asleep and God wants to baptize us in his fire again. Amen? So, I have some questions here and I want you to close your eyes if that helps. If not, you can keep them open. But be honest and I'm going to ask the Holy Spirit to highlight any of these questions if they apply to you. And just be honest.

Lord, we open our hearts and minds to you right now in this moment; those in this congregation, those listening through podcast or television, same thing.

Ask this question: Am I as passionate about Christ as I've ever been? Am I, and those I share life with, my kingdom community, are we as passionate about Christ as we've ever been? Was there a time when we really were more passionate? What's happened? What changed? Have we lost our first love? Holy Spirit, help us to be honest. Highlight what needs to be highlighted. Ask yourself the question: Is God as real to me right now as he was last year, or five years ago, or twenty years ago? Is Jesus on my mind and on my lips throughout the day? Or, is he just an addendum to my secular day? Does it feel awkward now, maybe it didn't before, but speaking about Christ, talking about the Lord—it just doesn't fit like it used to fit? Holy Spirit, help us to be honest. Ask yourself the question: Do I *long* for Jesus like I used to? Do I pant after him like a deer pants for the water? Do I need him like the air I breathe or is my life pretty self sufficient? Has my faith become largely a routine? Holy Spirit, help us to be honest. Ask yourself the question: Do I experience the life of God, the joy and peace that I used to experience? Am I growing in my capacity to love, especially loving the unlovable? Do I love better now than I did last year or ten years ago? Do I give more sacrificially now than I did last year or ten years ago? Am I growing? Holy Spirit, help us to be honest. Am I, and those I share life with, are we growing in our freedom from the idols of our culture, the values of our culture? Are we looking increasingly different than our culture? Are we contrasting with our culture or do we blend in very easily? Have we lost our first love? Holy Spirit, help us to be honest. Do I have that peace that comes from putting all my trust in Jesus Christ, like perhaps I once did? Am I preoccupied with the cares of this world? Am I being torn in a lot of different directions? Am I fragmented? Am I dissipating? Do I find that I try to escape the anxiety of my life or maybe just medicate the empty boredom of my life through alcohol, drugs, and other things? Holy Spirit, help us to be honest. And finally, if you knew that in two minutes Jesus was going to return and establish his kingdom, and if you knew that in two minutes the world as you know it was going to come to a quick end would that be good news or bad news? Are you looking for

his return with expectation or do you just live in the here and now? Holy Spirit, help us to be honest.

And if any of those things applied to you, this isn't about shame or guilt it's just about letting God do an inventory here. I want to encourage you to do three things: number one, repent; repent, which simply means turn—turn. Commit to walking in a different way, a new way of life. Commit to being revived and renewed and ask God to fan the flame and guide you. The second point is to ask God—we can't willpower our way into change but we can choose to say, "God, I want that fire back. I want that life back, I want that love back. I want that first love, I want to be excited about you once again. I want it to be natural to be talking about you and thinking about you." And ask God to fan that flame and then to guide you into how to put things into place in your life; strategies to stay awake, to be vigilant, to guard against being consumed by the cares of this world. Thirdly, for those who don't have somebody that they can invite in on this process, I encourage you to find somebody, or some other people to do this with you. We cannot on our own, I'm convinced, stay awake. We invariably become part of the pattern of this world. But somebody that you can say, "I'll help you and you help me stay awake and keep that flame going. And when we see each other starting to sort of just slide back into the fallen "normal" of this world, and we invariably will, we'll be there to remind each other 'Stay awake! And walk in a different direction.'"

Holy Spirit, seal on our hearts right now the things that you've been communicating to us. Help us not forget or fall asleep. Fan that flame, burn that fire. Make us alive and vibrant people once again who live with the knowledge that everything will pass away but who don't fret over that because we also know that your word will *never* pass away. And that way we manifest the beautiful kingdom that you came to establish. In Jesus name we pray, amen. Amen, amen, amen. [Audience applause] Amen, amen, amen, amen, amen!

If you want to contribute to the Haitian fund you can do that back at The Hub. Our prayer teams will be up here if you want to come forward and receive prayer for anything. Or if you just want to pray on your own, do that as well. Go out and be ambassadors of the beautiful country that you're a citizen of. God bless.