

Calvary United Methodist Church
August 7, 2011

THE LAST TRUMPET CALL
Rev. R. Jeffrey Fisher



Children's Sermon

1 John 2:28

As all of God's children have gathered this morning, I invite the littlest among us to come forward for the Children's Message. Summer mornings are really tough but I'm glad you are coming up.

Good morning! This morning I would like to read a passage of the scripture that tells us about Jesus loving us and more so how he is planning some place special for us. Every day of our lives God wants us to come into his presence that we might be aware—almost like a friend. Jesus is our friend and he wants us to love him, so I want you to hear this.



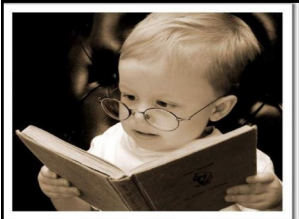
And now, children, stay with Christ. Live deeply in Christ. Then we'll be ready for him when he appears, ready to receive him with open arms, with no cause for red-faced guilt or lame excuses when he arrives.



Are you excited when you know a friend is coming? How many of you are excited when a friend is coming? I know your house is not made up. But when we see a friend we feel good. It is a wonderful feeling to know that friends come upon us. But sometimes we aren't always as ready with things as we would like. I am sure everyone in here has had a talk with their mother or father at sometime. Moms and dads talk to their kids and sometimes they see things like: "I love you so much. We are getting company today and I would like you to clean up your room." Have you ever heard this kind of tale? I used to hear that all the time, even as an adult. Have you ever had a room that looked like this? We all get rooms like that from time to time. We've had those moments where it went for a day or so, maybe not quite that bad.



If your room looked like that and your mother and father asked you to pick it up and you didn't clean up what would they look like? Sometimes when someone asks us to do something and we don't do it they could get a little upset.



How about when you go to school? Many of us like to study and I know you are getting ready to do that in less than a month. Sometimes you have been given a homework assignment and you have to read and you have to prepare and then the teacher finds out that you haven't read it. What do teachers look like when they are upset? Almost like mom or dad. They aren't nearly as angry as they are disappointed because they want you to be successful. They want you to learn. They want you to live in a clean atmosphere.



What if you played soccer or some such thing as that and the coach says we are going to do the best we can today and we are going to do all this kind of work, we are going to run laps, etc. And at the end of the game they know that you didn't do your practice because you couldn't keep up and the coach might get disappointed too.



Every place of our life there are people who ask us to do things and if we don't do them sometimes they are angry but more likely they are disappointed because they wanted us to do things. It's that way in our faith as well.



Jesus is like our father and mother but he is also a teacher. He is also a coach. He is the one that prepares us and tells us how to love others and to care for others. And if we don't do those things he's a little disappointed because he wants us to do it so we make our lives better.

When your parents want you to read it's so you will be able to read and be successful. If they want you to clean your room it's because they want you to be proud of all you have and don't break the things you have. And if your coaches want you to work hard it's so

you become a winner.

Jesus wants us to listen to him. His way of listening is doing things like loving our neighbor, caring for others, honoring our mother and father and doing a lot of good things. If we don't do it Jesus is disappointed but when we come around and decide we are going to do it Jesus is so happy.

I hope you will remember today that in all the things you do God wants us to love others and to try to do the right thing when you are asked to prepare because one day our friend, Jesus, is coming and he wants us to be ready to meet him.

Thank you for coming up today. I wish you a great week.

Message

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

I tend to like a lot of old hymns. In sharing with the children today I am reminded that one day there is a great reunion where we are all called together, those of us who are children of God. There is an old hymn that I remember growing up with. I am going to chat about it a little bit later. It's called *When the Roll is Called up Yonder*. Everyone here has been in a roll call sometime. In Elementary School or High School they go through the list of names. We've lost a lot of those images, and many people never liked them to start with, of the Kingdom of Heaven and having your name written in that Book of Life where God says, "I know you are one of my children." We are one of God's children whether we know it or not. God loves it when we finally say to God, "I'm glad I am one of your children and I want to be identified as being in that number of those who have made a conscious decision that I will follow you with my heart, my soul and all that I am.

I'd like you to hear these words of scripture that tell us what those last days might be like from 1 Corinthians.

But let me tell you something wonderful, a mystery I'll probably never fully understand. We're not all going to die—but we are



all going to be changed. You hear a blast to end all blasts from a trumpet, and in the time that you look up and blink your eyes—it's over. On signal from the trumpet from heaven, the dead will be up and out of their graves, beyond the reach of death, never to die again. At the same moment and in the same way, we'll all be changed.

We don't know what the scripture is like. Some versions say in the twinkling of an eye we will be transformed into a new creation where the dead in Christ will be raised up again. I'm not sure what you feel about the next life. Some, even in the church this day, amaze me to think that this life is it. I tend to believe there is a Kingdom of Heaven and day when all of the saints, all of those you have known, all of those of family and people you have never known before, those who have made a decision to be God's children will be raised up. I'm going to invite you to look at the words of *When the Roll is Called up Yonder* which is found on the insert of your bulletin today.

Someday there will be a last trumpet call. It might be on our deathbed when we pass way and it is just an individual thing or it might be a day when they say the earth comes to an end and we are all part of that Kingdom of Heaven. We never know that day. I know that death will come to all of us at one point but death has victory in it. Those of you who have been around a long time know that death can be a great friend to those of us when our days on this earth have become so weary that we are relieved from these bodies that are exhausted and find new life. But until then what is it like to think about what it will be like when that roll is called and will I be a part of that family.

In looking up this song I did a little history to find out about the writer and author because almost every hymn has someone who has a personal testimony about why they wrote these words. This is very interesting because the composer is from Pennsylvania. It was in 1856 a man named James Black who was trained as an educator, musician and one who was instructing pupils on music and how to use their gifts. He was also involved in the life of the church and had written several small books of anthems and gospel songs.



One day on the street he met a young girl about fourteen years old. He invited her to be a part of the Sunday School of the church he was in at Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Some of you might have visited there at some point in your life. It was the Pine Street United Methodist Church. Mr. Black invited her and surely enough she came. They talked about what it was like to know how much God loved you. She didn't know that. She had grown up in a family where she didn't have much. She was neglected, poor, had a father who was a drunkard and abusive. In that life she didn't understand what it was to understand God's love and how gracious God is and how loving and caring. It's hard to get those examples as a little child if someone hasn't shown you that love and hasn't talked to you about Almighty God. He spoke to her about this and she still couldn't make much sense about it. When he went home that night he tried to think not just about this little girl of fourteen but thousands of others who he probably knew where like her and that one day he expected there would be a day when the roll call would be taken. It would like me asking you a question today: How many of you love God and how many of you have made that decision that you want to spend your eternity in the Kingdom of Heaven? Would they know whether or not this is something they want to be a part of?



He realized the importance of this and he followed this young girl and he learned that she developed pneumonia and passed away. She died at fourteen. It made him all the more fervent to understand that there needed to be a way to get this word to others that we need to be a part of the Kingdom. We need to make a decision to follow God. Not only does following him mean we have securities with all the things of heaven which is a wonderful to thing to know that our eternity is secure but if you recall the last verse to go and serve with all the other saints--to make our day to day life count.



Those of us who make that decision have to understand that that decision to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth is our calling. Those who really believe in the Kingdom of Haven want it to come now. I don't want to wait until I die to find God's peace and I hope you don't either. We need to bring that peace of God not only into our own life but into the lives of those we work with, play with and in our families. That comes when we begin to ask ourselves what it is to live



like God, to love like God, to forgive like God, to be gracious like God. Not to do the things that we often do with each other on this earth which is often to ridicule, to judge, to condemn, and to not grant forgiveness and second chances and third chances?



God invites us to bring the Kingdom of God on earth. A part of what he does is he asks us to think, to mediate and pray about who we are. Who am I as this individual Christian called. For the Kingdom of Heaven is prepared, as I saw some months ago, for those who are prepared for the Kingdom of Haven. Are you ready, at some point in your life, to make that decision—that your day-to-day living will be for Almighty God?



We tend to get caught up in lifestyles and one of the scriptures that I am often reminded of is *Oh we are to be pitied if we only live for the things of this world.* Now I don't own a yacht. I didn't realize these boats cost like several millions of dollars for a small boat. That's amazing! That's not even with servants.

What is it that trips your trigger on earth? Is it a nice house? Is it an exotic vacation? Is it clothing? Traveling all the wonderful places you want to be? The things you accumulate? For we are to be pitied, God says, if that's all we live for because one day it will come to an end. We know as we've seen the financial markets up and down in the last years or so that even when we thought we were prepared for that, life can change very quickly.

Life is a lot more than these temporal things that we have to live. There are many in our life today who have never heard. They are like that fourteen year old girl because we have journeyed away from the people of the church who were so eager to invite other people into the Kingdom of God. Most of us don't see us as evangelists any more. We are not out there inviting our neighbors and our friends and the children on the street saying, "Why don't you come to Calvary next week?" For some reason we've lost that fervor that people a century or so ago had. Because of that when you start talking about God and the things of God people say, "Who? God who?" They don't know what we are talking about. They don't know if they understand it and a part of that is those of us who identify us as people of God don't re-



ally do the best job of it. They hear the wicked words from our mouths, they hear the judgments, they hear our condemnations of other people at work and our families, our friends. They see things on the news and the newspapers we are reading and they wonder what it really means to be a part of the family of God.

In my heart I believe people are looking for something more than they find in their day to day living. They are looking for the peace of God and God wants to grant it.

I shared with a gentleman in the back of the church a while ago that we in the church have become sort of one-sided faith. We want to believe in the loving, caring, kind, gracious God but feel God can never be judging. Now what kind of parents have you known that would only have the good and never correct their children? If we don't correct, we've got problems. The Bible uses some pretty harsh words. In Proverbs it says we treat them like bastard children. That's a tough word to hear because it's like we don't care because they will grow up to be villains in trouble because we've never taken the time to correct them and to show them there is a right and wrong way of life.

The word I used for the children is a lot better than judging and I think it's one really of God but God is a judge. I think God isn't nearly as judgmental about us as he is disappointed in us. He has loved us, he has cared for us, he has given us everything we need and we can't extend that same grace and mercy and peace to other people. He's probably shaking his head and saying what kind of children do I have? How can I be so loving and give them so much and they don't see that they are a part of a bigger picture? How can they miss that sign?

I believe that God has a judging heart that wants us to correct. God is the corrector of all of us but I believe that most of the times we see the arms outstretched as on the cross who says, "No matter where you have been, no matter what you have done, you are welcome in these arms." The arms of Christ are there for you to come home—to find new life, to find hope, to find second chances like you'll find no where else.

The scripture that was read this morning alludes to the fact that



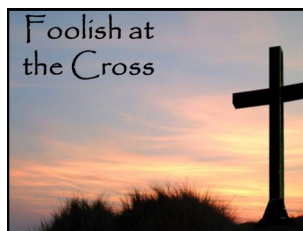
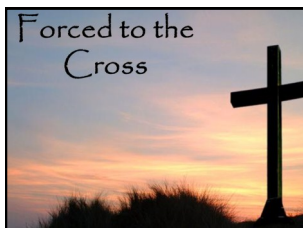


there is something beyond the tomb. When Mary and the others went to the tomb that morning and found that the body of Jesus was gone. At first they were not so sure about the resurrection until they saw him. They knew that we long for is hope.

I go to church not just because I love you and care for you and love God, I want to hope there is something more than this life. I want to hope that people who get news like the thirty soldiers' families who perished this week in that helicopter crash will know that there is still hope. That the person who comes home and finds that their husband or wife is packing up and leaving today knows that there is something beyond that day. That those who have had a son or daughter or themselves sent to prison know that this isn't the end of the story. Or someone who has gone to the doctor and found they have a terminal story knows that this is not final.

There is something beyond this kingdom that all of us and it is the Kingdom of God for which we will go.

I love Max Lucado's writings and I lift it up to you for those who like devotional material says he would like to picture a camera on the cross. He said there are three groups of people in particular he would like to imagine the photos being taken of. The first photo is those who were forced to the cross. He talks about those of us in the church who are drug addicts—we are drug to the church all the time. Was that you? Your mother drug you, your father drug you, your grandparents drugs you to church but you are here and we are glad of it. There are those who are here out of tradition. There are a lot of people who have been forced to the cross but they have never really connected to the man, Jesus, who is on the cross. Unless we connect we are outside that circle of the roll call. We've never made that decision. We are just sort of an acquaintance of Jesus Christ. God wants more than that. He wants us to want to be with him.



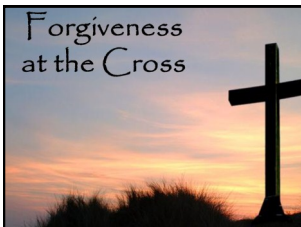
There are those who were foolish at the cross. Do you remember the day Jesus died soldiers were flipping coins and betting on who was going to get a share of his clothing and they were joking about him and they were mocking him? There's a lot of foolishness about the cross even to this day. There are a lot of people in the church who

are foolish. We yak about people behind their backs, called gossip. We mention words like certain places will freeze before we will forgive certain people. All of those kinds of comments when heard or even felt we all feel them. Do you think I've never felt that? Of course, that's human to do that. What do you do when you say with those feelings, Lord, I feel this way help me get over this feeling. Help me learn to love those who seem so difficult for me to love. Help me forgive these persons who have hurt me so bad that I really don't want to forgive them that I wish you would do something terrible to them. Have you ever felt that? That's a bad thought. That you want God to punish somebody else because you are mad at them.

I admit that we all get those thoughts but they are foolish thoughts. You see the foolish people at the cross were somehow thinking that this man Jesus wasn't for real and that all that he stood for really didn't count, but it did. To the point that the man on the one side wasn't foolish at all and he asked the Lord, "Could I be with you today in paradise? Would you forgive me?" And the Lord said to him, "Oh, today you will be with me." Today, no matter what his past was God through Jesus Christ said, "I don't care what you've done. Your mistakes of the past aren't fatal. Let go of them. Today you are with me because I know you want to be with me."

That's the kind of person God is looking for in us, someone who is read. There is forgiveness at the cross. Forgiveness is a tough thing. I don't know what more difficult thing God could have asked us than to forgive other people until we look in the mirror and realize thank God, God forgave us. Jesus is on that cross when it could have been us. He was nailed there for our sins. He suffered for our inequities. He endured his pain and his trial so that when God looks down and sees us, he doesn't see us as a problem child. He sees us as children who are redeemed by his Son because Jesus loved us and God says, "Welcome home." You are made worthy because of God and God in that invites us to welcome others into the family of God; to open our arms, to be gracious, to be loving and caring, that others around us might surely know what it is to love as God first loved us.

God is not nearly concerned about what we have done in our past as God is concerned about how we are walking from this day for-





ward.

If you are here today and you've heard these words and they touch your heart in anyway it means yes, I will not always be perfect; yes, I will have those moments when I am less than God than what God is happy with because I'm not even happy with me. But Lord with my heart and with my soul and with my mind and all that I am, I am going to strive to walk for you and your kingdom to do what I know you would have me do. And we do know that we are going to see those arms of Jesus Christ open wide and say, "You are one of mine and when that roll is called you've got to know that your name is in that number. You will be one of those who I know in my mind, as the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I know your heart's desire. I know in spite of your failures and in spite of your shortcomings and of all the problems you have your biggest desire is to live for me."

So the question remains: When that trumpet sounds will you be there? It's a matter of choice. It's a matter of choice. And my prayer for all of us today is that we chose, consciously, that today as all days I, Lord, want to be your child. I want to live for you with my heart and my soul and my mind.
