

## LEFT BEHIND

(Acts 1:6-14)  
(John 17:1-11)

Intro: We have been left behind.  
-You.  
-I.

Jesus has left the building.  
-We have been left behind.

Jesus has been glorified (John 17:1-5).  
-Crucified.  
-Resurrected.  
-Ascended.  
#Raised on the cross.  
#Raised from the grave.  
#Raised to the right hand of the Father.

We have been left behind.  
-Like Jesus' disciples.  
#Acts 1:6-14.  
#John 17:11.  
-As Jesus' disciples.

- I. Don't Assume That Being Left Behind Is Necessarily A Bad Thing.
  - A. That Is The Perspective Of The *Left Behind* Books and Video.
    1. First thing you need to know about that series.
      - a. Fiction.
      - b. Novels.
    2. When I was chaplain at the St. Louis County Jail.
      - a. Someone gave me:
        - Video.
        - Whole series of books.
      - b. I showed the video one time.
        - I decided:
          - #"Never again."
          - #"This isn't Biblical."
          - #"Where did these guys get this stuff?"

- I never:
  - #Showed that video again.
  - #Gave out a single *Left Behind* book.

- B. Do We Make The Assumption That Left Behind is Bad?
  1. Jesus talks about the day of his coming in Matthew 24:40-41.
    - a. "Two men will be in the field;"
      - "One will be taken and one will be left."
    - b. "Two women will be grinding meal together;"
      - "One will be taken and one will be left."
    - c. Do we assume?
      - Being taken is good.
      - Being left is bad.
        - #Jesus doesn't say.
        - #Biblical writers don't say.
    - d. We are simply to be ready.
      - There will be no second chance.
  2. If we lived in Nazi Germany.
    - a. Gestapo came into our worship service.
      - Some of us were taken.
      - Some of us were left.
    - b. Would you rather be?
      - Taken.
      - Left.
  3. But rather than getting hung up on:
    - a. Taken or left.
    - b. Good or bad.
  4. Reality.
    - a. This is where we are.
    - b. In the world.
    - c. Left behind.
      - Not ascended.
      - Not in glory.
      - Not yet, anyway.

## II. We Are In The World.

- A. This Is Where God Wants Us To Be.
  1. If God wanted us to be somewhere else.
    - a. We would be somewhere else.

2. If God had wanted his eleven disciples to be somewhere else.
  - a. They would have been somewhere else.
  - b. Jesus says:
    - “I am no longer in the world.”
    - “But they are in the world.
    - #John 17:11.

B. We Are In The World For A Purpose.

1. Not to try to figure out times and seasons.
  - a. Harold Camping was not the first.
    - To predict the end of the world.
    - To be wrong about the end of the world.
  - b. When I was in college.
    - I read a book.
      - #*When Prophecy Fails*.
    - Examination.
      - #Those who were part of a group.
        - \*Who believed the world as we know it.
        - +Was going to come to an end.
      - #How they reacted when the prediction didn't come to pass.
    - Conclusion.
      - #Those who were more solidly connected to the group.
        - \*Believed that there had been a new revelation.
        - +End of the world:
          - =Had been postponed.
          - =Needed to be recalculated.
      - #Those who were not so solidly connected to the group.
        - \*Came to believe that it was all a bunch of hoey.
  - c. Jesus says:
    - “Don't worry about it.”
    - “It's not for you to know, anyway.”
  - d. We have not been left behind to figure out times and seasons
2. Not to stand around.
  - a. Our heads in the clouds.
  - b. Our hands in our pockets.
    - Christian faith.
    - Christian discipleship.
      - #Not spectator sport.
        - \*Waiting to see:
          - +What God is going to do next.
          - +What the pastor is going to do next.
          - +What the church council is going to do next.
          - +What the evangelism committee is going to do next.
          - +What our sisters and brothers in the faith are going to do.

- \*What are we going to do next?
- +That's the question.
- =For Jesus' disciples.
- =For us.
- Individually.
- Collectively.
- c. We have not been left behind to stand with our heads in the clouds.
- 3. Prayer.
- a. If we don't know what we're doing here.
- We had better get to praying.
- #Like Jesus' disciples.
- #Like the women.
- \*Constantly devoting themselves to prayer.
- +Acts 1:13-14.
- Prayer is not simply a one-way means of communication.
- #Our telling God what God already knows.
- \*"Do this."
- + "Do that."
- \*"Give me this."
- + "Give me that."
- Prayer is two-ways means of communication.
- #Yes, we can tell God.
- \*Our hurts.
- \*Our hopes.
- #But prayer becomes our spiritual discipline.
- \*Tuning into the right channel.
- \*Putting ourselves on the right wavelength.
- +So that we can:
- =Perceive.
- =Receive.
- God's response.
- #When.
- #Where.
- #How.
- \*It comes.
- b. I talked to my son Joel this week.
- He moved to Atlanta 3½ years ago.
- #To be part of a mega-church.
- #With no:
- \*Job.
- \*Place to stay.
- +Trusting that God would provide.
- #First evening.
- \*He had a place to stay.

- #Within a week.
  - \*He had a job.
- He got a job with Global Christian Network.
  - #Media productions.
    - \*What he got his college degree in.
- This week he was informed.
  - #Atlanta production site is being closed down.
  - #Whole operation is being transferred to New York City.
    - \*At the end of June.
- Joel doesn't want:
  - #To move to New York.
  - #To continue with Global Christian Network.
- So what is he going to do?
  - #He doesn't know for sure.
  - #But he is in prayer about it.
    - \*We can be in prayer.
      - +With him.
      - +For him.
- c. We have been left behind to pray.
- 4. Wait for the Holy Spirit.
  - a. That's what Jesus' disciples were instructed to do.
  - b. Even when we have an idea.
    - What we want to do next.
    - What we want to try to do next.
      - #We still need:
        - \*Presence.
        - \*Power.
          - +Of God.
          - +Of the Holy Spirit.
            - =Guiding.
            - =Directing.
            - =Empowering.
  - c. We have been left behind to wait for the Holy Spirit.
- 5. Be witnesses.
  - a. Witnesses are those who tell what they know.
    - To be Jesus' witnesses means to tell what we know.
      - #About the one who was glorified.
        - \*Crucifixion.
        - \*Resurrection.
        - \*Ascension.
      - #About the one who is still loose in the world.

- b. Sometimes our witness is not positive.
  - Joel moved to Atlanta to be part of this mega-church.
    - #Some months ago.
      - \*Pastor was accused.
        - +Of sexual impropriety.
          - +By several:
            - =Teenage boys.
            - =Young men.
              - They sued him.
    - Joel and I both thought the issue had been resolved months ago.
      - #But apparently not.
    - Week or two ago.
      - #Whole business was in the news again.
      - #Parties involved reached an out-of-court financial settlement.
        - \*You can decide if the payoff.
          - +To put the whole business behind the pastor.
            - =So he could focus on ministry.
          - +Hush money.
          - +Both.
    - It's not the kind of witness that pastor would want to make.
      - #Intentionally.
      - #Unintentionally.
    - It's not the kind of witness we would want to make.
      - #Intentionally.
      - #Unintentionally.
- c. Sometimes we may not be aware of how we make our witness.
  - On Friday.
    - #I officiated at the funeral service for Carroll Werling's mom.
      - \*Zell Adams.
      - \*At Floral Haven.
    - #I knew I made a witness about:
      - \*Only true God.
      - \*Jesus Christ.
    - #I used the first five verses of our Gospel lesson for today.
      - \*John 17:1-5.
        - + "This is eternal life,"
        - "That they may know you, the only true God,"
        - "And Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."
        - =John 17:3.
  - Woman came up to me.
    - #After the service.
    - #Said:
      - \*"I've been to a lot of funerals."
      - \*"I always appreciate how Lutheran pastors preach the gospel."

#I wondered:

\*"How did she know I was Lutheran?"

#Little obituary card that was passed out at the funeral home.

\*Identified me:

+By name.

+But not by position.

=It simply said:

-Pastor Norm Dake.

=It didn't say anything about:

-Ascension Lutheran Church.

#How did she know I was a Lutheran?

\*Did someone tell her?

\*Is there something about how we Lutherans:

+Proclaim the grace of God.

=Love.

=Mercy.

=Forgiveness.

-Of the one true God.

-Of Jesus Christ, whom the Father has sent.

-Wouldn't it be wonderful?

#If people could tell:

\*Who we are.

\*Whose we are.

+Even if we don't explicitly tell them.

d. We have been left behind to be witnesses.

-In word and deed.

-In water and Word.

-In bread and wine.

#"This is eternal life,"

"That they may know you, the only true God,"

"And Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

-John 17:3.

