

Friday: *What to do...*

Read: Jude 22-23 ²² And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Reflect:

It appears three different groups of people are being mentioned in these verses. The first are “those who doubt”. It’s most likely that they doubt because of the influence of those who are “ungodly”. We must be merciful to them (it is a command). If you have problems thinking, “What’s wrong with them!?” – just remember how God has been merciful to you...

Those who are “snatched from the fire” are in danger of hell. These people may never have made a decision for Jesus, or they may be those who are indulging in ungodly behavior that has infiltrated the body (cf. “these” from Monday). Likely both are in view.

The “others” to whom “mercy with fear” must be shown are quite possibly those who “brought in” the ungodly actions (i.e., perverting God’s grace). We must remember that no one is out of the reach of Jesus’ saving love – unless a person willfully keeps themselves there.

Pray: Confess to God any doubts you have about Christianity – ask for His help to guide you to godly answers. Pray that you are “spiritually fit enough” to be able to “rescue” others in need. Pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.

Respond:

Have you ever had doubts about your faith? Do you currently have any? What are you doing to address them?

Why is it we’re content to watch dramatic rescues on the big screen, but reluctant to get involved in “them” in real life? Do we not perceive spiritual danger to be as important as physical danger?

While the mercy is commanded (v23) we must not forget the severity and allurements of sin. How do you guard yourself against it?

Saturday: *Yikes!*

Read: Revelation 20:1-6 ¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while...

Reflect:

So...if I’m reading this “properly” Satan (you know, the red guy with a pointy tail, pitchfork, and pointy ears) is really a dragon...AND he’s in the bottom of a big pit, bound by a chain, for a thousand years?!? Also, during this time period he can’t deceive the nations anymore? Rrrright...and I saw another guy in a red suit last December 25th too.

Have you looked around at the world lately? It appears Satan is unbound and doing quite well. Oh, perhaps those 1,000 years were in the past – or maybe they’re in the future. Maybe no one knows.

As we wrap up this sermon series dealing with Natural Church Development we come to the book of Revelation (all of God’s word speaks to us today). Some avoid it like the plague – others flock to it like, well, something they really like. What is missed when those two extremes occur?

Pray: Pray for those God is prompting to come to New Life tomorrow to be obedient and come. Pray that what we do tomorrow is pleasing to God and that lives will be positively impacted by the interactions we have, the singing, preaching, and teaching...pray for a God-honoring day. Thank God for His love.

Respond:

Has your desire to know God’s word better been increased or decreased by today’s passage?

List the top five ways in which you see Satan as active in the world today.

Begin to prepare yourself today for worship at the building tomorrow.

We Need Each Other – Others Need Us

August 17 – August 23

“No man is an island.” Without a context those words can be taken in a variety of ways.

- A man is not physically an island – meaning he isn’t a small landmass surrounded by water...
- Men aren’t islands – but women could be...
- Boys start out as islands, but with chronological age (or maturity), they turn into something else...
- I suppose there are more possibilities.

At any rate, when we put those words into a larger context (i.e., an extended saying by John Donne – b.1572-d.1631), we see that...

- It talks about the fact that people are not isolated from one another; mankind is interconnected.
- It talks about mortality – we are all going to die (unless Jesus comes back first).

Let’s bring that quote into the body of New Life and see how it fits.

- It’s true that the men here (nor anyone for that matter) are physical islands.
- Yet more importantly it’s true that we are interconnected. We are a part of the body of Christ. We need each other and others need us.
- Oh yeah, we’ll die too – unless Jesus comes back first.

This week we look at the area of Holistic Small Groups from the Natural Church Development health assessment. This was tied for our highest ranking quality characteristic. This is a good thing because it indicates that many at New Life realize they need others in their efforts to live life as a follower of Jesus. However, there are people who are not in Discipleship Groups...

This isn’t to say they think they’re an island, or that they think they don’t need others to grow in the faith (I suppose some might). More than likely there are other reasons for not being in a Discipleship Group – time, not knowing people, uncomfortable around others, have been in one and didn’t like it, etc.

Will you consider giving Discipleship Groups another try? Will you commit to one for a month? If you don’t like it will you let us (or me) know why you don’t? If something is wrong we’d sure like to know about it. Will you do your part to build up this part of the body of Christ here at New Life?

Monday: *Wouldn't it be nice?*

Read: Jude 3-4³ Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.⁴ For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

<p>Reflect: Jude thought it was going to be great to simply reminisce about how good they had it in Jesus. Yet his plans were changed. An urgent need arose and Jude was compelled to respond to it.</p> <p>His response is instructive for our proactive action. Things really haven't changed much over the last two millennia. There are still people who distort God's Word and therefore act in ways which distort the view others have of God. Also, people following God still aren't completely obedient to Him.</p> <p>God's grace was being perverted into an "anything goes" type of mentality – "If God forgives, why concern ourselves with sin?" That line of thinking went against "the faith" and Its teaching. That's some of the instructive part; the proactive will come on another day...</p>	<p>Respond: If you were to write someone about the blessings of your common salvation, what would you include in it? Why not write it?</p> <p>Which of your actions denied the Lordship of Jesus over your life last week?</p> <p>How do you see New Life being "reactive" against sin? How do you see New Life being "proactive" against sin?</p>
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Pray: Continue to pray for workers in God's Kingdom (Mt9:36-38). Thank God for the time of corporate worship yesterday; pray its impact is a lasting one on you this week. Pray New Life sees and seeks ways to be proactive in the lives of people and in the surrounding communities.

Tuesday: *You knew it was coming*

Read: Jude 17-19¹⁷ But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁸ They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions."¹⁹ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

<p>Reflect: The language is emphatic (literally "But you, beloved, <u>you must remember</u>") and the "But you" marks a sharp contrast between verse 17 and what precedes it. The contrast is between believers (i.e., beloved) and "these" who occur throughout the letter (e.g., vs8,10,12,14,16,19) as ungodly.</p> <p>The "predictions" are words spoken beforehand by those handpicked by Jesus (cf. Mt7:15; Acts20:29f). We need not think of "fortune telling" or that a long period of time had passed (e.g., Gal5:21).</p> <p>We also don't need to make the mistake of thinking these words written by Jude nearly 2,000 years ago speak to only "us" or whomever will be alive immediately prior to Jesus coming back. We have been living in the "last time" since the resurrection (e.g., Acts2:17; 2Tim3:1; 2Pet3:3).</p>	<p>Respond: If one is to "remember," doesn't one first have to "know"? How are you working to improve your knowledge of God's word?</p> <p>How often do you think about Jesus possibly coming back today? How can that influence your actions?</p> <p>What, in your mind, are the key components of the faith that you "must remember"? What do others think?</p>
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Pray: Continue to pray for God's people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29). Pray that followers of Jesus won't be/get dismayed by the world – its condition (ungodliness) was foretold. Pray for your desire to know God's word to increase.

Wednesday: *Who to look out for...*

Read: Jude 17-19¹⁷ But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁸ They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions."¹⁹ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

<p>Reflect: A scoffer is one who makes fun of or despises anything that has to do with God, religion, or morality. A related verb carries the connotation of making fun of something for sport (cf. Mt27:29,31,41).</p> <p>It can be OK to follow our "passions" – that same word is frequently translated as "desires". However, difficulty arises when our passions are not influenced by (conformed to) God's word. Here in Jude the passions in verse 18 are influenced by those who have no desire to worship God, or have nothing to do with Him. In other words, they want to do their own thing...</p> <p>Earlier in Jude "these" were described as those who "feed themselves" (cf. v12). Evidently part of doing their own thing was being selfish. It shouldn't come as a surprise (generally speaking), those without the Spirit are selfish. To be "others oriented" we must have the Holy Spirit working in us.</p>	<p>Respond: Have you ever been a "scoffer" of Christianity? What changed?</p> <p>What are you most passionate about in life? How is it influenced by God?</p> <p>Are you aware of any divisions at New Life? What can be done about them?</p>
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Pray: Continue to pray for God's Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1). Ask God to make your number one passion to be conformed more into the likeness of His Son, Jesus. Pray for the Youth Group as they meet tonight and for Tammy Krause as she leads them.

Thursday: *What to do...*

Read: Jude 20-21²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

<p>Reflect: Verse 20 takes us back to verse 3, "...I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." This is how they were to fight. It is also a part of how we can be proactive</p> <p>The "building" imagery is a common one in Scripture (e.g., 1Pet2:5). It doesn't mean that we keep to ourselves and make sure that "I'm doing OK". It's plural, meaning that Christians help and encourage each other to collectively grow for the real being of God's Kingdom. Our faith isn't private. Furthermore, our faith isn't passive either. To "keep" ourselves takes effort – basically obedience (e.g., Jn14:21; 15:9-10).</p> <p>Throughout history people have been waiting for God to act (e.g., Mk15:43; Lk2:25). We have the benefit of knowing that His past action(s) guarantees His future action(s) – one of which will never be repeated (cf. Tit2:13).</p>	<p>Respond: Aren't you glad the Bible tells us what we need to know?</p> <p>The phrase "praying in the Holy Spirit" indicates He is directing our thoughts and desires (e.g., Rom8:26; Eph6:18). Do your prayers indicate His influence, or are they dictated by you and your desires?</p> <p>Do you anticipate the return of Jesus? If so, how is this helpful to you? If not, why not?</p>
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Pray: Continue to pray for open doors to share God's Word (Col4:2-6) and the boldness to do so. Pray for Emporia Christian Schools as they seek to lay a foundation upon which continued

spiritual growth can be added. Pray that you grow more eager for Jesus to return and that it is reflected in how you live your life.