# The Church at Work

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 23 February 2025

Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Well, just a little road map here. Open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 5.

! And we'll be starting 2 Thessalonians in two weeks.
But we've got this passage that we have not finished yet from 1 Thessalonians 5. And I want to be able to get this study finished up that we've been doing on Sunday nights so that the whole church knows kind of where we are as we're going into 2 Thessalonians two weeks from today.
I won't obviously take time to re-preach all of 1 Thessalonians 5. We've been doing that since August. But this is a letter sent to the church to encourage them, to strengthen them.
And much of what he talks about in this letter deals with elements of what we would call eschatology, the study of the last days.
[1:23] And I do want to draw your attention to two things before we jump into the last section. Chapter 4, verses 13 to 18, deals with elements related to the last days.

It speaks in verse 17 about those who are alive being caught up in the clouds with the Lord. And at the end of that section, verse 18 says, Therefore, encourage one another with these words.
And we talked a lot when we were going through this on Sunday nights, dealing with the rapture of the church, the second coming of Christ, things related to all of those details about the importance in Scripture of being encouraged by the truth of the end.
For too many people, when we talk about the end times, it drives some to be anxious and nervous and scared, and others to be combative and argumentative.
But in Scripture, the unveiling of the truth of how things are going to end, biblically, is to be an encouragement to God's people.
[2:39] Therefore, encourage one another. Strengthen each other. Serve each other. Bless each other. Help each other.

That as we think about how things are going to end, as we have just sung, what we know is that Christ is risen from the dead, and Christ is coming again.
And because He's coming again, we have hope. No matter what you're going through today, no matter how difficult or dark the season may be, we have hope.
And that hope is that our God is coming again, and that we will be with Him. And so Scripture says, encourage each other with these words.
This is not an empty encouragement. This is an encouragement based on that which is true.
Chapter 5, 1-11 speaks of the day of the Lord.
[3:38] It's another lengthy section that deals with things about eschatology. But at the end of that section, verse 11, it says again, therefore, encourage one another and build one another up.

This is what should be happening in the church. That we encourage each other, we love each other, we help each other. And one of the ways we help each other is by pointing our attention to the fact that Jesus is coming again, and that as believers, we have nothing to fear in that.
But when you get to the end of chapter 5, he deals in this final section, verses 12-28, with life in the body.
What do we do as a part of the body of Christ while we're waiting for His return? We don't want to simply acknowledge Christ is coming again and then miss the opportunities we have while we're waiting.
We're waiting for Him, but while we wait, we serve. While we wait, we worship. While we wait, we work. And so he deals with how the church is to be at work.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[5:00] The church at work while we're waiting for the return of Christ. And so a couple of Sunday nights ago, we looked at verses 12-15. And we'll pick up here and finish this rest of this section under this theme of the church at work.

Verse 16, Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
Do not quench the spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything. Hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.
I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. What do we do while we wait?
[6:18] How do we live? We're not to be people who simply withdraw from society. We're not to be people who just do foolish things because the Lord's coming again doesn't matter.

We're not to be people who live in fear. We're not to be people who neglect our earthly responsibilities. What do we do? How do we live while we wait for the return of the Lord?
This closing text gives us several things to consider. I hope this will be simple. I hope this will be practical. And I hope it will be rooted in the theology of the return of Christ for our encouragement. Number one, we rejoice and pray. We rejoice and pray. Verse 16, rejoice always, pray without ceasing.
Rejoice and pray. Attitudes are contagious. We know that. There are people that are always unhappy.
[7:25] No matter what happens around them, they're looking for the negative. One of the great joys of my life, and I say this with 100% honesty and transparency, I don't know anyone in our church that's like this.

I'm not saying that we don't have people who can be frustrated, that any of us in a certain moment can't be discouraged, but what I'm telling you is there is no one in this church that when I see them walking down the hall, I think, what are they going to complain about this time?
Now, I say that because I also don't want that to happen. Like, this is something good God has given us. I tell a new members class, which if we can ever have Wednesday night again, we're going to have new members class.
I tell them all the time that we enjoy great unity here. Please don't mess that up. And they laugh because they think I'm joking. I'm really not joking.
There's the Lord and his kindness is giving us lots of new members, and we don't want to take things for granted or to be assumed. We want to state clearly that which we're trying to protect and value.
[8:40] And one of those things is a spirit of unity, which never means that we have to agree on every single decision, never means we have to have the same opinions or preferences.

It does mean that we want to be a people that are so consumed with the glory of Christ that we truly rejoice always. And I'm so thankful that the Lord and his kindness has allowed me to be a member of a church where we don't have complainers.
We don't have people who just always are unhappy about every little thing. For some churches, that's all they know. Maybe you're new to our church and that's been your experience, but that's not how God's people should be.
We're people who rejoice, who want to have a spirit and an attitude of joy. The Bible tells in Psalm 28, verse 7, the Lord is my strength and my shield, and Him my heart trusts, and I am helped.
My heart exalts, and with my song I give thanks to Him. It would just be so strange to be at a church where the Bible is sung, the Bible is taught, the Bible is loved, people are serving, people are caring for each other, and our response to that would be to complain.
[10:10] And so, I don't want to neglect to just show my appreciation to you for living this out. I'm thankful as a member of this church.

I'm thankful to belong to an imperfect church that does strive to rejoice always. That there are times where, of course, things are discussed and debated and talked about, and we've got to make hard decisions.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

That's a part of any church, any family, any organization. But for me to be able to be a member of a church that is not filled with infighting and careless words, I'm so grateful for that.
And I want to thank you as a congregation for your role individually in striving to stay so focused on Christ and the glory of His return that we don't want to waste our time fighting.
Our attitudes are contagious. That's true for the negative. That's true for rejoicing. But while we're waiting, here's our work.
[11:28] We rejoice and we pray. Our rejoicing is in Christ. It's what we just sung. In the victory, Christ has won. That's why we rejoice. We're not rejoicing because our income is perfect.

We're not rejoicing because our job is perfect. We're not rejoicing because our family is perfect. We're not rejoicing because our home is perfect. We all have problems. We all have struggles. We're not rejoicing because every circumstance is perfect. We're rejoicing because in Christ, we have all we need. We're rejoicing because He has saved us by grace and He is coming again.
We rejoice and we pray. Pray without ceasing. This is a continual attitude of prayer. A continual attitude of submitting to the will of God. But one practical way to think about this, to pray without ceasing, is not only would this teach us to just be continually in a spirit of prayer and in a readiness to pray, but when you're at church on a Sunday or a Wednesday, if somebody shares with you a need they have, rather than saying, I'll pray for you, which is good and I hope that you will, just stop right there and pray for them right on the spot.
We all know what it's like for someone to share a need and we say, I'm gonna pray for you, and we mean it. We really do intend to, but we didn't write it down. We didn't make note of it. It just quickly was something that we forgot to do.
[12:55] But one of the great things we can do is to pray for each other. When you're in Sunday school class and you're walking in the class, you're walking out of Sunday school class and someone mentions a prayer need, just step off the side of the hallway right there and just pray right then for them.

When you're here talking before church service and somebody mentions an upcoming surgery they're having or a need that they're experiencing, just right there, just right where you're standing, just take a minute and just pray with them right there.
Not only so you can pray for them in the moment, but to help you to remember to pray for them later. We all have good intentions. When we say we're gonna pray for people, but often our intentions exceed our practice.
And so when a need comes your way, just give yourself the freedom and permission to stop right then and pray for them. Let's be a praying church and a praying church for each other.
And as we rejoice, let's pray without ceasing. Verse 18 says, give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
[14:02] You can't miss how this all fits together. This is how life works. When you are rejoicing in Christ and when you are praying continually, you're going to be thankful.

This doesn't mean that every circumstance we find ourself in is something that we are happy about. It doesn't mean that every circumstance we're in is something that is easy by any means.
But when you are rejoicing in Christ and praying continually, then in whatever your circumstances are, find reasons to give thanks. When you are driving yourself to the doctor's office and you're sick and don't feel well, you're not happy that you're sick, but you can give thanks for the vehicle you have that's giving you transport.
You can give thanks for the job that you have that's perhaps providing insurance to go to the doctor. You can give thanks for the physicians who are there who have dedicated so much of their life and time to be prepared to do that.
You can give thanks for the people in your family who are helping you and taking care of you. You can give thanks for your children or your spouse or your parents who are helping you while you're sick.
[15:20] You can give thanks in that circumstance. It doesn't mean that that circumstance is what you wanted. It doesn't mean that you're happy that you're in that circumstance necessarily, but within that circumstance, there's reasons to give thanks.

even in hard situations, look for reasons to give thanks. Be thankful for a church that loves you and cares for you and prays for you.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Be thankful for Sunday school class members who minister to you. Be thankful for Sunday school teachers who study and labor to teach you the Word. Be thankful for the gift of prayer that you can offer your needs up to the Lord.
Be thankful for a Bible that you can read and know the heart and the mind of God. Be thankful. One of the things that we want to do to train our mind is to say, in every circumstance I'm in, how can I give thanks to God?
And understand the connection between learning to do that and verse 16, rejoice always. People who learn to be grateful are people who are able to rejoice always.
[16:38] People who pray without ceasing, who continually are confessing their sin and praying for each other and giving thanks to the Lord are people who are able to give thanks in all circumstances.

So we rejoice and we pray. By the way, people who really live that way are an incredible blessing to the body of Christ.
People who truly are thankful, truly are prayerful. I could not overstate, it would be impossible to, what a blessing these kinds of people are within the body of Christ.
Number two, we not only rejoice and pray, but the church tests and holds fast. Test and hold fast. But what do we mean? Well, let's go back to verse 19. Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophecies, but test everything. Hold fast to what is good and abstain from every form of evil.
[17:55] We don't want to quench the Spirit. What does the Spirit do for us? Well, the Spirit helps us understand the Bible. The Spirit leads us to intimacy with the Lord. The Spirit directs us to walk in obedience.

The Spirit gives the gift of assurance of salvation. The Spirit, of course, converts us and takes our dead hearts and gives us life. And we want to love the Word of God.
It says, do not despise prophecies. These are the things that God said that He revealed to us. When people proclaim and read the prophecy God has given to us, we are to believe it.
Of course, when this was being written, it was a time when the Holy Spirit was still giving inspiration to people to record the very words of God in Scripture.
Today, with the work of new revelation being finished, when we think of the prophecies of God, we speak of the Word of God, preaching it, believing it, proclaiming it, memorizing it, living according to it.
[19:05] So, for us, to think about how do we not despise prophecies, how would we despise the Word of God? What would that even look like?

Well, for some, it could be as blatant as they hate the Bible, they hate the Lord, they despise the people of God. But, what about for us?
What's the warning for us? Well, even people who attend church, even people who are a part of the local church, we could live as though we're despising the Word of God when we don't obey it, when we don't spend time with it, when we ignore it, when we think that we know better than the Lord.
The application for us here is to test everything according to the Scripture and to make sure we are showing reverence for the Lord by obeying His Word.
We test everything through the lens of Scripture. What does God's Word say? Test everything.
Now, I was speaking of this at the conference I was preaching at yesterday.
[20:24] Something you hear me say all the time here that when you go to your local church, I hope that you trust the man who's preaching. I hope that you trust his life.

I hope that you trust his work. I hope that you trust his knowledge. But, the greatest reminder that our hope is not in a man but is in the Lord is that that preacher has an open Bible and that on your lap you have an open Bible while you're saying to the pastor, I want to make sure that what you're saying lines up with his Word.
Test everything. I say this all the time but I say it again because it comes up in the text again here. I hope that you do believe me. I hope that you do trust me.
But let me be crystal clear. There is never any amount of experience in ministry or education earned or title. Nothing of any of that ever is enough for you to take blindly what somebody says about God.
Everything should be run through the lens of Scripture. I hope that there's not hundreds of you today saying that you don't believe me or you don't trust me or you don't expect what I say to be true.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[21:44] I hope that's not the motive. But if you come to church and your mindset is, oh, you know what, that old man, he's been here a long time. He probably knows what he's talking about. No. I mean, yes, old man, but no, don't think that just because I said it's true.

Test everything. Every word I say, test it through Scripture. Do it graciously. Do it with the Spirit that wants to assume the best of motives, not with the critical spirit, but at the same time, test everything.
And hold fast to what is good. Let your life be dominated by what is true, by what is pure.
However, Philippians 4 says, finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is anything that's excellent, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.
Let me help you with this. I think this will help you. If you say in your life that you have a hard time rejoicing always, and you have a hard time giving thanks in all circumstances, I can tell you why that is, at least in part.
[23:14] It's because you're letting your mind dwell on the junk of this world and not the beauty of Christ. When Philippians 4 says, think on things that are pure and lovely and excellent and praiseworthy.

Let your mind dwell on those things. Brothers and sisters, that's how you rejoice always. You just can't read your Bible and believe it and then pray and give thanks and set your mind on the glory of Christ and the truth of the crucifixion and resurrection and the anticipation of the Lord's return and the promise of heaven.
You can't do that and then walk away and just grumble and complain. You can't. The way that we rejoice always and the way that we give thanks in all circumstances is by setting our mind on things that are true and pure and lovely or to use the language of verse 21, we hold fast to what is good.
Let your homes be filled with the reading of God's word and conversation about the Bible. Let your life be filled with music that speaks of the glory of Christ.
Let your home be dominated by the things of the Lord. And as you test everything through the lens of God's word and hold fast to what is good, you will find yourself rejoicing always and giving thanks in all circumstances.
[25:02] So we rejoice and we pray, we test and hold fast. Third, we are sanctified and blameless. Verses 23 and 24, now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Once again, another reference to the return of Christ. It's all throughout this letter. May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely.
The word here is hageatso. You may be familiar with that word. It means to be set apart, to be separated. Speaks of dedication, speaks of purification, speaks of transformation.
We are to be sanctified. We are to be growing in our spiritual maturity. Hebrews 13, 21 says that we are to be equipped with everything good that you may do his will.
We are to strive under the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to grow in our knowledge of God's word and grow in our obedience to God's word and we do that together as the body of Christ.
[26:18] This is something that we do together. Sanctification is something we fight for together. We strive as individuals to honor Christ.

We strive within our families to honor Christ. We strive as a church family to honor Christ. Christ. This is to be our goal. This is why we are not wanting to be grumblers and complainers because the point of life is not to get our way.
The point of life, the purpose of life is to grow in Christ's likeness. So just understand that the way you speak and the way you think and the way you react will be informed by your theology.
If you really think of and believe in the return of Christ, then what you're going to live with every day is an awareness that we stand before the Lord and we don't want to waste any opportunities to help people prepare for that moment.
And because of that, becoming like Christ is our prevailing goal. But if you forget that, then you make the goal of life for you to get your way.
[27:34] And when you don't get your way, you're going to grumble and complain. Which is why theology matters. The reason you become someone that dwells on things that are good and not complaining is because your theology reminds you every day we will all meet the Lord face to face.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

And I don't want to waste my time complaining. I want to spend my time preparing. That's individually. That's as our family.
That's as a church. He says, may the whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
We're kept by Him. Kept blameless. We're watched over. We're guarded. The Lord Himself keeps us. The Lord Himself watches over us.
Jude, verse 1, says, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ. Christ. We're kept by Him and we're kept for Him.
[28:49] What does the church do while we're waiting for the coming of Christ? We seek to be sanctified. We seek to become like Christ.

We seek to honor Him while we trust and rest in His protection and His provision for us. And look at the promise of verse 24.
He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. My confidence of my salvation is in the work of Christ.
My confidence in the security of my salvation is in Christ. My confidence in one day my glorification is in Christ because He who called me is faithful.
He will surely do it. He will save the uttermost, those who are His. He will protect and keep to the uttermost those who are His.
[29:46] And all who are justified, Romans 8 says, will be glorified. So we rejoice and pray. We test and hold fast.

We seek to be sanctified and blameless. and then just a highly practical thing He says at the end here. Greet and read.
We greet and read. This is as real life as you can get. Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. We greet each other. Again, this means there's relationships here. This is a reminder that the Christian life has not lived in isolation.
I know that's elementary, but we live in a culture that is losing sight of this day by day by day. The reason why these words are in here is because the Christian life is to be lived together.
[30:52] Greet each other. Be invested in each other. Love each other. Have a relationship with each other. Talk to each other. We talked about hospitality for a couple of weeks of the first of the year.

We need to continually grow in that. Continually work on that. Greet each other. Just be practical as you can be.
When this church service is over, turn to the person beside you and greet them. And at least you can say, I did something right today. It's practical, it's biblical, and it's honoring to Christ.
Because when you greet each other, it's a reminder that your spiritual life is not lived in isolation.
When you go to Sunday school and there's someone you haven't seen in a couple of weeks, greet them.
When there's someone you don't know who they are, greet them. When there's someone who is new, greet them. And as you do so, it's not just about good manners, it's about reminding you and reminding them that we are in this spiritual battle together.
[32:02] I care about your walk, you care about mine. I care about your life, you care about mine. See, you could go to church and sit down and all listen to the same sermon and you go to Sunday school and all listen to the same teaching.

but there's something there about the connection of people together. It's not biblical if everybody shows up, sits down, listens, takes notes, leaves, goes home and no one interacts with each other. Even though the word was taught, even though truth was received, even though information was given, there's a part of the spiritual life that's very, very much about us together as a family.
So don't read too quickly over this. As we greet each other and care for each other, we are also to be reading the word of God together.
1 Timothy 4.13, until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and to teaching.
[33:07] Read the word. The word should dominate everything that we do as a congregation. This is why we read Scripture together.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

This is why we memorize Scripture together. This is why in Awana, our children memorize Scripture. This is why students in our lead teams memorize Scripture because we want the word of God to just dominate and permeate everything that we do.
Read this letter. read the words of Scripture. Pay attention to it. Study it. Memorize it. Pray it. Read it. Sing it. Live it. Believe it. Obey it.
And then he ends the letter. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. It's interesting that this letter of 1 Thessalonians 5, if you were with us on Sunday nights, the last six months that we've walked through this, you know how much of this letter is about the return of Christ.
And he gets to the very end of this letter and his final word is grace. Grace be with you, the grace of our Lord.
[34:26] If I were to talk to a thousand unbelievers, unconverted people, and I were to tell them that they will stand before the Lord, that Jesus is coming again, properly understood, that should terrify them.

It's literally the most frightening thing I could tell someone that an unconverted sinner will stand before the Lord face to face. That's frightening.
And yet, in 1 Thessalonians 5, he speaks often of the return of Christ, and I showed you two places where he says, be encouraged by this.
That's fascinating. Because with one group of people on planet Earth, to tell them Christ is coming again is terrifying. Then if you're here today and you don't know Christ is your Savior, and you've not repented of your sin, and you're laughing at the things of God, I'm telling you right now, brothers, sisters, whoever you are among us, we may not know that you're not a believer, but in your heart that you do, and you're not truly in Christ, a spiritual brother or sister, and you're just resting in the fact that everybody assumes that you are, or thinks that you are, or is convinced that you are, I'm telling you, if you're not a believer, to stand before the Lord is the most terrifying thing your mind can fathom.
And yet, for those whose sins are forgiven, who have been brought into Christ by grace through faith, to think of meeting the Lord face to face in this book is an encouragement.
[36:20] It's joy. How can that be? What's the difference between the one who is terrified and the one who is fearless? Well, the answer is grace.

It's all about grace. grace. It was grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved. It was grace that taught me, that showed me how awful my sin is. And it was grace that drove me to my knees to confess my sin.
the difference between being terrified and being fearless is all about the grace of Jesus Christ. Not your works, not your strength, not your intellect, not your giftedness. The only thing that gives us hope is the grace of Jesus Christ.
[37:30] And as we know from other parts of Scripture, we can say it this way, His grace is more than sufficient. On our own, we're not.

By grace, we are. It's fitting that the last words of 1 Thessalonians would be about grace because the predominant theme of this letter has been about the return of Christ.
And when Christ returns and we see Him face to face more than ever before, we will understand man, it was all His grace. Now, when you think about that truth, here's what it should produce within you.
Joy and thankfulness. And the response would be to pray without ceasing while we work as we wait for His appearing.
Let me ask you for a couple moments if you would just to bow your head and close your eyes with me as the deacons of our church join me here at the front and we prepare to receive the elements together.
[38:44] Thank you so much for joining us via live stream this morning.

If you have any questions whatsoever about our church or the ministries that our church provides, please visit us at fbcmustang.org. We would love to follow up with you and get to know you better. As always, we try to emphasize if at all possible if you could be here physically present with us, we would love that and that'd be a joy to serve you in that way.
But thank you again for joining us via live stream today. Have a great day. We'll see you next time. Let's see you next time. For our service of God. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. [39:56] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host