

Date of sermon: 7/17/2021
Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke
Bible passage or verse: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15
Title of Sermon: Anchored by our Diligence
Series: Living in the Light of His Coming - #5

[6](#) In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. [7](#) For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, [8](#) nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. [9](#) We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. [10](#) For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." [11](#) We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. [12](#) Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. [13](#) And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good. [14](#) Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. [15](#) Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.

So, we're finishing up this series today, called "Living in the Light of Christ's Coming." Paul was writing to a church -- they thought they'd missed the return of Christ. They thought He'd come back and they had missed it. They were trying to figure out what's gonna happen, and because of that bad theology, they were doing some crazy things, like quitting their jobs, not paying their bills, thinking that somehow -- "Well, golly, if we missed the return of Christ, maybe we can get it on the rebound." And they were out trying to evangelize and do all these things, but they weren't taking care of basic things. Paul writes to them and he says, "Guys, when the end times come, there are a few things that you need to know." Chapter 1. "You are going to suffer. You're not gonna get out of it." It's not something that God says, "Oh! You're a Christian! I'm gonna keep you from this."

In fact, it was interesting -- I was reading this morning in 1 Corinthians 16, and Paul was writing, and he was telling the church, "I want to come and see you, but I can't yet because there's this wonderful open door in Ephesus. And there's great opposition here." Now, I don't know about you, but I don't attribute those two together. When I hear "open door," to be honest with you, I hear blessing and the ease, and -- God has opened a door, that means we're gonna walk through it. Paul says, "There's an open door, and there's phenomenal opposition." And I was really kind of rebuked this morning in my thinking, that I don't think like God. I don't think like the Apostle Paul. I think that, when God shows up and it's an open door, that means it's a path of, you know, kind of easier resistance. I kind of think more like water than I do God. And Paul says, in chapter 1 of 2 Thessalonians, "You're gonna experience difficulty." And yet to anchor your life in truth. And the truth, he says in chapter 2 is, before the gathering, or the coming of Christ and the gathering of the people of God, and the judgment, there are some things that need to happen. Number one, there's going to be a great rebellion. Matthew talks about the hearts of many will grow cold, and I believe, if you look at the language that Paul uses, he uses a couple of key words that are only used in Matthew 24, that Paul is actually referencing the words of Jesus as he is explaining, and kind of giving a commentary back and forth of Matthew 24. So -- he says there are two things that will absolutely occur. Number one, the great rebellion, and number two, the man of lawlessness -- or, if you will, the anti-Christ is gonna show up. He says, "You know that the coming and gathering and the judgment of Christ has not occurred because those two things haven't happened. Anchor yourself in the truth of God's Word. May not be what you look forward to, may be kind of challenging, but anchor yourself in God's Word and you're never gonna regret it."

Number two, he says, "I want you to anchor yourself in the love of God. He loves you. He adores you. And He's not going to change that." Third, he says, "I want you to anchor yourself in prayer. I want you to be a praying people, because that's where you're gonna find your greatest strength." And he finishes today with anchor yourselves in what he calls the discipline of diligence. What is it? It is to relate something that you and I both know something about, and that is, a job. So, I'm going to do a little word association. When you hear the word "job," what comes to your mind? What pops to your mind? Some

people think, "Job -- I hate my" -- Other people think, "I want another job." Some people say, "I love my job." A lot of people think, "I can't wait 'til I get to quit my job and retire."

When I was a kid -- I've told this before -- when I was a kid I went to church every Sunday night. My mom said, "You go to church or you're out of the will." I said, "Mom, you don't have much in your will," and she said, "Go to church anyhow." I enjoyed a lot of it, honestly. It was fun. I mean, we had a great place and great church. But one of the things I do remember is how much people were kind of miserable on Sunday night. And they would talk about, "Oh, I gotta go to the salt mines tomorrow. Gotta go to work." "I can't wait 'til I can retire." And I thought as a kid -- "Man, God, please spare me from this nonsense. I do not want to spend the rest of my life dreading the next day." And that's what they did. I made a commitment at that point, "Man, if I don't like what I'm doing, I'm out. I mean, if I have to just go to Walmart and say 'hi' to people on the way in and hand 'em a cart, if that's the only thing that'll make me happy, I'm going!" Thankfully, I love my job, so you're not gonna see me at Walmart! Not for ten more years. But I was like -- it was terrible. But they hated it. That's what Paul was writing to. He was writing to a group of people who said, "I just quit my job." Why? Well, they had some faulty thinking. And their thinking went like this -- "Christ has come back, He's already come, or He's gonna come, and so therefore, we gotta be about the really important things! We gotta be about the critical things of life!" And they were stopping their work, they were being busybodies, they were idle, they were undisciplined. And Paul was writing to them, saying, "Whoa whoa whoa -- time out. You aren't thinking correctly." And this is what he says to them. I'm in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, let's start in verse 6. "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, keep away from every brother" -- he attributes them. They're brothers. These aren't enemies. And he says later that very statement, "These are brothers. These are Christians who are idle, that do not live according to the teaching that you received from us." Another word for "idle" would be "undisciplined."

"For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it." (Unless you took me out to lunch after church.) "On the contrary, we worked night and day -- every day -- we labored, we toiled, so that we would not be a burden to you. We did this, not because we didn't have the right to a salary -- we did -- but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule." And here was Paul's principal rule in this area: "'If a man will not work, he shall not eat.'" Pretty simple, isn't it? He believes that so much that he says it in a different way later. "We hear that some of you are idle -- you're undisciplined." They're not busy -- they're busybodies. "Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus to settle down" -- in other words, dig deep roots -- "and earn the bread that they eat. And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what's right. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet, do not regard him as an enemy -- he's not. He's your brother, and don't forget that."

What did Paul tell these folks? As you prepare for the return of Christ, people are gonna do weird things. They are. They're going to have strange behavior. As the return of Christ comes, the Scriptures tell us that the love of many will grow cold, inflation is going to soar -- in fact, the Scripture says that a loaf of bread will cost, what, a week's wages? Imagine that. Just go into the grocery store today and look at that loaf of bread, and say, "When the return of Christ is near, that's gonna be a week's worth of wages." It's gonna have to have a lot of inflation to get there. Maybe that's what we're doing right now to prepare for it. And Paul says, in this season there are two things he wants to tell them. Number one -- "I want you to carry your own weight all the weight to the end." There will be no Christian slouches. There will be no folks hanging around on the sidewalks saying, "I'm a Christian. I'd rather give away tracts than go to work." Paul says no. In fact, he says, "And I want you to remove this separation." There's a reason why they were quitting their jobs. There was a reason why, because they had this separation between that which is secular work and sacred sharing the gospel. That which is, you know, of the earth -- that which is of Heaven. And their theory was, Christ is coming back, why go to work and waste my time? I've gotta go out and do the important things, like sharing the gospel! There are people who are gonna burn in hell, and so, I've got to get rid of everything that I'm doing that somehow takes me away from that. And Paul suggests, you need to remove the separation between the glamorous and the mundane, because it's a false dichotomy. It's a false separation. How do we know that? Well, look at another teaching of Paul, in Romans the 12th chapter. Romans chapter 12, verse 1, says: "In view of God's mercy" -- that's an

eloquent way of summarizing the 11 chapters -- "In view of God's mercy, I want you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice." He doesn't say, "I want you to present your bodies at church," he doesn't say, "I want you to present your bodies when you go to Bible study." He doesn't say, "I want you to present yourself when you're in Bible class -- not in chemistry, can't do that there, because you can't worship God in chemistry, can you? Only in Bible class. I want you to present" -- he didn't put any qualifications on that at all. He said, "I want you to present your bodies a living sacrifice. This is your" -- what? "Spiritual act of worship."

Paul noticed something in the church, and tragically, we've been suffering from it for 2000 years, and Francis Schaeffer talks a lot about it -- this sacred/secular split. And he says that you need to carry your own weight, and one of the things you have to do is, you have to remove the idea that when you go to teach on a Monday morning in front of students, you are worshiping God. When you go to sell a car, you're worshiping God. When you're going to build a bridge, you're worshiping God. Why? Because, he says, "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Whatever you do, that is your worship to God. Do it well. Pay your way." That's what it means to honor God. You have to remove that. You have to get rid of that ability to somehow, in people's minds, separate out that which honors God and that which doesn't. Notice what Paul is saying here. He summarizes this -- get a job, follow our model -- and he summarizes this, "Never tire of doing what's right." Yeah. It's right to remove that separation. Why? Because it's not from God.

And secondly, and just as clearly and straight as he possibly can say, he says, "Get a job. Get back to work. You should not be abandoning your post." He says it in one summary when he says, "This is the rule. If a man will not work, he shall not eat. Therefore, go to work. Because, by the way -- you're gonna eat, you're gonna consume a lot." No, he's not talking about a person -- he's not talking about a person who is disabled and simply their back doesn't allow them to walk. That's not Paul's scope. He's not talking about, to the mom whose husband passed away, or maybe deserted her, and she has a child with disabilities, and she cannot go get a job because she has to be there virtually 24/7 to take care of the tube that is going down her son's throat. No, Paul is not saying, "Hey, you need to go get a job, and you don't deserve to eat!" That's not on Paul's radar. What's on radar for Paul is the person who is able to work, who has the strength to work, who has an able mind, and what they're doing is, they're sitting out, passing out tracts, thinking somehow that somebody else deserves the right to pay their way, as they are evangelizing the world. Nah. Paul says, "Huh uh. Not for a minute. You wanna eat? Get a job. You wanna take care of your life and pay your bills? Good. Get a job." He says it in a lot of ways. Why? Because we live in a culture where it seems that people mock work.

I was having a conversation with a relative, and the conversation went something like this. "Uncle so-and-so" -- we were talking about, you know, the last year and a half, and -- "Hey, one of the great benefits of this last year" -- as this person is talking -- "was the fact," he said, "that we are coming to grips with the value of our generation." It's like -- "Huh. What do you mean by that?" He goes, "Oh yeah. We're worth way more than minimum wage. Our value is much higher than that, and we're simply not gonna work until you recognize our value." "Huh. So, how do you determine that value?" I asked him. "Well, there are a lot of ways." I said, "Because whatever value you have, quadruple it, and that's my value." "You can't do that!" "Yes, I can. Whatever you're worth, I guarantee I'm worth four times that!" "Well, how do you determine that?" "The same way you determine your value. If we're gonna remove it from what? The economics of supply and demand and the economics of this world, and we're just gonna arbitrarily say, 'I'm worth this!' well then, I guarantee you, I love you. I'd take a bullet for you. But I'm worth four times what you are." He didn't like that discussion. Why? Because we live in a world where we joke about work, we joke about value. This little phrase was found on a company. There was a company that put this up, and you wonder why would they put something up like this. It says this: "Sometime between starting and quitting, without infringing upon your lunch breaks, coffee breaks, rest periods, storytelling, ticket selling, holiday planning, and the rehashing of yesterday's television programs, we ask that each employee try to find some time for a work break. This may seem radical, but it might aid steady employment and assure regular paychecks." Now, why would they say that? It's because we live in a culture that really doesn't across the board value work the way we used to. We're way more concerned about our personal value than we are about get a job. If you want to eat, you need to work. You have a responsibility, Paul says, and that is -- what? "I want you to drill deep roots, I want you to

settle down, I want you to quit skimming across the earth as if somehow you're gonna miss something if you don't keep your options open. No. Settle down, earn the bread that you eat."

Here's Paul's summary. You want to honor God? You want to please Him? You want to do what's right? Get a job, pay your way, pay for the things that you consume, and take care of your personal finances. That's how you prepare for the return of Christ. You don't abandon your post! You don't get rid of things. You don't presume upon a bunch of other people to take care of you because you're doing godly things -- you take care of the things that God called you to do. And as you do, you will strengthen your testimony. You will. Paul says, "Never tire of doing what is right." Let me add to that. Never tire of keeping your finances in good order. Never tire of paying your bills on time, because when you don't, and people find out that you're a believer, you sully the name of Christ. Never tire of mowing your lawn. Why would I say that? Because I don't think God wants your lawn to look like a cow pasture. It's just not becoming. And never tire of keeping your house in order. There are some people -- I've entered into their home, and let me tell you what -- I cannot find the floor. And you're just like, "How do you live here?" And not to be mean, but it's like -- "Wait want to wait, wait a minute! How does this complete disorder help you in your life?" It's doesn't! And so, Paul says, "Never tire of doing the right thing." And here's a question -- why? Why? Because people are watching. That's the inference. There's a watching world out there that is making judgments. You say, "Well, Pastor, that's where I'm off the train. I don't live to please other people. I live only to please God." Well, let me mess with your theology just a little bit. John chapter 17 -- Jesus is praying for us, and He says, "Father, may they be one as you and I are one, so that the world will know." How does the world know? Because they watch us.

They watch us when they come and they see you treat your family. They come, and they watch us as a congregation. They watch the way you do business. And they make observations. See, Jesus understood -- He even prayed, "Because the world is going to watch, I pray, God, that they would be unified so that when the world looks at them, they think of us." There's another passage -- 1 Corinthians 14. He's talking about worship, and he says, "I pray," and he's talking about their worship, and he says, "I want your worship to be orderly. I do not want people, you know, belting out a song over here and another group over here going, 'Hey, we're gonna do our own thing.'" He goes, "No no no. I want your worship to be orderly. Why? Because non-Christians are gonna come into your church, just like today. People who are not believers. They're gonna come in." And you know what? Something's happening. Not just during the preaching -- it's during the worship. And they're kind of like, "Wow. These guys are saying some really lofty things about this God." And Paul envisioned -- in 1 Corinthians 14 -- the people were coming, and what they were observing was so compelling to them that they placed their faith in Christ right in the middle of the third song. Yeah. Why? Because people are watching. And when people watch you, they make judgments -- not only of you, but of your God.

Carol Shirley understood that. She went to church one day, and the pastor was preaching a similar message. And the Holy Spirit quickened her. And she had a job. She was 26 years of age and she worked for Manpower. She was in the Milwaukie division. And she realized that she saw work as simply just -- "Next -- put another person out there. You need a job -- good." And she just wasn't seeing it as dignified, and she wasn't seeing it as worship. And she went to work on a Monday morning, and she was a changed individual. When she went to work, she decided that, "God, I'm gonna help people worship you. I'm gonna help people do a job that they so enjoy and they do it in such a way that they bring glory to Christ." She recruited in her church, and she decided that a lot of reasons why people weren't getting jobs is because their soft skills were horrible. Their etiquette. Their dress. Their breath. And so, in her free time, after hours, she would hold classes. And she would invite people. And she held the classes oftentimes at her church. And she would teach classes on soft skills, on etiquette, on how to greet people, on how to write a resume, on how to dress -- and all of the things. When she began to teach her classes, her division alone in Milwaukie in one year increased profits 300 percent. Why? Because, people looked at her life and they knew -- "Carol's a different person. She cares about me." And Carol looked at them and said, "I want to help you serve God." Carol didn't stay in Milwaukie very long. You usually don't when you do well. They moved her. They moved her up to a regional position. But on one of her days, just before she left, a few days before she left she found a paper bag with a note. Here's what the note said. "Dear Carol, I didn't have any money to buy you a card. I didn't have any money for flowers. But the raisins and the candy bar that I have is all that I have, and I give it to you. You've changed my

life." That's what Paul's about. He's not trying to, you know, embarrass you. He's not trying to tell you you don't measure up. He treats you like a brother, like a sister. And he says to you, "Carry your own weight to the end, because it's there that you worship God."

Now, the next thing that he encourages us to do is a little harder. It's gonna be harder. And that is, you don't get to just go apply this and live it, you have to correct those who are busy at the wrong things. That's where the ante goes up a little bit. Because now you have to get in people's face a little bit and you have to love them. And you have to tell them two things -- two things that Paul asks us. Number one is, he says, "I want you to practice a level of, kind of, organized isolation." And secondly, he says, "I want you to gently correct or rebuke them." Let's talk about the first one. What does it mean to practice appropriate isolation? He gives it to us in two different locations. Verse 6 is the first time he says, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you to keep away from every brother who is undisciplined." Now, he's not saying you can't go to church with them. He says, treat them like a brother. You go to church with your brothers. So, what is Paul thinking about when he says keep away from them? It's hard, because -- we don't have this phrase virtually being used anywhere else from the Apostle Paul, and so, we have to wrestle with, "Paul, what kind of things are you talking about?" Let me suggest a couple of things.

Number one, if I'm gonna keep away from a person, still treat them as a brother, still love them, still sit next to them as a church, but what I won't do is, I won't support them in their undisciplined life. Keep away from them. In other words, don't become a participant in their life. If they are an able-bodied person that they can get a job, then mom and dad, shame on you for bailing your kids out, and continuing to pay their bills, when the fact is -- they can work. And when you continue to pay them, and when you continue to bail them out -- I'm not talking about an emergency, I'm not talking about a flat tire, I'm not talking about a dangerous tire that you can gift a new tire and make their day. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about month in, month out, month in, month out -- making excuses for why the 10th job in the fifth year of their working career, their manager is once again the biggest idiot in the world. You don't do it. And you don't take up their cause. When they come home, and they say, "Hey Mom, hi Dad!" And you say -- "Oh -- you're here early. I thought you worked 'til 9:00 o'clock tonight?" "Nope -- I quit. My boss was an idiot. They don't know how to run that business." "Oh, wow -- well, what did they do?" "Well -- I mean -- they tell us that, you know, if we're not gonna come to work we have to actually replace ourselves with somebody, and it's like -- it's their job. I mean, if I don't come to work, they're the ones who are the managers. I'm not gonna replace myself. I wanted to take the day at the beach! I'm outta here." And if you pick that up and say, "Boy, I tell you what -- yeah, you're right. That manager is an idiot! I mean, I can't imagine that they would ever expect you to be responsible. I mean, we never have!" The fact is, don't take up their cause. Not because you don't love them -- it's because you do love them. And if you continue to take up their cause, and if you continue to support them in their undisciplined life, then can I say this kindly -- you are a party to their destruction. You are contributing to the delinquency and the undisciplined-ness of your friend, your husband, your wife, your children. Paul says, "Get a job. And keep away from them. Don't support them in their undisciplined life."

Secondly, Paul says, "I want you to take note of them." He says this towards the end of this section. It's in verse 14 -- "If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him." Now again, this is a phrase that Paul gives us that he doesn't give a lot of explanation for. Like -- nothing. He does qualify it and he says, "They're not the enemy -- they're a brother. But take special note of them." Well, what would this look like? I don't think it's that you come to church, it's like, "Yup -- there's -- they haven't worked in six weeks." Or -- I don't think it's that you go to their house and knock on the door, "What time did you get up this morning? Oh! You got up at 12:00 o'clock. You are a sluggard! Go to the ant, thou sluggard. Let me read a Bible passage for you." No no no, God's not saying that kind of a thing. Well, what would it look like to take note of this person? Again, he's writing to a people who are in the body of Christ. It might be that he suggests to them, "Don't trust them in the body of Christ to be a leader." Why? Because they're probably going to help others embrace faulty teaching, which leads to unbiblical behavior. So, you don't trust them. It's not that you don't love them. It's not that you don't sit with them. It means that you don't entrust them into positions of influence, because what you don't want is your church being littered with people who expect somebody else to pay their way. It's unbiblical. It's

unhelpful. It's dangerous. "But", he says, "I want you to gently correct them." How do you do that? Well, they've allowed the truth of God's Word to be forgotten, twisted. Straighten it out. Help them see. Help them see, that yes, they're loved, but that they have responsibilities. And help them see the beauty of work.

This week at Skills Camp I was helping in the area of woodworking, and I was -- I saw God in these kids. I did! Here's what happened. We were building various things. We built these stilts, and then we built this frame, and it was nice, and they wanted to take it home, and they were so proud of it. And Wednesday we built this chair. And I am telling you, they could not stand the thought of just leaving it there. They wanted to take it home and show their mom because some of them were like, "Pastor Mark, I bet we could build a house!" "Oh yeah! Probably a whole city!" They were so proud. They were so unbelievably proud that they had sanded, and stayed the course, and cut, and no fingers went with it, and they were so proud, and I was so relieved when Friday afternoon happened! But I watched them walk away, and they were carrying this stuff, and none of them said to their mom, "Mom, here -- take my chair." No! They had their chair, and they had their frame, and they had their cross, and they turned it into a sword. And it was awesome! It was! And they were proud. They were so proud. Just like when you taught your kid to dig a trench, and your kid says, "Three feet deep? Dad, we're gonna see China!" "Yes, and that's why we're having rice for dinner tonight. Dig!" And it's three feet deep, and it's about 12 inches wide, and they look up at you, like, every 30 seconds, "Are we there yet?" "No, here's the white line, right out here. Keep going! Keep going!" Why do you do that? Because if you don't instill that kind of stick-to-it-iveness, if you don't instill that kind of faithfulness and that kind of grit, then they're gonna be looking for the spiritual excuse out. Paul says, the way you prepare for the return of Christ is, you get a job. Because when you work, you're actually doing good for the Kingdom of God. You are.

People are watching you, and they're watching how you work, and they're watching how you keep your home. And they're watching how you train your children -- because human life is the most compelling thing to watch. God knows that -- Denmark knows that. I want to go to Denmark one day. My grandfather was born there. But they are some strange people there -- those Danes. I say that because I was reading a fun story about one of the zoos in Denmark. In Copenhagen, there's a zoo there -- and they built next to the monkeys in the primate area a new category. It was the human species category. Yeah -- it was a 320 square-foot glass house. And they placed into that little home, Henrik Lehmann and Maléne Botoft. For the sole purpose of simply living. They had to live in front of everyone. But the tragic thing is, the monkeys needed therapy because no one wanted to go see the monkeys anymore, because everyone was lined up to watch the humans. Really? Yes. They had a line-up of people who wanted to simply watch this couple live. Thankfully, the Danes had some discretion and they had a bathroom that you couldn't look into. But everything else was right out front. What did this home have? Well, everything, you know -- furniture, computer, television, stereo. There was a kitchen, bedroom. And every day, people would come to the zoo and it would be the number one visited place in the zoo. I mean -- man, you can just go out to Liberty and Marion and do that for free! You could go to your neighborhood and do that for free! Why? I'll tell you why -- it's because the human life is the most compelling thing to watch. It is. That's why they did it. The human life is the most compelling thing to watch. It's captivating. The human story. That's why "48 Hours" works. That's why "20/20" works. It's the same story -- somebody died, and they have an investigation that they can't figure out. Same story. But why do they do it? Why does it sell? Because the human life is the most compelling thing to watch. God knows it. Denmark knows it. Do you?

Do you understand how compelling your life is, and the most powerful thing that you can do, Paul says, is to do what is right. Never tire of that. Never tire of doing a good job at work. Never tire of paying your bills. Never tire of taking care of the basics. Why? Because when you do, you do good for the Kingdom of God. People watch you, and they will be drawn to God because of you, because they will discover, as a group of kids did this week, that when I work, and when I produce something, I'm filled with joy. And the Father in Heaven, I believe, delights in that moment. That's how you prepare for the return of Christ.

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