



The Living and the Dead

Part 1 – Scared of Zombies, Clowns, and Things in the Dark

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We're doing this brand-new series on *The Living and the Dead, Part 1 – Scared of Zombies, Clowns, and Things in the Dark*. I don't know if a lot of hands will go up with this question in this service. I'm guessing there will be a lot more hands that go up with this question in the second service. How many of you have already gone to see the movie *It*? That's what I thought; probably about ten.

Just so you are aware, that was more than a waste of \$15.00. Let me tell you why it's more than a waste of \$15.00. Not only did you pay the \$15.00 to go get yourself scared, but then you're leaving the movie theater, pretending to call somebody that you're not really talking to because now you're afraid out of your mind. You're talking to your phantom dad who happens to work for the CIA as you're walking along in the parking lot. Then you get home and you're just kind of skipping in your house because you're terrified out of your mind. You're jumping to light switches.

My wife does this same thing any time I'm out of town; she's always scared. She's like, "Did you put that there? Did you leave your backpack here? Did you move the shower curtain?" All these things start playing in her mind.

So, it cost you way more than \$15.00 to go to the show. Your electricity bill, when you come home for the next 24 hours is through the roof. So, now you've wasted like \$50.00 because all your lights are on all night long, right?

Look at these stats. The haunted attraction industry generates between 300 and 500 million dollars in ticket sales annually. That's not any of my 300 to 500 million dollars. I'm not going to pay to be scared out of mind. I'm just fine without nightmares.

Look what the Wall Street Journal says. "Zombie culture contributes over six billion dollars in revenue." Millennials and Gen Z are fascinated with zombies. By the way, I have a sibling and I went to visit him this last October, so almost eleven months ago. I had never seen their house, so they were giving me a tour of their entire house. I get to the basement and I could tell there was this wall that didn't look normal. I could see a little tiny crack. I asked what it was and he goes over and he punches something and he opens up this underground barricade. He's got a cache of guns and all this stuff. I go, "What in the world is this." He's like, "Brother, I'm prepared for the zombie apocalypse." I'm dead serious. I was like, "You really believe in the zombie apocalypse?" He goes, "You don't?"

Other than one passage in Zachariah where it talks about how their eyes will be sucked out of their head, maybe referring to prophetic nuclear warfare, I just don't see any proof of zombies in scripture. As a matter of fact, when we even think about things risen from the dead in an apocalyptic or animated form, it's just not accurate.

I'm being really sensitive when I say this this morning too. It's not theologically accurate to think when a loved one dies that they come and watch over you. It's just not biblically accurate. I'm saying that with sensitivity. When a loved one dies that was in the Lord, do you know what they are doing? They are worshiping Jesus. They're in the presence of Jesus. They don't want to know anything of sin. They don't want to look at this world that's wretched with sin as we saw last week. They are worshiping Jesus. You might have angels surrounding you, absolutely. God said there are angels and there are fallen angels and then there is his army and those are angels and they may be protecting you, but it's not loved ones. Your loved ones in Jesus are worshiping Jesus.

It's important to know that zombies don't exist. People might try to scare you and they may think zombies are real, but that culture... And here's why. As we are talking about the living and the dead, those that are living in the light need to walk in the light and not entertain the things of the dark. Why even give Satan a foothold? Why even entertain those things?

Look at these movies sales. This was in 1995. The gross for horror movies was 294 billion. In 2017 the gross for horror movies was 895 billion. Nearly 900 billion in ticket sales to go watch horror movies. That tells me that millennials are fascinated with the dying. My encouragement is let's push them to walk in the light, let's them push them away from nightmares, let's push them away from things that are of the darkness.

Romans says it this way: ***11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.*** I believe Shay or Ted are going to get into that a little. The day or the hour of when Jesus comes back, nobody knows. I know this, we're closer today than we were yesterday to Jesus coming back and we will be closer tomorrow.

12 The night is far gone... Jesus has come so now the night is far gone. There is no more darkness. ...the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness... Stop going to watch these zombie movies. Stop going to watch these movies with those freaking clowns. Stop going to watch these things that give you nightmares ***...and put on the armor of light.*** As you are children of light, live there, be there, think about those things, set your mind on those things. Whatever is lovely, whatever is pure, whatever is noble, whatever is praise worthy, honorable. (Philippians 4:8) Think about those things.

I'm telling you right now that those movies don't bring things to mind that help me sleep at night. They just don't. And I don't want my mind filled with those things because I don't think they are glorifying to the one who walks in the light and is the light and was the light from the beginning.

Our fascination should be on the majesty and person of Christ, not the darkness that he has overcome. That's where our eyes should be fixated. Why even entertain it with these horror movies? I'm not up here giving an anti-Halloween message today at all. That's not what this is. I'm not a pre-

millennial, fundamental, King James only, Baptist whatever. That's not me. If you exercise Halloween, great, but have a conversation with your kids. Also, have a conversation with your child about how this is the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation that we're approaching. There are different conversations you can have around October 31 and explain what All Hallows' Eve is. Just be careful not to walk in the darkness or entertain the things of the darkness when Christ, the Light, has overcome it. That should be our fascination. Amen?

We're going to spend the majority of the time today in Matthew 24. As a matter of fact, the next four weeks of the series is Matthew 24 and 25. So, we're taking two sections of scripture out of Matthew 24 and then Ted will wrap it up with two passages, parables from Matthew 25, talking about the living and the dead.

Matthew 24 - ***3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?"*** I love this. His disciples now aren't focused on the darkness or the people that want to persecute them or the people that want to hate them. Their eyes are fixated where? They are anticipating his return. They want to know when he's coming back. They want to be with him.

They're not like, "Hey, Jesus, do you know if there are any good haunted houses around here while you're gone? Do you know if there are any really horrific horror movies we can go watch while you're gone? Do you know if there are any Beelzebubs we can entertain and hang out with while our gone?"

Their eyes are fixated on the author and perfecter of their faith. "Jesus, when are you coming back. We want to know when these things start lining up. We want to be with you again. We want to be in your presence. We want to keep our eyes fixated on you." I love this passage because that's where their eyes are fixated. "Jesus, tell us when are these things coming." Jesus' followers had their eyes fixated on him and not on the present darkness of the world.

If you do anything with this... I'm not saying don't go watch *It*, which most of you didn't. I already knew that in first service. Way to go. You guys are smart. My hope with this message is that you understand when you are children of the light, you are called to walk in the light as Jesus is the light. We are living.

This millennial phrase YOLO, you only live once, is not accurate at all. It actually should be YOLF, you only live forever. Some are going to be much cooler than others, but everybody lives forever. So, this idea that "Man I'm going to live in the darkness while I'm on earth and then when I'm done..." No, no, no. I can't encourage young people and adults enough to walk in the light as Jesus is in the light. Fixate your eyes on him and not the darkness.

I have a sibling who is a recovering addict. He has recovered from drugs and alcohol, the whole bit. At different seasons of life, I've been there to support him. I've gone to NA meetings and AA meetings. I remember going to the first meeting with him. They sit down in a circle. Some you have been there in support of loved ones and done the same thing. They introduce themselves and then they say how long they've been sober. Then in like a mantra, they all say the same thing, "Keep coming back. It works." Then the next person introduces themselves, "I'm Bob and I've been sober for two weeks," and they say,

“Keep coming back. It works.” Then the next person introduces themselves, “I’m Mike and I’ve been sober for two years,” and they say, “Keep coming back. It works.”

What I was fascinated by with these NA and AA meetings is that they all teach them to cling to some higher power to help them get through their addictions, regardless if that’s pornography, sexual immorality, drugs, or alcohol. Their eyes were fixated on something other than themselves. You see, sometimes when we are in the midst of our addiction, we see no way out; we’re in that darkness. There is always a crack. There’s always a beam of hope. There’s always a beam of light that comes through that crack and you just keep your eyes fixated there. You keep pursuing there. You keep walking there. You don’t have to live in the darkness.

I know what Satan does. “You’re the only one that struggles with this; don’t share it with anyone. They’ll think you’re crazy.” That’s exactly where he wants you. If he can keep you in the darkness, remember that’s where he has power. But the light casts out the darkness. Light has power over the darkness and regardless of how hopeless or defeated you may feel, you can still walk in the light, you can still be children of the light and cast light on the darkness.

Continuing on in Matthew 24 - ***4 And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.”*** So, we see here that even good things can become sinful things when they lead us astray from the one true Christ. That good thing could be my family, it could be my kids, it could be my vocation, it could be my hobbies... There are so many things that can lead us astray. It could be false doctrine. It could be wolves in sheep’s clothing. It could be all sorts of different people teaching theology.

Even good things become evil things when they move our eyes from Christ. John 14: 6 makes it very clear. ***“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”***

John 1 says, ***1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.*** The light that was there in the beginning was Jesus, right? Our eyes should be fixated on the one true Christ. No pastor, no Bible study... Nothing should replace Jesus, first and foremost.

You’ve heard me say this from the stage before. “If only I had _____, then I would be happy.” If that blank is anything other than Jesus, it’s a lie of darkness. “If only I had _____...” “If only I won the Powerball.” “If only I had a new boat.” “If only I had a new house.” If anything in that blank is other than Jesus, it’s a lie from darkness. Jesus is the light. He is all that you will ever need and he is what you will get forever in eternity.

2 Corinthians 11 says, ***13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*** So, we get this idea from 2 Corinthians 11 that Satan masquerades as an angel of light. He’s not an angel of light; he masquerades.

I was up in Arrowhead last Monday night watching the Redskins/Chiefs game. (Cheers from the congregation) That's what a lot of the Chiefs fans are saying, but they had a little more liquid in them, if you know what I'm saying. There was one particular fan that was hooting and hollering like that that was in the foyer when I was leaving the game. Football fans are crazy...

Anytime you get up and preach messages, everything becomes an illustration, just so you guys know. So, I'm walking in the foyer and there is this group of guys that have these evil masks on, evil, Freddie Krueger-like masks. You don't have any idea who they are, but there was one kid that was about my size. This whole crowd was walking at me. I thought, *These are a bunch of idiots. I don't care; I'm going to keep walking.* I could tell they were intoxicated just by the way they were walking through the foyer of Arrowhead.

I'm not going to move because if I move, I don't know if he's going to move. I just didn't know what he was going to do. You don't ever know when someone's intoxicated. It's hilarious because on the outside, he looked so evil. I'm not tall, but I'm kind of built like a tree trunk, so I'm sturdy; we'll just say that. He was coming right at me and I couldn't go left or right because he was surrounded by all the other goblins. I just stood my ground and ran right into me. I don't know if he could see me through the mask or not. He fell flat on the ground. I helped him up, I could smell the alcohol on him, but then the voice that came from behind the mask was the daintiest, puberty driven voice you had ever heard.

I thought to myself, *This is Satan.* He tries to lure you. He tries to be scary, but the reality is when we are rooted, when we are firm and our roots are planted in the light, the one who is light, the one who is truth, and we are not moved because our roots are deeply in the Word, the one who masquerades is not going to get us off base. Granted, I don't know if I would have knocked him over if he wasn't so intoxicated, but it was pretty easy. That's what the Word of God does. It roots us in the light so when Satan masquerades as an angel of light and we really know he is the prince of darkness, we don't get swayed away.

It goes on to say in Matthew 24 - ***6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.***

Those living in the light have nothing to be alarmed of. I don't fear death, but if I were to be transparent with you this morning, I fear dying. I don't want to drown. I'm just being honest with you. It doesn't sound very attractive. I don't want to be burned to death. That doesn't sound good either. But, if that is what the Lord wills, I'm going to trust that. I don't fear death, but I tell you there is a little fear of how I'm going to die. But, I have nothing to be alarmed about because I trust and believe the one who is the light and he never promised me or you a calm passage. What he promised was a safe landing.

You might be in the midst of a storm right now. There might be some serious turbulence going on. Your kids might have a marriage that's a wreck. Your marriage might be up in arms. There might be a lot of difficult things going on in your life, but I'm here to tell you to keep your eyes fixated on the light because there's a runway and there's going to be a safe landing and that runway is heaven and he is the

light. In the midst of the storm, that's what pilots want to hear as they are flying a plane. They just need to see the runway lights. As soon as they see those runway lights, they know they're good.

Check out this video:

Psalm 119: 105 says that the Word of God is a lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path. I find it fascinating here that the Word of God is referred to as a lamp or a lantern. Have you ever walked through the woods in the middle of the night and used a lamp to light your path? Probably not. What you've used is your iPhone flashlight which would illuminate your path far greater than that of a lamp or a lantern. A lamp doesn't show you what the next 20 feet hold. It just shows you what the next step in front of you holds.

Similarly, you may not know what's going to happen a year or two years from now, but God suggests if you keep pressing into his word, which is a lamp, he'll be with you one step at a time, one day at a time. You see, I don't know what your future holds, but I know who holds your future and rest in that gives you no cause to worry because worrying is simply temporary atheism.

The worst thing I could do for you is to send you out into a world of darkness with a compass that points to yourself. The best thing I could do for you is to send you out into the world with God's word as your compass and allow you to illuminate your path. Similarly, it's important to know that the Word of God imparts to you heavenly knowledge and illuminates your path on a daily basis. Therefore, when you spend time in the scripture, it gives you great resolve in your decision-making process and it leaves you with a great restfulness in your heart.

I don't say this in a boastful way. The reason I don't want to go watch *It* or *I Am Legend* or zombie movies is because it just doesn't align with the Word. When I spend time in the light and the Word is my lamp and the Word is my lantern and it is leading me towards the light and in the light and walking in the light, things of the darkness just aren't very appealing to me. Hear me. **Either this book will keep you from sin and darkness or sin and darkness will keep you from this book.** Walking in the light will keep you from walking in the darkness or walking in darkness will keep you from walking in the light.

John 1: 5 says it this way: ***The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*** Nor will it ever overcome it. That's great news, Woodland Hills and those of you that are listening online. That is great news! The darkness hasn't overcome the light nor will it ever overcome it.

I'm really competitive; just ask my wife. She hates playing board games with me that requires skill. She will only play games with me that require pure luck. I'm just competitive. I bet you never knew that. Here's the reality. I'm competitive, so I want to be on the winning team. That's just me. I know that this team of darkness, of Satan and his fallen angels, they're never going to win. Spoiler alert! I've read the entire book. Guess what? In the end, those walking in the light win! Amen! That's great news. I just don't want to be defeated. I don't want to lose. I hate the Patriots, but if I'm picking a team, I'm jumping on the band wagon, right? Okay, maybe I took that too far. But, you get my point. We win.

There's joy and there's victory in walking in the light and not having to walk in the dark, to be among the living and not those who are focused on the dead or living in darkness. I'm here to tell you there is victory in the light. Walk in the light.

I give this illustration to people that are living in sin all the time and I've been there. Let me just tell you that in my life there have been seasons where I was living in sin and had to be called out too. It's like this, Mom and Dad, you're going to love this illustration because you're going to use it for your kids. It's like when you have to go wake up your kid and they're sleeping in until 11:00 on Saturday. You flip on that light and they start screaming at you because the light hurts their eyes. When you're in the darkness and the light shines on you, it's painful for a second. But, eventually, your eyes adjust and you're easily able to get around throughout the day, walking in the light.

If you're living in darkness today and the light was shone upon that... I know it's painful to hear. It was painful for me to hear when I had mentors in my life calling me out in certain areas that I was struggling with. But, I was much healthier walking in the light. I don't mean to just jerkingly flip a light switch on your darkness. I do it in the most loving way possible because I want you to be on the winning team with me. I want you to hold up that crown of righteousness. I want you to hold up the greatest trophy you will ever hold up and that's praising Jesus.

It goes on to say in Matthew 24 – ***7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.***

You can look at birth pains in two different ways. Our first child... I would never want to go through a labor like that again in my life and I wasn't even the woman. Sorry if you're pregnant with your first one and I just gave you horrific thoughts. I'm sorry; I really am. I've learned to not ever tell my wife's first labor story to women that have not had their first child, so I'm not going to tell the story. But, I'm just telling you that for me, it was horrific. It was so horrific that my stomach was upset and I had to leave the delivery room for about ten minutes just to gather myself. Anyway, with the second one, she sneezed and we had a child, so it was great.

For us, with the beginning of birth pains, I was so excited the baby was coming and it was great news. But for those who are walking in the darkness, the beginning of birth pains is horrible news, horrific news. But, for those who are walking in the light, this is great news. Here's why.

Children of the light don't fear darkness and death, they anticipate the radiance of His Shekinah glory. They anticipate what's coming. Those birth pains mean something great is coming for those who are walking in the light. Now for those who walk in the dark and focus on the dead and not the living, those birth pains are scary. That's what he's saying in Matthew 24.

He goes on to say, ***9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.***

Martin Luther King, Jr. said this and if this doesn't shine light on the climate of where our culture is right now then I don't know what does. *"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."* We have to stop listening, on social media and conversations... We have to stop listening to respond. Let me explain. When we listen to respond, we're not seeking to understand. When we listen to hear, we're seeking to understand and we will never truly understand unless we are willing to just listen and begin walking in someone else's shoes.

There is so much hate going on right now in our culture it pains my heart because that's not from the children of light. Jesus was hated, but he retaliated with more love. Jesus was hated, but he just kept serving and loving and humbling himself. Jesus was hated, but he just kept loving people. As we are to follow his example, we keep loving... Even if we are hated, even if people think we are stupid because we are conservative republicans or whatever... Even if you are not a conservative republican, I love that you're here and I love you. We keep loving. Hate cannot drive out hate. Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Light does that.

When we retaliate and we blast all of our rhetoric, hateful speech on a Facebook post or social media or whatever, that is not light, that is not love, that is not walking in the light. That is allowing the one who masquerades as an angel... I've never once heard someone who is not a believer say, "You know the way that Christian that ripped me on social media really turned me over to Jesus." I just haven't heard it yet.

But, I've heard a lot of this: "Man, there is something so deeply different about that follower of Christ that walks in humility and loves me enough to tell me the truth, but doesn't sit on their judgmental throne. They are is compassionate with me and gentle with me and walk in my shoes and want to seek to understand where I'm coming from and where I'm at." Love does that. Light does that. Not darkness. Not hate.

It goes on to say in Matthew 24 – ***11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.*** We all feel like lawlessness is increasing, that it's getting crazy, that our country is getting worse, and you see nation against nation. In World War II, they were pretty concerned that was it; that Hitler was the antichrist and there was an actual world war. Now, granted, it feels like it now because we have more access to everything going on around the world all the time. It feels like that lawlessness has definitely increased, but it's been there. Like I said earlier, we are one day closer than we were yesterday and Shay will elaborate more on the signs of the end of the age or no one knows the day or the hour.

Here's my bigger concern with this passage. "The love of many will grow cold." I fear that sometimes, as Christians, the longer we walk with Jesus, our heart just grows callused. Callused to the dark, callused to fervor, callused to zeal, callused to actually still believing in the Holy Mighty God that we just come to church on Sundays, go through the motions with our hands, listen to a message, and then go about our day. We worship one day a week rather than seven days a week. When your love doesn't grow cold, you walk out of here worshiping the rest of the week. You enjoy your week of worship, not your one hour of worship.

As a matter of fact, there is a great cross reference to this “The love of many will grow cold.” John says this in John 13: 35 – **“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

Next time you go to post something, next time you go to have a conversation with a friend, someone who doesn’t look like you, talk like you, act like you, politically think like you, ask yourself these questions: “Am I doing this out of love?” “Or is the prince of darkness pulling me to walk and talk in darkness right now?” “Am I pointing and pushing people back to the light and love of Jesus Christ?”

They will know you are his followers if you... Yeah, preach the gospel, but I’m saying you don’t even have to use your words. If you do John 13: 35, scripture says they are going to know that there is something different about you. They’re going to know that you live for something different. They’re going to know you don’t act like everybody else that’s a fool on social media. They are going to know there is something different about those people that live in the light.

I think the most contradictory thing we can do as believers is when there is an atheist or agnostic walking in the darkness and they say, “I don’t believe in God and you see that self-proclaimed Christian walking in the same darkness that I am, there is proof there is no God.” Rather, in walking in the light and loving one another, that atheist would say this: “I don’t believe in God, but I just can’t explain that joyful, loving, fun, person at Woodland Hills. There’s just something so different about them it drives me crazy. They have something I want and I don’t know what it is. There’s just something different about them. I’ve never met somebody like that.”

You’ve met those people. It’s because they have love for one another. It’s because they are walking in the light. I think so many times atheists and agnostics say, “I don’t believe in God. See that person that claims to be a Christian, there’s proof that there’s no God; there’s nothing different about them than there is me. They hate the same way I hate. They blast the same way I blast. They act the same way I act.” Jesus says walk in the light and you will have love for one another.

He closes Matthew 24: 3 – 14 with this. **13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

I’m in ministry and people are always concerned about the 10/40 window. If you're not familiar, the 10/40 window is the latitude and longitude lines where the gospel of Jesus Christ has never been heard. I get questions from young people all the time. “What’s going to happen to those people that have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ?” “If they’ve never heard the gospel, is it fair that God would send them to a place of darkness or is it fair that he would automatically let them get into heaven?”

Rather than get into a deep theological debate with these young students, I challenge them with, “If you’re so concerned about the 10/40 window, why don’t you pack up our bags and go share the gospel with the people in the 10/40 window?”

So many times in my own life, it's easy to sit back and criticize and get pulled into the darkness rather than be like, "You know what? I can be part of the problem or I can be a part of the solution. I'm going to choose to love people and be a part of the solution."

That's what God is doing in my life with all the craziness going on in the world. He's saying, "Adam, you need to love people. You need to listen to people to hear, not to respond."

How do we respond as Woodland Hills? We love people. We look different. We don't engage in the hateful rhetoric. We walk in the light because we are children of light and we cast that light on darkness, not in a hateful way, but in the most loving, gentle way. And that sweet aroma of Christ will lure people in because of the work the spirit of God is doing in your life. Amen?

Pray with me.

God, we confess our fascination with horror movies and things of the darkness. God, I pray if there are any dark caverns in my soul that I'm unaware of this morning, would you shine light on those? God, I pray for any dark caverns of any souls in this room that you would shine light on those.

Thank you that we win. Thank you that in the end we win, that we will live with you in light for eternity.

We pray for our young people and their fascination with zombie culture and clowns and evil. I pray, Lord, that you would raise up a generation of young people that are passionately pursuing you.

God, we pray for our nation. We pray that we would once again be united under your name, a name above all names. Not be united under political parties, not be united under patriotism, but be united under you, God.

We love you and it's in the matchless and mighty name of Jesus we pray. And all God's people said... Amen.