Where are the Watchmen?

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Date: 24 November 2024 Preacher: Jon Hochstetler

[0:00] Greetings to all of you, in Jesus' name. It's good to be here this morning. I've been blessed. Thank you for what you shared, Laverne, about faith.

It's a blessing to be together again. It's an honor to have two of my nephews here with us today. That verse has been really on my heart a lot lately, that seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Thank you for picking that song. I was looking at it earlier. That's not necessarily what the message is about today. I've been struggling some with what to share.

And it seemed like I wanted something easier to share on. The Lord just wouldn't let this subject go. Especially this morning, it seemed clear to share about being a watchman.

The title is, Where Are the Watchmen? And part of the reason for that, I think, is that was something that was shared this past week as we were in Pennsylvania and with the other brothers, ministers, and their wives.

[1:33] We had a wonderful time together. And some of the things that were talked about, just a few things that we were challenged in, was to build.

That was kind of the main maybe subject, was to rise up and build. It's time to build. And in our homes and in our churches.

And we were very challenged about that. And then in that came this about being watchmen. And we were also very challenged about having good and beautiful marriages.

And that, yeah, our marriages were very, I'll use the word challenged or encouraged. You know, that if we're going to build, and if we're going to be watchmen, and we're going to be alert and aware, and all of those things, if our marriages aren't right, then we're still going to fail.

And so we were, yeah, that was really much a blessing. I just really appreciated the emphasis this past week and what was shared.

[2:54] So I'd like to start out by turning here to Ezekiel 3. And there's many, many scriptures that we could look at this morning.

And I'm just going to touch on a few here, especially in the Old Testament here. But do some reading in Ezekiel 3, starting in verse 16.

One of God's prophets to his people, Ezekiel. And it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel.

Therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity.

But his blood will I require at thine hand. Something that stands out to me in these verses is that the man, this prophet, Ezekiel, that he is supposed to give warning to the wicked.

[4:35] But it's a warning from him. It's a warning from God. It's not his own warning. It's not his own thoughts even. It's a warning from me, God says.

Let's keep that in mind as we go through this. Verse 19, Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity.

But thou hast delivered thy soul. You have met the requirement. The prophet, the man, because he warned him.

Even though he didn't bring the fruits that God wanted, he did his job. Verse 20, Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die, because thou hast not given him warning.

He shall die in his sin, and his righteousness, which he hath done, shall not be remembered. We're talking here about a righteous man now that wasn't warned when he committed iniquity.

[5:55] And because he wasn't warned, even his righteousness, like when he died, even the things, the good things he had done will not be remembered.

But his blood will I require at thine hand. Back to the prophet, because he did not warn him. Verse 21, Nevertheless, if thou warn the righteous man that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he was warned.

Also, thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, he did his job. He obeyed. Now let's turn to Ezekiel chapter 33, verse 1.

Again, Again, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon the land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchmen, If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people, Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

He heard the sound of the trumpet, and he took not warning, his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

[7:49] I have a note here that I wrote. I don't even remember writing this. It just says, Church, can we receive warnings, or are we too indifferent?

Verse 6, But if the watchmen see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned, if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

This is God speaking to his prophet. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, if thou does not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand.

How many times is God repeating this about his prophet that does not warn? He refuses to warn. But if he does warn, then he's okay.

[9:08] And I noted here, you know, warning for us today is not always maybe a negative either. Sometimes it can be in a positive way, like, you know, if we teach our children what God's heart is in a positive light from little up, those are warnings.

Those can be considered warnings because we're guiding them right. In other words, a strong word that is to guide into truth is in a sense a warning of being wicked, against being wicked.

but may these words, especially, his blood will I require at thine hand. He's talking about God putting a word of warning into somebody, a man, a person, but he's not acting on it.

God's going to require something. Is he not? May these words grip our hearts. When is the last time we warned a wicked person?

I believe that God wants us to hear this because the devil has come up with many lies of deceit and convinced Christians that it's not their job.

You agree with that? The enemy wants to make believers think that it's not their job to warn people. He has convinced many fathers and mothers that it's not or that it's too unloving to warn their children.

You know, maybe another part of this burden has been there are now two young men in Ohio that were killed this summer.

One just in the last week that were killed due to alcohol and drugs or at least alcohol and drug related.

Men or young men that were from the community that we lived in where that runs rampant. And you know, you could say, well, yes, they knew better.

That's just what they do, right? At that age, the one last week, I think, was only 17 years old. And living a very ungodly life. Went out in the middle of the night with his motorcycle and was killed.

[11:54] Just yesterday, a father told me that he doesn't want to say too much to his son that is lost. He doesn't want to come across too strong.

And he's almost 30 and has lived a very ungodly life. I hear what he's saying.

But there's another side that when we're called to warn, we warn. I remember the words Joe gave me a few years back or gave us as a church.

We can love our children right into hell, so to speak. You know what I'm saying. We get the meaning. We think we're being loving, but we fail to warn that there is a judgment day coming.

Are you ready to meet your Savior, your Christ? Are we ready to meet God? We can be...

[12:57] We can be... I understand we can be... People can be obnoxious. They can be overbearing and never, you know, giving a word of hope or whatever and just warning and warning.

That's an extreme side of that. But we react to that too much and we think we can't give a warning. We can't... You know, we're weak. And we're...

Maybe not being used by God the way He would want us to be used. Want to use us. Yes, we have to show love and compassion and try not to make someone angry and all those things.

But who will warn of the judgment to come if God's people don't? Who will plead for the soul with tears? Where are the tears?

Where is the intercession for sinners? Where is the weeping for a family member that has strayed and are lost? And why do we want to support something and make something feel good that God hates and is going to judge soon?

[14:10] is there any wonder that people aren't repenting because the church has become a coward? I'm just speaking very bluntly here this morning.

Nobody in particular. It's just... This past week this was just laid very heavily on me about being a watchman and about warning the sinner.

Maybe that warning can be mostly just in prayer. Just praying. Maybe interceding. But we're communicating with God and if God lays it on our heart to speak, we'll look at some more verses.

I just sitting here this morning thought of something. I remember one time when this really, really gripped me in a very personal way.

I was doing business with a man in I think North Carolina for a number of years and I never... I don't think I ever met him personally but on the phone.

[15:21] And he was very cold. Very hard. Very cold. And his language indicated everything of a lost man. And I remember many times being convicted about I need to stand up to him.

I need to stand against that and warn him of judgment to come. And I always thought I would do that someday. This was a long time ago. Tony was just a very little boy.

And then yeah, like I'd get off the phone and think someday I need to warn him about God. And then I just remember getting the message one day that Emmett Brohard died.

And that just gripped me. I never one time warned him. May God help us to speak I had to repent to God for that.

Did he want to use me in some way? I believe he did. Or it wouldn't have been on my heart. Let's read on here in verse 9 in Ezekiel 33.

[16:40] Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity.

But thou hast delivered thy soul. Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel. Thus ye speak, saying, if our transgression and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked would turn from his way and live.

Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel? We see here the heart of God, that he has no pleasure, even though he will judge, and he will judge righteously, he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

He doesn't like it. He wants them to turn. In fact, so much so that after all this, he comes and becomes a man and gives himself a ransom for the wicked, that they can be redeemed.

[18:07] That is the heart of God. Now let's turn to Isaiah chapter 56 for another Old Testament scripture, another prophet.

Isaiah 56, I think we'll start in verse 8. The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, yet will I gather others to him beside those that are gathered unto him.

All ye beasts of the field come to devour, yea, all the beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind. They are all ignorant.

They are all dumb dogs. They cannot bark. Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand.

They all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter. Come, yea, they say, I will fetch wine and we will fill ourselves with strong drink and tomorrow shall be as this day and much more abundant.

[19:37] I get a picture of just a looseness and a party life and carnality. You know, just loving to slumber and sleeping and ignoring the truth and just having an easy life.

In fact, tomorrow will be another one of those easy days. It will be even better tomorrow. And God is warning. You know, most of the watchman concept in Scripture is in the Old Testament.

And I do believe that there is a difference in the new in that the Holy Spirit has come. And that we have, we all have God.

In fact, I believe that, you know, while in the Old Testament there were just a select few watchmen. You know, God's prophet here and one over here and they would warn God's people.

But today as Christians, I believe we're all called to be watchmen. First of all, over our own soul. We watch for our own soul and for what God brings to us about us that we are saved and that we are walking right.

[21:02] While some have, today, still have further callings and giftings, we are all called to be watching as faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ. a question.

If those of us that are called to be watchmen, we are called to speak at times, but we do not warn and we do not obey that calling, what will our judgment be?

if God has specifically called us and I believe He has probably many more than we care to acknowledge.

Let's look at 1 Peter chapter 5. I want to look at a few scriptures here in the New Testament and there are many.

Jesus, how many times did Jesus say, watch and pray? To watch and pray, to be alert. 1 Peter 5, verse 1.

[22:14] The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

Feed the flock of God which is among you taking oversight thereof not by constraint but willingly not for filthy lucre or money but of a ready mind being willing neither as being lords over God's heritage but being examples to the flock.

and when the chief shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away likewise ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder.

And then he goes on he says yea all of you be subject one to another and be clothed with humility for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.

humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time casting all your care upon him for he careth for you.

Then he goes on in verse 8 he says be sober be vigilant why? because your adversary your enemy the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour because we have an ugly determined enemy that wants to destroy us that's why that's why we're vigilant that's why we're aware and we warn each other we warn the sinner verse 9 keeps going there whom resists steadfast in the faith we heard about faith this morning knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world but the God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by

Christ Jesus after that he may have suffered a while make you perfect establish strengthen and settle you to him be glory and dominion forever and ever amen we have an enemy of our soul we have a personal enemy that wants to destroy you and I personally we also have an enemy that wants to destroy the church of Jesus Christ the people in the church elders in the church are also called to be watchmen and when I talk about this I'm talking about both the church and us as individuals and also in our homes fathers in the homes especially fathers and mothers I might say but it fits for all really Paul in

Acts 20 verse 25 might just read a few verses there in Acts 20 verse 25 starting there and now behold I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God shall see my face no more wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men isn't that an amazing statement Paul said he is pure or he is free from the blood of all men like we were reading in the Old Testament about blood being required of us or of God's prophet Paul the apostle Paul said that he is free from the blood of all men he also said I have fought a good fight I have kept the course I have finished the race and all of that can we say that with Paul maybe not in our past can we say that going forward that we want to be free from the blood of all men we want to be such an example that we don't cause anybody else to miss it so concerned that we pray for those we should pray for and we speak to those we should speak to

Paul did and I think he was a good example he goes on he says and here's why he says for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers to feed the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood for I know this that after my departing these were Paul's final words to the church he said after his departing I lost my place here 29 for I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things things that aren't true to draw away disciples after them therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years

I cease not to warn everyone night and day with tears Paul warned I think all of them did in the New Testament there's lots of strengthening things and encouraging things and blessing and all of that mixed with warnings throughout the Old and New Testament you know I personally experienced something that it took me a number of years to see and I'm still not sure where it's all at where to put it all but just a personal experience and wishing for a warning when I never got a warning have any of you ever experienced that in life where you went down maybe a wrong road for a while and nobody ever warned you when our family was young over 20 years ago we moved to a different area to a different church mostly due to our friends being there and because we connected well with some of the families there and thought it would be exciting to move there and it was and it wasn't all bad

[29:55] I don't want to give that impression we have good memories we had good even spiritual connections but there were also many bad influences it looked like maybe almost the perfect church from the outside but recently I've come to a place where I have this deep sense of those were some wasted years spiritually and I'm not even blaming anybody except myself I don't even if I would have to blame somebody I wouldn't know who to blame it just is what happened I was not being I remember being frustrated but I was not being a good watchman as a father and my wife and children

I think just looking back I was more concerned about physical things making money looking good everything just kind of was at ease more concerned about that than spiritual growth and being okay spiritually and I do believe that those eight or ten years there were detrimental in my children looking back and for that I I don't know what can be done other than that I'm very sorry and it took a very almost a rude awakening from God to show me that and I just want to say that if we ever find ourselves in a setting with no spiritual oversight or no brotherhood accountability or no you know

God's not moving or at least not very much there's no pulling together in unity like we heard last Sunday the need for spiritual unity you may need to consider finding a different fellowship if there's more excitement about making money and having big parties and a casual fun exciting lifestyle over the deep workings of God it is time to be alarmed if your heart isn't continually being drawn into with a desire for a deeper relationship with God and to know him more in the interactions that you have in the local body you should be alarmed and you should do something about it

I'm not saying it means you have to leave but we need to be alarmed we need to have a trumpet we need to have a warning that this is going a bad direction this isn't going to come out right with our next generation things like that if souls are no longer being saved lives aren't being changed you have to sound the alarm there's something wrong has God left us there needs to become a desperation of seeking God I feel like we miss so much of that where are the watchmen in our churches where is a Paul that warns the people night and day with tears could just one person even have warned me I don't know who that would have been but look this isn't going to take your family the right course where was just one person about lukewarmness and carnality we have the warnings in the Bible we just don't apply them many times we think it's for somebody else it's not really for me it's not for you it's that church over here or whatever and I'm afraid that the church may have become weak and flimsy with a flimsy argument that we don't want to offend anybody let's not cause a ruckus let's just be quiet we be quiet if God's quiet right

God wants us to be quiet let's be quiet but if he wants us to speak who will speak let's not scare people away let's not hurt their feeling why are we so afraid is it because we don't have enough love to really have love and we don't trust ourselves we don't well what if I come across unloving that needs to be there I get that we can be very unloving and very harsh I'm not talking about that kind of warning but it may sound harsh to somebody is it because we don't truly hear from God if God wants to bring us a clear warning to this church can he would we hear it is he allowed to do so through a brother or even a sister it was shared last week that sometimes being a watchman is a very lonely place you know thinking back of being a watchman out on a city wall watching for the enemy was a lonely thing and it can be that way in our day too especially if God really puts something in you know in our day a lot of these things would be rejected a lot of warnings are rejected but giving a person a warning or a people a warning is not trying to have some cozy loving feeling always if God wants to bring a warning now I'm going out on a limb here if God wants to bring me a warning as a father through a brother in this body can he do that can he do that will I be open or am I too defensive and not open

[37:32] I know it doesn't feel good but at times we need it and I welcome that and I want to have an open heart open ears I don't want any more years of waste I would rather have a false warning than none at all looking out for each other and let's remember we're called to walk in the spirit not in the flesh you know if the warning comes in the flesh it'll bring confusion and it won't bring what God wants but if it's in the spirit of humility and meekness sometimes I think we want to be so humble though that

God can't use us you know I really appreciated the warnings we got this week brother James we were challenged we were I feel like it was just so good we had a time Jesse Lapp was asked to share and he shared a little bit but then rather than him sharing he opened it up to the older men in our midst and I'll just share this there were quite a few men that were 60 and up I forget how many but James fell in that category and he just wanted to use that verse about the older men having dreams and he wanted to know what are your dreams for the church what would you like to see and all those things and that was that whole session was that going around just listening to the older men and that was extremely an inspiring blessing for me

I think for all of us very encouraging and strengthening to us that are younger give ourselves to hear what the older men are saying just a question we have older men here in our midst and I'm like I don't know where I am I'm not young and I'm not old right but that's a tough place so when it's convenient I'm one of the younger I guess but sometimes I'm one of the older but what about us older ones can can we be understanding and careful to listen to the younger generation and to walk closely with them I think that's very important because the younger have visions too of what should be right it's what the

Bible says it's not just the older ones dreaming how it should be it's we need to blend those and come together it is very important that we have vision without a vision people perish we need the younger to have to share those and to be willing to be used by God we want to hear that we can blend this into a powerful army of God isn't that amazing the older men having dreams the younger having vision maybe sometimes the vision needs to be defined a little bit better with the dream you know maybe the dream needs to be brought to more reality with the vision how often did Jesus say to watch and to pray need to keep moving in 2nd

Corinthians 5 again Paul speaking 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 verse 10 he says these words for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men but we are made manifest unto God and I trust also are made manifest in your conscience did you catch that phrase knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men we persuade them we live a life that's persuasive number one but we also speak to them we persuade them and we don't just tell people about the terror and the wrath of

God we also tell them we speak of his great love and his mercy his compassion his long suffering today is the day of salvation today if you hear his voice don't harden your heart God is good and yes he's merciful but a good watchman will also warn his friends he'll warn them of the wrath that is to come if they stray right there's a wrath and a great judgment day coming a good watchman doesn't just say well they can see my godly example and be saved I mean that's part of it at times though he will speak and sometimes even blow the trumpet as loud as he can and give that warning another verse that has been on my mind a lot lately especially this week was this one to seek first the kingdom of heaven kingdom of

God in Matthew 6 is where Jesus gave those words in verse 31 it says therefore take no thought saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or wherewith shall we be clothed for all these things do the Gentiles seek for your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of all these things but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you take no thought for tomorrow for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself tomorrow will have its own troubles seeking first first things of God and in one of the maybe this I don't know why this verse but maybe God wants to warn us with this verse or bless us with this verse however you want to look at it but a challenge if I could leave this challenge with us

Jesus these are his words if there's a challenge it's from him but he said to seek him first his kingdom to seek his kingdom and his righteousness do we do that you know the move I made when my children were so young some of it's a little faint but I don't remember really seeking his kingdom first and his righteousness first it was more what I want does that make sense and yet it was a very big decision can we commit to saying him first his kingdom first his righteousness will it enhance that in the decisions that we make can he bless that well many of us could probably look back and say yeah we we missed it somewhere in life's journey and we can't go back but we can go forward we can commit going forward that we will seek his kingdom first his righteousness

I believe this verse should be our standard for our decision making or one of them for sure wives and mothers are you being observant in case you thought this is all just for the men are you being observant and watchful in your home with your children when something just doesn't seem right can you find your place where you can do something about it my wife has given many warnings over the years and it's created many discussions that's not being out of place I don't believe God has given us that are married a help need somebody that walks with us and is called to fulfill a place there in the home and us men need your godly input we are co-labors so don't just be silent all the time there's a place for that but that's why

I said find your place and do something about it the prayers of a wife the prayers of a mother are very powerful and sometimes the words that you speak they carry a lot of weight and it's right God wants to use you and if you have the spirit of God in you he will use you he will use you to help guide your house we can read about that in Proverbs about a godly woman you know we could mention many things that we can warn against I only did one I think in all this and that's to seek the kingdom of God first in our decisions choices that we make but there are many things it's not what the message today is about necessarily is about the details but in our hearts

I think we know what matters to God in our hearts we know where his word is clear and what the heart is of God young people a word for you I think it was John that said he has no greater joy than to know that his children walk in truth I believe he meant his spiritual children and to know that you are fighting the battle with all of us with the rest of us and hearing a warning from a young person is very powerful if if it's you know in Christ obviously we know that's what we're talking about but in the Lord a warning from a young person that says that's not going to come out right we heard last week about you know it's not the beginning of the road that's so bad oftentimes but where will that road end up and to hear that coming from somebody young is amazing and it brings strength it brings courage yeah it's not a bad thing in itself but then think it through a little bit what if we all start doing that where will it end up how will it affect my younger brothers and sisters and so on and to have that warning

God wants to use us in many ways and that may be one of them looking ahead and seeing what's coming and coming up with a plan to outwit and outsmart the enemy to stop it in its tracks before it goes too far you know if we stay full time talking again to younger ones in defense we're going to fail you can't win typically by just defense you know like in a game but dare to be on the offense to just see what the enemy does and doing nothing about it isn't going to win any battles there are sinners to warn about the coming judgment and yes the church believers also need to be warned

I need that in my life we need to be warned about the dangerous trends in our culture things that will make us pray less and become lukewarm or indifferent things that destroy not necessarily sin in itself even but they cause something that can cause us to sin those are the enemy strategies being warned about the things that the enemy will throw at us and his evil methods of trying to deceive God's people let's stand together you know the great falling away that we read about is real the deception is here we're in that time of great deception and we better have our anchor deep like the song we sang this morning we have an anchor we have a hope we have a power that we can be tapped into seeking his kingdom first let's pray together

Lord we just come to you at this time God we thank you for your word thank you Lord for calling us out out as a peculiar people a people set apart for you and Lord I just pray that you would make us into all that you want us to be Lord there are some here that need to be watchmen that need to be looking out for danger to understand the time that we live in and to bring warning and Lord I pray that we as a church body could hear those warnings Lord that we would be humble and meek and we would esteem each other highly Lord I just pray that that you would use us perhaps in a deeper way than before

Lord that your church could be growing and going moving forward and at the same time being protected from the enemy's darts that are flung at us all the time Lord I just pray especially this morning I think of our young ones here the younger generation all these men Lord I just pray God that you would do a deep work in their hearts and just let them know it's okay to speak it's okay to warn and to caution and to see that to have vision Lord I pray God that you would put visions in their minds and in their hearts of what you want Lord Jesus for your bride for your church it's all for your glory Lord we read this morning that you purchased the church with your own blood which makes you the legal owner of this church this body Lord

God I just pray God that that would be a reality that would be settled in our hearts that we have a king and we are accountable for what you have said Lord for what how you have called us out God I just pray that that we would be a people that would love you and would serve you with all our hearts be with us Lord as we consider these things and I pray God you'd help us to always seek you first seek your kingdom first your righteousness first every decision that comes up whether it's work related or anything else things that we do things that we buy that it would be with the thought deep in our heart oh God that we'd be seeking you first never just for ourselves we need you

Lord help us Lord we pray in your most precious name amen