

## We Aint Done Yet

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

Meanwhile, we've got our hands full continually thanking God for you, our good friends—so loved by God! God picked you out as his from the very start. Think of it: included in God's original plan of salvation by the bond of faith in the living truth. This is the life of the Spirit he invited you to through the Message we delivered, in which you get in on the glory of our Master, Jesus Christ.

So, friends, take a firm stand, feet on the ground and head high. Keep a tight grip on what you were taught, whether in personal conversation or by our letter. May Jesus himself and God our Father, who reached out in love and surprised you with gifts of unending help and confidence, put a fresh heart in you, invigorate your work, enliven your speech.

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I don't recall where it came from but many years ago I heard some words of wisdom that I often think of at this time of year. It is not what you eat between Thanksgiving and Christmas that makes a difference in your health but what you eat between Christmas and Thanksgiving.

We just finished celebrating Jesus' birth but are we really finished? Some of us woke up Friday morning and began right away tucking away the vestiges of the party away, for some it may have been folding up the artificial tree for next year for others it was harvesting the bulbs off a very dry evergreen trying to untangle the rope of lights from the tree without becoming entangled in them oneself. Putting all the party supplies away, that's what we're supposed to do right?

Over the past four weeks we have been listening to the sermon series that focused on the building up to the big party, Jesus' birthday party. We decided to have the party, we invited, we

prepared and we welcomed... did you feel the hope of the season?... did you feel the love of the season?... did you feel the joy and peace of the season?

The Thessalonians were the people addressed in the letter for today's scripture reading. At one time they felt that hope, love, joy and promise of peace shared to them through the gospel as taught by the Apostle Paul. Paul believed Christ's second coming would happen before the end of his own life, but it has not happened yet. Our scripture being a letter leaves us with many holes of information. It seems to be addressing rumors that the people missed Christ's second coming, in staying with the theme you might say they feared they had missed the party. Consequently some of them had eased back on their work and the letter urges others not to succumb to these attitudes. The writers tone is one of comfort that they are not forgotten, they are to stand firm and remember, to keep a tight grip what they were taught.

It is hard to understand the challenges the Thessalonians were undergoing as we have our own challenges. The world continues to suffer from war and economic strife: where is the peace, where is the joy, where is the love, where is the hope? It is easy to put away the party favors of this season only to pick up the baggage of regret, grief, anger, and fear. Such baggage can be hard to carry making it even harder to be all we can be, making it hard to continue.

I had recently been watching the film the *Legend of Bagger Vance*. The lead character Rannulph Junnah, played by Matt Damon, was a young amateur golfer in the early 1900's. Although he was an amateur he was good, real good, Savannah Georgia's best. His record setting talent for the game could have proven to lead to a bright future in golf for Junnah that is until he found himself traveling to Europe to fight in the First World War. While on a dangerous mission he became the only surviving member of his troupe. Consequently feeling less than a hero he

doesn't return to Savannah for over ten years but when he does, he returns a broken man, a golfer who, as he put it, has lost his swing.

Another key character is Adele Invergordon, Junnah's former girlfriend and heiress to Krewe Island, a golfing resort her father had just finished building when the depression hit the South. In order to save her father's dream that it become the South's premier resort, she determines to hold an exhibition match between the two greatest golfers of that time, Bobby Jones and Walter Hagen, with the winner receiving \$10,000.00. Before allowing the match to happen, the town's people insist that one of Savannah's own be represented in the match. After much coaxing, and some subtle nudging from a mysterious stranger, Bagger Vance, played by Will Smith, Junnah agrees to participate in the event.

Bagger enters into Junnah's life becoming a very different kind of caddie for him; at times seeming like he knew nothing of the game of golf, at other times giving him tips that often correlated with life lessons. Bagger believed one could tell a man's grip on his world by the grip he had on his club.

I am no world class golfer fact is my score in would be something to brag about only if I was bowling. But I still find I can relate to Junnah. I can relate to the various emotions he goes through in the match. First he feels intimidated by these two pro golfers who are at the top of their career. In his discouragement he almost skips town before the game even starts. Perhaps you have felt that way at some point I know I have. Like you weren't worthy, you weren't qualified, or the task at hand seemed too big, impossible, so why bother. Sometimes we need someone to believe in us, to help us see what we can't. We as Christians always have one who sees our full capacity and their belief offers us hope. For us it is God, for Junnah it is the town's people who are filled with hope that he can win for the sake of Savannah.

The match begins. Although he goes through a rough start, with the help of Bagger he is able to pull himself out of it and begin to really play the game. Junnah appears to have found his swing as he lowers his score to where it is even with the pros. Certainly you have experienced this; you find your groove you get comfortable, you are excited, things are working for you. But then sometimes if we are not careful we can get like Junnah then did, too big for his britches.

Despite the fact that it was Bagger's tips that helped him get as far as he did, he began to get a little cocky, acting like he could do anything. His judgment became warped and he didn't feel he needed Bagger's advice. As his game quickly declines he returns to the disheartened man he was when the game began. We are about to see a clip (get ready to play clip) of what happens when Junnah has dropped behind by three strokes and he lands it in the woods. As he enters the woods he begins to experience a psychological flash back to the war; when he was Captain Junnah and all his men lost their lives. (play clip) Overcome by emotion he is ready to give up... ready to pick up the golf ball which would lead to immediate disqualification.

1:38:33

(Junnah enters the woods. Overcome by the flashback he is just about to pick up the ball, until...)

Bagger: You gonna be wantin' a different club there Junnuh.

Junnah: I can't do this

B: Well... Why don't you just loosen up your grip a smidge? You know a man's grip on his club is like a man's grip on his...

J: That's not what I'm talkin' about.

B: I know.

J: No you don't.

B: What I'm talkin' about is a game... a game that can't be won... only played.

J.: You don't understand

B: I don't need to understand. Aint a soul on this entire earth aint gotta burden to carry he don't understand. You aint alone in that. But you been carryin' this one long enough. Time to go on. Lay it down.

J.: I don't know how

B: You got a choice: you can stop or you can start.

J.: Start?

B: Walkin'

J.: Where?

B: Right back to where you always been... and then stand there still... real still and remember.

J.: It's too long ago.

B: Oh no sir it was just a moment ago. Time for you to come on out of the shadows junnah... time for you to choose.

J.: I can't.

B: Yes you can... but you aint alone... I'm right here wit' ya... I been here all along. Now play the game... your game. The one that only you was meant to play... the one that was given to you when you come into this world... You ready? ...Go on take your stance... strike that ball Junnah, give it everything. Now is the time for you to remember... remember your swing. That's right Junnah settle yourself. Let's go. Now is the time, Junnah.

(Junnah swings, landing it on the green.)

B: Let's go Hardy.

J.: Hey bagger? You are one hell of a caddie.

B: Well I do the best with what I got to work with... we aint done yet. 1:43:05 (end clip)

We aint done yet... the party is over... but we aint done yet.

There are times in our lives that we find ourselves brimming with hope. Perhaps it is refocusing our attitudes through the season of advent or maybe life just seems to be doing fine.

On the other hand I know I have fallen away from such hope, perhaps it is due to feeling like one

is returning to the mundane of everyday living, perhaps it is from looking at the news or listening to naysayers that saps every last drip of hope. Perhaps that was what was going on in the minds of the Thessalonians that resulted in a letter being written. They were losing hope, they needed to be reminded to stand firm. Other times I have found myself picking up the baggage that I had been carrying around too long. Despite the fact it handicaps me it feels comfortable, it is familiar. However, when we do that it gets in the way of using the gifts God gave us, the game God gave each of us to play.

We spent four weeks deciding, inviting, preparing and welcoming, in honor of Jesus' birthday. But we need to keep deciding to invite, prepare and welcome, because the truth is the impact we make on this world is not so much how we live between Thanksgiving and Christmas, as much as it is how we live between Christmas and Thanksgiving. We aint done yet.