

What would you do if your smoke detector went off in the middle of the night alerting you to a huge fire burning somewhere in your home? Of course there's only one thing to do in that situation. Run around and grab as much of your belongings as you can. Stuff clothes into a suitcase. Grab your TV off the wall. Back the cars out of the garage. Those are not the things you would do. You would do whatever it took to get your family safely out of the house.

Lot and his family experienced something very similar while living in Sodom. You've probably heard of Sodom and Gomorrah. The two towns that were so overrun with sinfulness God determined they were beyond saving. Not even ten righteous people could be found within the city limits. Smoke detectors of God's warning were going off. Destruction was coming soon. As Lot ran to alert those important to him of the coming danger they responded with laughter. They did nothing.

Today marks the beginning of another four week waiting period before Christmas. You may think we're waiting for Christ's birth. Actually we're waiting for the fire, the fire and the brimstone. We're waiting for the destruction that God promised, actually warned is coming. Advent is all about waiting for Christ to return a second time. Advent is the smoke detectors going off for this world. The fire is already planned. How will we react? Will we run and gather up everything earthly that's important? Will we look back with a desire to stay? We learn a lesson from Lot, Abraham's nephew, in the first lesson for today...

**Your redemption is drawing near  
Leave everything behind  
Look forward to Christ's coming**

Moving from a warm climate to a cold one or from cold to warm can be a difficult change. Live there long enough and you'll adapt. Time allows us to get comfortable wherever we live. The account this morning centers on a man named Lot, nephew to the great Abraham. Abraham was comfortable living in God's presence. He enjoyed the warmth of God's love and promises. He spent time walking and talking with God. Lot lived in far colder climate away from God's presence. It wasn't because God didn't care, it was because of where Lot chose to live. Lot chose to leave the warm climate of God's love and move to the cold climate of Sodom, a cesspool city with a sin problem. But Lot got used to living there, and over time wasn't so concerned about the sin problem anymore.

That was until two angels visited him with a warning about the town. **"Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished."** The time to go was now. No time to grab money, provisions, or possessions. Grab the family and go because the smoke alarms are going off. But Lot froze. He hesitated. Could Lot have some good reason? Maybe. But there are too many likely bad reasons. Was it the thought of losing all his earthly possessions? The thought that his city was being destroyed over some harmless sins. Really how bad could it be? Lot seemed comfortable in Sodom, among the sinful behavior. He hesitated and showed an attachment to this world that was too tight. So little did he care for God's mercy.

When seconds count everything has to be left behind. You can't hesitate when the fire of Judgment Day comes. Don't think that you have a good reason to hesitate either. Don't stop to count every penny you've stored away in the bank. Don't try and gather up furniture or clothes. Don't think that your sinfulness couldn't be that bad. You've grown too comfortable with sin. You hesitate to leave it all behind like Lot.

The Lord God made a promise to send Jesus to this earth, not once but twice. The first time started in the manger and ended on the cross. Jesus didn't hesitate to leave his father and come to earth. He left it all to redeem us, to buy us back from our sins. The second coming of Christ we're still waiting for. Christ described that occasion as a time to, **"Stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."** For believers in Christ God's love shown to us in Jesus has won us to an eternity. There's no reason to hesitate. Leave it all behind.

Jesus never said having things was bad. Gift exchanges at Christmas, Black Friday shopping for deals, making money to be comfortable are acceptable. But as we prepare for Jesus' second coming consider Lot's story; the more "stuff" we have, the more comfortable we are with this world. The closer we live to sin the easier it is to get comfortable with it. This life is filled with great gifts from God for you to enjoy. When the end comes only faith in Christ matters. With that you can leave without regrets, with no hesitation. Concentrate on Christ, prepare for your redemption which is drawing near and be ready to leave it all behind.

As they stood watching the flames engulf the entire house the owner realized they didn't even have time to grab anything precious or valuable from inside. They were losing so much. Without thinking they started walking back towards the flames. The possessions seemed too important. "Stay back" a fireman yelled. The warning startled them. They couldn't go inside to get anything. It was gone. Looking back wouldn't do them any good. They needed to move forward, however tough it was to do. Jesus yells to us, "I'm coming soon" and it startles us. However tough it is Jesus doesn't want us looking back. We need to look forward to Christ's coming.

Lot's wife needed one more peak. And why not look back? They had left so quickly. So much fun and excitement, so many pleasures, so much living yet to do there that it was sad to leave. Before looking forward to her new life Lot's wife stole one more glance backwards. **"Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."** Her judgment is a lesson for everyone. She cared so little that God had rescued her and the family from sin. She cared so little that the angels had pushed them out of the city to keep them from being swept up in the destruction. She cared so little about God that she looked back to the past. God saw her sinful desires and judged her harshly.

Kids love to play, “just once more.” Toss me up just once more. Swing me around just once more. Let me go on the ride just once more. God warns us of the coming destruction; in plain language from Jesus, in picture language from Revelation, in the signs he warns are happening all around. God warns us about our future, tells us he’s won the victory, and says now is the time to prepare. But even with all that we end up being like kids saying, just once more.

There’s the glance over our shoulder at the life we used to live. It was a life without God imposing so many rules, a life where we were free to please ourselves. A time when we did what we wanted to do when we wanted to do it. That life with its guilty pleasures didn’t seem so bad. We certainly didn’t fear turning into a pillar of salt. But we should watch for flames of judgment. Spending our time looking back towards our life of sin or simply living a life of sin shows just how little we care for God’s plan to save us.

As the end comes and Jesus returns as promised our attention will be drawn to the one who won redemption. All around us the world will be destroyed, but we won’t care. The one with the marks in his hands and feet, who looks like a lamb that was slain, he holds our attention. He’s here to lead us out of the danger in love and mercy. He’s our Savior. We wait for that day not looking backwards to anything else. We look forward to the coming of our rescuer, our deliverer, our Savior Jesus.

The morning reveals the fire did total damage. Nothing can be salvaged. I imagine that’s what Abraham thought as he surveyed God’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But out of the destruction something was salvaged. Redemption came for one family. It was completely God’s grace which saved them. This world already shows signs of the coming destruction. What will be saved? As we wait for Christ’s second coming let’s not hesitate to leave it all behind. We will be saved from the destruction as saved children of God. We look forward for our redemption is drawing near.