

On the Fifth Day God Created Vultures – Matthew 24:28

I. Introduction:

- A. A few days ago, along with two of our church members, I spent a wonderful week in rural southeastern Oklahoma at a Bible conference,.
1. In going back and forth to the meetings, and taking a short drive through the rolling hills one afternoon, I was soaking up the country-side – specifically looking for the local wildlife.
 2. I saw two of my wife's newest favorite bird – the cardinal – and there was another blue bird, but I didn't have time to identify him.
 - a. One night there were three deer in the yard of our Airbnb, & the next night a bunny had replaced them.
 - b. Along the highway there was a road-kill skunk and not very far from that there was, I think, a squished possum, but as I say, he was well-mutilated so I can't be certain.
 - c. I saw a bald eagle sitting high in a tree, and there was a boisterous rooster who visited my open window, doing his thing from 4 a.m. until late in the day.
 3. Besides all these, there was one animal more abundant than any other
 4. I saw several dozen turkey vultures, circling and soaring high in the sky. They seemed to be everywhere.
- B. Coincidentally, when we were flying down, I was reading a book by my current favorite author, **F.W. Boreham**.
1. It is said that Frank Boreham might have been the last student personally interviewed and approved by C.H. Spurgeon to matriculate into Spurgeon's college.
 2. After graduation, he was called to a Baptist church in New Zealand where God greatly blessed his ministry.
 3. Then he pastored in Tasmania and Australia before becoming an internationally-known evangelist.
 4. He is still a thought provoking, colorful writer, and several of his sermons and articles have blessed my soul.
- C. I used the word "*coincidentally*," because on my flight down I read a Boreham article, called "*The Scavenger*."
1. I know that it is unorthodox – this whole message will be unorthodox – but I'd like to read the opening paragraph of that sermon.
 2. About a hundred years ago, Boreham wrote, "*Who has not lost himself in rapt and reverent admiration as he has stood before A. T. A. Schenk's great picture of 'Anguish' in the Melbourne Art Gallery?*"
 - a. I, for one, have never stood before that painting, but Boreham repainted that picture for me.
 - b. He described a "*dead lamb lying stiff and stark on the bleak and snow-wrapped moor; (a) grim circle of coal-black crows perched ominously round, craning their necks and flapping their wings in their impatience to blood their beaks and bury their talons in the banquet that awaits them;*"
 - c. *the telltale crimson blood-marks that splash the white, white snow;*
 - d. *and, most affecting of all, the distracted mother (the ewe), with eyes that would move the coldest onlooker to tears, standing sadly over her lifeless lamb, attempting, like Rizpah in the Bible story, to protect her precious charge from the avarice of the hungry birds.*
 - e. *It is a pathetic painting; but it is not with its pathetic side that I propose to deal.*
 - f. *I am the champion of the crows."*
 3. From there Boreham wrote as if he was a lawyer defending the scavengers in a court of law against charges against them.

II. Let's think about crows, sharks, dung beetles, jackals, vultures and all of God's other natural undertakers.

- A. From where did they originally come?
1. Some people may call me a fool, but I believe the Bible, and so I believe that God created them.
 - a. There is no evidence whatsoever, proving they evolved into their low and despised position. None!
 - b. It takes as much faith, if not more, to believe in the evolution of buzzards, as it does to believe the Bible.
 2. On the fifth day of creation, the Lord ordered their appearance, and you might say they were waiting in the wings, soaring high in the sky, until death was introduced a few days later.

- B. Some of you might be aware that the word “**vulture**” is not found in our King James Bible.
1. But that is clearly what Jesus described in our text. He was not talking about the bald or golden eagle.
 2. And the word “**vulture**” is used in other translations of this verse.
- C. Now I encourage you to picture vultures as you know them.
1. Are there any vulture varieties **as beautiful** as a cardinal, a gold finch or Idaho’s state bird?
 - a. Have you **studied** the **face** of the Turkey or the Black Vulture, or the California Condor?
 - b. They are **so ugly** they’d make **blind children cry**.
 2. Of course, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so that a crow, raven or even the mighty condor have their respective comeliness.
 3. But it goes without saying: no vulture is going to win a beauty contest.
 4. Furthermore, there no farms cultivating and selling vulture eggs.
 - a. We ate venison meat last week, but there were no scrambled vulture eggs for breakfast.
 - b. Are there any **Buffalo Vulture Wing** outlets? Are there any **Kentucky Fried Buzzard** stores?
 - c. Do ladies fix **vulture soup** to give to their ailing friends?
 5. As you think about it, just about everything seems to be against those poor vultures.
 - a. As well as being among worlds **ugliest** birds, they are constantly **associated** with **death & destruction**.
 - b. **They** eat what most of us would never touch, such as road-kill skunks – the stiunkier the better.
 6. Rather than a skull & cross bones, a good warning label on a poison bottle would the silhouette of buzzard.
- D. Please bear with me in all this. I will come to a spiritual application eventually.
1. But first, **what is it** that vultures, ravens and crows **do**? What is their **job**? Why did God create them?
 2. They are **scavengers**; they are garbage collectors; putridity devourers. They clean up after others.
 3. But, as a general rule **they don’t kill** their own prey. They aren’t **murderers**.
 - a. They aren’t wolves, lions or human beings.
 - b. They aren’t apex predators; they aren’t predators at all. They are the lowest of all the bottom feeders.
 4. That ewe sheep in Schenk’s painting didn’t have anything to worry about as she tried to keep them from devouring her dead lamb. Those crows had no desire to do her any harm.
 5. **Frank Buckland**, a well-known naturalist wrote: *“If any creature deserves, more than any other, to be defended and protected, it is that creature which performs the duty of a scavenger.”*
- E. Last summer, a deer ran out onto I-90 and was struck down by some vehicle – tossed to the side of the road.
1. You saw the blood on the pavement and broken body laying there, wondering about the vehicle that hit it.
 2. A week later you passed that same spot, and the carcass was still there, but it was bloated and grotesque.
 3. You flew by at 73 mph, so you didn’t smell it, but you wondered about the stench.
 4. You thought, *“Why hasn’t the Transportation Department sent someone to remove that horrible thing?”*
 5. But why didn’t **you** stop and throw it into the back of your Lexus?
 6. We want it done, but we don’t want to do it. We have human vultures to take care of such things for us.
- F. Why do we **idolize** the **tiger**, but not the buzzard? Why do we admire the mountain lion?
1. Isn’t it because the lion is more like us? Or perhaps isn’t it because he is more like what we’d like to be?
 2. As a race, we revere the aggressive business man, the over-achiever, the bone crushing football player.
 3. The only human vultures we appreciate are the road crews and the morticians – the **“undertakers”** as they used to be known. And neither one of them are high on our friends list.
 4. And 99.8% of us would not want to be one of them; we don’t yearn to become buzzards.
- G. But vultures were created by God to be His undertakers.
1. They are nature’s official mourners, when no one else sees or cares about that murdered zebra or seal.
 2. As the lion is finishing his meal, with blood all over his muzzle, the vultures are in the wings ready to bury the remains. As Jesus said, *“Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”*

- H. Now before I get to my point, I will give you the last paragraph of that article I read on the plane.
1. In pointing to his clients – the vultures, crows and buzzards, lawyer Boreham says:
 2. *“They are a terrible crowd, these unlovely clients of mine.*
 - a. *Even as I defend and belaud them, their frightful fangs, their blooded beaks, their dripping talons, their gleaming tusks, make me shudder.*
 - b. *As I lay down my brief I am grateful – profoundly and ceaselessly thankful – for two things.*
 3. *Firstly, I am thankful, even whilst I praise them, that they only bury their hideous faces in that which is putrid and corrupt. The living sheep in the picture does not fear the crows.*
 4. *‘Wheresoever the **carcass** is, there shall the vultures be gathered together.’*
 5. *And, secondly, I am thankful – more thankful than words can tell – that I **need NEVER** become their **PREY**.*
 - a. *‘He that believeth,’ said their great Lord and mine, ‘he that believeth hath everlasting **LIFE**.’*
 - b. *‘He that liveth and believeth in Me **shall never die**.’*
 - c. *Never die. **NEVER DIE! NEVER DIE!** That is grand! It is a gospel worth preaching.*
 6. *I hurl that great triumphant word into the terrible faces of my ugly clients, and, with a smile on my face and a song in my heart, I leave my case with the court.”*

III. This world in which we live, is filled with good and bad.

- A. This is a place of light and dark; sunshine and shadows; beauty and ugliness.
1. I would imagine that even in the Garden of Eden there were shadows behind those magnificent trees.
 2. There are things which we love and enjoy. There are things to which we look forward.
 3. And there are things we would rather avoid. But sometimes avoidance is out of the question.
- B. **Death** is one of those **unavoidables**.
1. God told the first person of our race, *“In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”*
 - a. Speaking about the one thing God forbade Adam, He said,
 - b. *“The moment you choose to disobey me – your Creator and God – your spirit will die.”*
 2. And die it did – instantly – and then about 930 years later the physical body of Adam followed his soul into death – howbeit it as a different kind of death.
 3. I hope that Adam’s son, Seth, buried his father; that Adam’s body wasn’t left to the buzzards to devour.
 4. Eventually, 782 years after Adam, Seth died, then years later Enos his grandson followed him
 5. On and on, death has chased and overtaken each and every child and grandchild of Adam.
 6. As the Apostle Paul tells us, *“death **REIGNED** from Adam to Moses.”*
 - a. Death **has RULED** over humanity from Adam to Moses and from Moses to this very moment.
 - b. Tell me it isn’t so?
 7. Yesterday, some of our men were talking about the oldest woman in America. She is 115 years.
 - a. It was said that in recent years no one has lived past the age of 120.
 - b. That is exceedingly old, but eventually death creeps up on us all. It is coming after you.
- C. There is nothing more true than that truth – we are all doomed to die. It is a part of our human inheritance.
1. But it isn’t simply because death is a part of life.
 - a. While that is certainly true, the deeper truth is that death is the end result of sin against our Creator.
 - b. Death is not natural in the sense that it was not a part of God’s original creation.
 - c. But it is now a part of the judgment we deserve for sin.
 2. *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” – **Romans 3:23**.*
 3. *“As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” – **Romans 3:10-11**.*
 4. *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way,”* and in doing so we have run into and been slain by the wolf and the lion – a car wreck, cancer or COVID. Tell me it isn’t so?
 5. There are vultures soaring high above every living thing upon this earth, including you.

- D. **But** I will follow Frank Boreham's concluding thought:
1. "I am **THANKFUL** – more **thankful** than words can tell – that I need never become their prey.
 - a. 'He that believeth,' said their great Lord and mine, 'he that believeth hath everlasting life.'
 - b. 'He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.'
 - c. Never die. Never die! NEVER DIE! It is a gospel worth preaching."
 2. Indeed that **IS** a part of the gospel worth preaching.
- E. Before I began a few minutes ago, we read from **John 11**, which was a part of the **story of Lazarus**.
1. One day years ago, the Lord Jesus visited the recently filled grave site of His friend Lazarus.
 2. In my imagination, I see vultures squawking and croaking, craning their long necks and flapping their wings, jostling for position as they sit above Lazarus' tomb.
 3. Martha's brother had died four days earlier, and without a doubt, if someone opened that tomb, before Jesus ordered it to be opened, everyone would have been overcome with the stench of death.
 4. Those humans – who hate death – would have been repulsed, but the buzzards – who love it – would have cracked their beaks with glee.
- F. Then Jesus said to the gathered crowd, "**Take ye away the stone,**" which covers the doorway to the tomb.
1. When Martha protested, the King of Life said, "**Said I not unto thee, that, if thou would believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?**"
 2. "**And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth,**" as much alive as he had ever been before.
 3. The vultures may have raised their heads and snuffed at the air, but there was nothing putrid in it.
 4. At that point, disappointed, they flapped their great wings and flew away looking for other carcasses upon which to feast.
- G. Vultures, crows and ravens make their living feasting on things that are dead.
1. But they have no claim – or even any interest – in those things which are alive.
 2. And like Frank Boreham, and thousands of others, I have nothing to fear from the vultures of God's wrath and judgment. I have been given eternal life.
 3. With respect to that picture in the Melbourne museum, Jesus said, "**My SHEEP hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall NEVER PERISH...**" – **John 10:27-28**.
- H. How can Christ do that? How can He give anyone eternal life?
1. It is His to give, because He is "**the way, the truth, and the life**" – **John 14:6**.
 2. In Him is life, and that life is the light of men – **John 1:4**.
 3. He came into the world so that dying and dead sinners "**might have life and they might have it more abundantly.**"
 4. The Apostle Paul has said, Our saviour, Jesus Christ "**has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the GOSPEL**" – **II Timothy 1:10**.
- I. What is that gospel which tells us about eternal life in Christ?
1. It is the good news of God, which begins with the reminder that we are dead & decaying sinners in His sight
 - a. We are a stench in the nostrils of Jehovah, and He is revolted by us.
 - b. By our stench we are drawing to ourselves the vultures of eternal judgment.
 2. But Christ Jesus, God's Son gave His life on the cross of Calvary to satisfy the demands of the divine law which we have broken.
 3. And those sheep, even lambs, who will hear His voice, putting their trust in him, will be given eternal life, and they shall never perish.

- J. The vultures of God's eternal judgment are hovering above us all, awaiting the opportunity to feast on our everlasting souls.
1. But as Boreham said, *"I am thankful – that I need never become their prey.*
 - a. *'He that believeth,' said their great Lord and mine, 'he that believeth HATH everlasting LIFE.'*
 - b. *'He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.'*
 - c. *Never die. Never die! NEVER DIE!"*
 2. Yes, we are all going to leave this physical world some day.
 3. Hopefully there will be an undertaker available to take care of our temporal bodies.
 4. But far more important is the truth that our souls can enjoy eternal, spiritual life, through Christ Jesus.
 5. Christ Jesus was sacrificed on the cross, *"that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have ETERNAL life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have EVERLASTING life."*
- K. I implore you this morning, as the Lord speaks to your heart, arguing the truth that I have just shared with you...
1. I implore you to humbly acknowledge your need of the Saviour and turn to Him by faith.
 2. I can tell you with all the authority of God and His word: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."*
 3. Ye must be born again in order to avoid the Lord's vultures of eternal death and judgment for your sin.