

Deeper Applications Looking for Jesus 7: “Live Looking”

Matthew 24:36-42

Cross Community Church, Savannah, Ga.

August 30, 2026

36 “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. 37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39 and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. 42 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

- **Key Question: How should we live in light of Jesus’s return?**

Summary

What does it look like to truly live in anticipation of something we know is coming but cannot predict? That is the central question driving this powerful exploration of Matthew 24, where Jesus shifts from describing the signs of his return to instructing his followers on how to actually live while they wait. The pivot point is a single, stunning declaration: no one knows the day or the hour, not even the angels, not even the Son, but the Father alone. Far from being a frustrating non-answer, this truth is meant to shape the entire posture of our lives. Drawing on the rich imagery of Jewish wedding traditions, we discover that the groom's return for his bride was always a surprise, always initiated by the father, and always something the bride had to remain ready for. We are that bride. Christ is that groom. And the Father alone holds the timing. This reframes everything. We are not meant to obsess over calendars or chase

down date-setters. We are meant to be found ready, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, making ourselves prepared through faithful and holy living. The message calls us to three distinct postures: live looking, live alert, and live serving. Each one pushes back against two dangerous extremes, becoming so consumed with end-times speculation that we stop functioning, or becoming so absorbed in everyday life that we grow spiritually numb. The days of Noah serve as a sobering mirror. People were eating, drinking, marrying, and planning long-term futures, not because those things are wrong, but because they had become completely unaware of the judgment approaching. The question that lingers with us is not whether Jesus is returning. It is whether we will be found awake when he does.

Discussion Questions

The sermon describes living 'looking, alert, and serving' while awaiting Christ's return — which of these three postures do you find most difficult to maintain in your daily life, and why?

Jesus compares his return to the days of Noah, when people were consumed with ordinary life and unaware of coming judgment — in what ways do you see a similar spiritual apathy or unawareness in your own community or culture today?

The pastor draws a parallel between Jewish wedding traditions and Christ's relationship to the church as his bride, noting that the groom could only return upon his father's consent — how does viewing yourself as part of the bride of Christ change the way you think about holiness and preparation in your everyday life?

Matthew 24:36 establishes that no one knows the day or hour of Christ's return, and the sermon warns against date-setting — why do you think believers are still drawn to predicting specific timelines despite repeated scriptural warnings against it?

The sermon describes a spiritual impenetrability and apathy in the surrounding community, where even simple acts like leaving prayer cards go largely unacknowledged — how do you maintain hope and perseverance in evangelism when the response seems minimal or even hostile?

The pastor challenges listeners to ask themselves daily whether they are living looking, living alert, and living serving — what practical habits or rhythms could you build into your week to keep these questions at the forefront of your mind?

Revelation 19:7-9 describes the bride of Christ making herself ready, clothed in the righteous deeds of the saints — what does it look like practically to pursue holiness not out of fear of judgment but out of love for the returning bridegroom?

The sermon draws a distinction between being so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good and being so earthly minded that you are no heavenly good — where do you currently fall on that spectrum, and what would a healthy balance look like in your own life?

The pastor emphasizes that our righteousness before God is like filthy rags and that we are clothed in Christ's righteousness alone — how does resting in Christ's righteousness rather than your own performance change the way you approach both your failures and your service to others?

1 Peter 4:8-10 calls believers to love one another earnestly, show hospitality without grumbling, and steward their gifts to serve others — which of these three commands feels most countercultural in your current context, and what would it cost you to obey it more fully this week?

Small Group Guide

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"Live Looking" -- Matthew 24:36-41

Looking for Jesus Series

Introduction for Group Leaders

This session draws from Matthew 24:36-41 and the surrounding Olivet Discourse. The sermon centers on one key question: How should we live in light of Jesus' return? Use that question as the thread running through your entire discussion. Encourage honesty -- the goal is not to produce the right answers but to prompt genuine reflection and accountability among group members.

Key Verse

Matthew 24:36 -- Jesus declares that no one, not even the angels or the Son, knows the day or hour of his return; only the Father knows.

Key Takeaways

- 1. Live Looking** Jesus' return is certain, but the timing is unknown. Rather than obsessing over predictions or becoming paralyzed by uncertainty, believers are called to orient their lives toward his coming -- actively, hopefully, and with purpose.
- 2. Live Alert** Just as the people in Noah's day were absorbed in ordinary life and unprepared for judgment, we can drift into spiritual apathy. Alertness means regularly asking whether our lives reflect an awareness that the Lord could return at any moment.

3. Live Serving The illustrations Jesus uses in this passage -- men working in a field, women grinding at a mill -- show people actively engaged in work. The answer to "how do we wait?" is not to stop living but to keep serving, and to do so in a way that points others to Jesus.

Discussion Questions

Opening (Choose one to get the group talking)

1. The pastor opened with a social experiment -- when he stopped and stared at something, people naturally wanted to look in the same direction. Who or what are you most naturally pointing people toward in your everyday life? What does that reveal about your priorities?
 2. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to wait for something important but did not know exactly when it would happen? How did that uncertainty affect the way you lived during the waiting period?
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Going Deeper

3. Matthew 24:36 is described in the sermon as a pivot point in the Olivet Discourse. Jesus says that no one knows the day or hour of his return -- not even the angels, not even the Son. Why do you think Jesus was so direct about this? What does it say about God's character that he did not give us a date or timeline?
4. The pastor referenced the Jewish wedding tradition as a framework for understanding this passage -- the father choosing the bride, the groom preparing a place, the return coming as a surprise. How does that picture of the bridegroom and bride deepen your understanding of what Jesus is promising his followers?
5. The sermon described three characteristics of Noah's day that parallel our own: impenetrable apathy toward spiritual things, increasing apostasy, and an insatiable appetite for things that do not satisfy. Where do you see these patterns most clearly in your own community or culture? Where do you see them showing up in your own life?
6. The pastor drew a distinction between being "swept away to judgment" in the days of Noah versus the security of those who were prepared and kept safe. How does understanding the context of this passage change the way you read verses 40 and 41?

7. 1 Peter 4:8-10 was read as a closing charge, calling believers to love one another earnestly, show hospitality without grumbling, and use their gifts to serve. How do these three things -- loving, welcoming, and serving -- connect to the three main points of the sermon: live looking, live alert, live serving?
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Personal Reflection

8. The pastor offered three daily evaluation questions. Work through them honestly as a group:
- How am I living looking -- where is my hope anchored right now?
 - How am I living alert -- if the Lord returned today, would I be at peace with how I have been living?
 - How am I living serving -- am I engaging the people around me in a way that points them toward Jesus?
9. The pastor shared that after three years and more than 3,000 prayer cards distributed in the community, the response has been minimal. He used this to illustrate the apathy of Noah's day. How does that kind of persistent, low-response faithfulness challenge or encourage you in your own efforts to share your faith?
10. The sermon warned against two extremes: being so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good, and being so earthly minded that you are no heavenly good. Which of these two extremes is a greater temptation for you personally? What would it look like to find the balance?
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Practical Applications

Choose one or two of the following to commit to as a group before your next meeting.

Point Someone to Jesus This Week Identify one person in your life -- a coworker, neighbor, or family member -- who is not yet following Jesus. Pray for them by name every day this week. Look for a natural opportunity to share what your hope is rooted in.

Daily Evaluation Each morning this week, ask yourself the three questions from the sermon: How will I live looking today? How will I live alert today? How will I live serving today? Consider keeping a brief journal of your responses.

Love Someone Who Is Hard to Love The closing prayer prompt from the sermon challenged each person to pray for someone who is difficult to love. Name that person. Pray for them. Then take one concrete step toward showing them Christ-like love this week.

Practice Hospitality Identify one practical way to show hospitality to someone outside your normal circle this week -- an invitation to a meal, a conversation initiated, or a simple act of welcome. Report back to the group next week.

Read and Reflect Read Genesis 6:9-22 and 7:1 alongside Matthew 24:36-44. Note the parallels between Noah's situation and what Jesus describes. Write down one thing that strikes you and bring it to share with the group.

Closing Prayer Guide

Close your time by praying through these areas together:

- Pray for a renewed awareness of Jesus' return and what it means for how you live each day.
 - Pray for the people in your community who are spiritually unaware -- that God would use your group as instruments of the gospel.
 - Pray for one another by name, specifically asking God to help each person live looking, alert, and serving in the week ahead.
 - Pray for revival -- that the love of Jesus would spread in your city and that your church would be a community that points others toward him.
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A Note on Date-Setting

The sermon addressed the tendency to predict or calculate the timing of Jesus' return. The New Testament warns against this in at least eight separate passages. If this topic comes up in your group discussion, gently redirect the conversation back to the central question: not when is he coming, but how are we living in light of the fact that he is coming? That is the question Jesus himself chose to answer.

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Living Looking: How to Wait Well for the Return of Christ

Day 1: The Living Hope That Anchors Us

Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-5

Devotional: God has not left his people without an anchor. According to his great mercy, he caused us to be born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That hope is not wishful thinking -- it is a certainty grounded in an empty tomb. Our inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept safe not by our effort but by God's power. When the world around you feels unstable, return to this truth: you are being guarded. The same God who raised Christ from the dead is actively preserving you for a salvation yet to be fully revealed. Live today from that security.

Reflection: In what area of your life are you relying on your own strength rather than trusting God's power to guard you?

Practical Application: Write down one worry you have been carrying and intentionally surrender it to God in prayer, reminding yourself that he is your guardian.

Day 2: Alert Without Alarm

Reading: Matthew 24:36-44

Devotional: Jesus was remarkably clear: no one knows the day or hour of his return -- not the angels, not even the Son during his earthly ministry. This was not meant to frighten his followers but to free them. When we stop obsessing over predicting his arrival and start focusing on faithful living, we discover a holy alertness that transforms everyday life. The people of Noah's day were not destroyed because they ate or married -- they were swept away because they were utterly unaware. God calls us to awareness without anxiety, readiness without recklessness. Stay awake not in fear but in faithful expectation.

Reflection: Are you more consumed with predicting the future or faithfully living in the present?

Practical Application: Spend five minutes each morning this week asking God to make you alert to his presence and to opportunities to point someone toward him.

Day 3: The Bride Made Ready

Reading: Revelation 19:7-9 and Ephesians 5:25-27

Devotional: Scripture paints a breathtaking picture of the church as the bride of Christ. The bridegroom has gone to prepare a place. He paid an unimaginable bride price -- his own blood. He is coming again, and his return will be sudden and glorious. In the meantime, the bride is called to make herself ready, clothed not in her own righteousness but in the righteous deeds made possible through Christ. Our own righteousness falls tragically short, but Christ's righteousness covers completely. The fine linen of the saints is woven thread by thread through acts of faithfulness, holiness, and love lived out while we wait.

Reflection: What does it look like practically for you to clothe yourself in righteousness while you wait for Christ's return?

Practical Application: Identify one habit or pattern in your life that does not reflect the holiness Christ has called you to and take one concrete step today to address it.

Day 4: Serving While Waiting

Reading: 1 Peter 4:8-11

Devotional: The end of all things is at hand, Peter writes -- and his response is not to tell believers to withdraw from the world but to love it more earnestly. Hospitality without grumbling. Service using every gift God has supplied. Stewardship of grace. This is the posture of a people who truly believe their Lord is returning. We do not wait passively, frozen in anticipation. We wait actively, serving the people beside us -- believers and unbelievers alike -- with the strength God himself provides. Every act of genuine service done in Christ's name is a declaration that the kingdom is real and the King is coming.

Reflection: Are you waiting actively or passively? What gift has God given you that you have left unused in his service?

Practical Application: This week, perform one intentional act of hospitality or service for someone outside your immediate circle, without grumbling and without expectation of recognition.

Day 5: Point Others to Jesus

Reading: 1 Peter 3:15 and Matthew 28:18-20

Devotional: When someone notices you looking toward something with conviction and hope, it naturally draws their attention in the same direction. That is the essence of the Christian witness. We are not called merely to believe privately but to live so visibly anchored in Christ that others are compelled to ask about the hope within us. The Great Commission was not a suggestion for the especially gifted -- it was a charge to every follower of Jesus. We are sent into fields, workplaces, neighborhoods, and homes where unbelievers are working right alongside us. They may not be ready. We are called to be ready -- and to help them become so.

Reflection: Who in your life is working or living alongside you who does not yet know Christ? What is one step you can take this week to point them toward him?

Practical Application: Pray by name for one person in your life who is far from God. Ask the Lord to open a natural opportunity for you to share the reason for the hope you carry, and be ready when he does.