

Sunday School Lesson for April 12, 2026  
Matthew 24

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, on this second Sunday in April, we're moving chapter-by-chapter through the gospel according to Matthew, with Pastor Trey preaching from the odd-numbered chapters and our Bible Fellowship lessons drawn from the even-numbered chapters. Following Trey's message from Matthew, chapter 23 where we read about the woes the Lord pronounced upon the Jewish leaders of the day, Matthew records a conversation between Jesus and His disciples about the Temple, its destruction, and the Lord's return in chapter 24.

It's Tuesday afternoon after a long and difficult day that began with Peter expressing his astonishment at the tree Jesus had cursed the day before and our Lord's words to them about the power of faith and prayer recorded for us in Mark, chapter eleven. Challenges by the Pharisees that we read about in chapter 22 were followed by the charges the Lord laid at their feet. The confrontation with the religious leaders only heightened their anger, and--more than ever--they were determined to put Jesus to death. Matthew's record of the day ends with this conversation that extends through the end of chapter 25.

As Jesus and His disciples leave the Temple after the Lord's severe denunciation of the chief priests, Matthew tells us that "Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple." Mark adds some detail to the story by saying that "One of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!'"

Similar to the artist's rendering behind me, the temple in Jerusalem at that time was truly a glorious feat of design and architecture, its buildings and courts covering some 35 acres. By way of comparison, imagine the land area

that two and a half Jordan-Hare or Bryant-Denny stadiums would cover, and that's about what the Temple complex included.

The stones of the Temple were enormous. Several of them that were used to build the wall on the east side were more than seventy feet long, ten feet wide, and 8 feet tall.

Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, tells us a lot about the Temple. Here's a part of what he says, "As to the holy house itself,"--referring to the Holy of Holies and the Most Holy Place--"that most sacred part of the temple, it was ascended to by twelve steps; ... each a [hundred fifty feet wide], .... Its first gate was [one hundred five feet] high, and [thirty-eight feet wide]; but this gate had no doors; for it represented the universal visibility of heaven, and that it cannot be excluded from any place. Its front was covered with gold all over, and through it the first part of the house, that was more inward, did all of it appear; which, as it was very large, so did all the parts about the more inward gate appear to shine to those that saw them; .... [T]hat gate which was at this end of the first part of the house ... had also golden vines above it, from which clusters of grapes hung as tall as a man's height. But then this house, as it was divided into two parts, the inner part was lower than the appearance of the outer, and had golden doors eighty-two feet tall], and [24 feet wide]."

"Now the outward face of the temple in its front [lacked] nothing that was likely to surprise either men's minds or their eyes; for it was covered all over with plates of gold of great weight, and, at the first rising of the sun, reflected back a very fiery splendor, and made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn their eyes away, just as

they would have done at the sun's own rays. But this temple appeared to strangers, when they were coming to it at a distance, like a mountain covered with snow; for as to those parts of it that were not [covered in gold], they were exceeding white."

No wonder the disciples stood in amazement at the beauty of the Temple as they left for the day. But even as they paused to marvel at this magnificent structure that was the very heart of their history, their heritage, and their special place in God's own heart, Jesus shocked them by what He said next in verse two: "But he answered them, 'You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.'"

There's no way we could begin to imagine the shock and dismay that His words brought to their hearts. Their livelihood, their heritage, their culture, their future / were all anchored to that building and what it meant to be a Jew. If it were to be destroyed, what would become of them as a people? What would happen to God's promises to them?

So it was only natural for some of the disciples--Mark tells us it was Peter, James, John, and Andrew--who came to Jesus as they sat on the Mount of Olives, looking down over the Kidron Valley, to ask, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" The answer He gives is long and wide-ranging, and addresses both the events surrounding the destruction of the temple as well as His Second coming, and sometimes it's difficult to distinguish between the two. Contrary to what one study guide suggests, there is no indication of a threefold division of Gentiles, Jews, and the church addressed in this chapter. It's always best to let the Word of God speak for itself and not try to read into it something that's not there.

Jesus begins with a preview of the destruction of Jerusalem, giving them a warning about deceivers claiming to be the Messiah--verses four and five; and conflict among and between nations and natural disasters that Jesus says "are the beginning of birth pains"--verses six through eight.

They must prepare themselves, because they will be universally hated and persecuted,--verse nine. Many will fall away--verse ten--as false prophets

appear and lead many astray--verse eleven. Verse twelve: “lawlessness will be increased, and the love of many will grow cold, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.” “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come”--verse fourteen.

Because our time is short and there’s much to discuss, allow me to jump to the first question you might be asking: “What ‘end’ was Jesus speaking of here?” Most students of the Bible today immediately think of the end of time. But remember that, back in verse three, the disciples had asked, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the **age**?” The King James Bible reads, “What *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” but the word “world” is from a Greek word meaning “age” as most translations read. So the disciples were asking about the end of an age identified by spiritual or moral characteristics.

The disciples were living in the last days of the Jewish Age, just as Daniel foretold in chapter nine of the book that bears his name. So, Jesus gave some signs that would precede the end of that age, beginning in verse five: “For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.” He follows this with warnings of wars, famines, persecution, false prophets, and “the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place,” and Matthew adds here: “Let the reader understand.”

I very much regret that we don’t have time to talk about how each and every one of those things actually took place within Matthew’s lifetime, including Daniel’s abomination of desolation as the Romans occupied the Holy City, then desecrated and destroyed the Temple. Remember that he’s writing his gospel shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem that took place in 70 A.D., in fulfillment of what Jesus foretold and forewarned in these verses five through 28, so he’s writing of these things after they’ve happened, just as Jesus had said they would.

In verse fourteen, the Lord continues: “This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” That the gospel **was** proclaimed throughout the whole world is verified in scripture, for example, in Romans, chapter ten, verse eighteen; and Colossians, chapter one, verses six and 23.

In verse sixteen the Lord says, “Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains,” and follows that with four more words of caution. The early Christian historian, Eusebius, tells us that, in 66 A.D., when the Jewish uprising began, all the Christians in Jerusalem fled to Pella, a city about seventeen miles south of the Sea of Galilee in what is now Jordan, and there’s no evidence that a single Christian died when Jerusalem was destroyed.

How great was the tribulation the Lord spoke of in verse 24? Again, time doesn’t allow us to go into the great detail Josephus provides, other than to say that so much Jewish blood was shed by the Romans who indiscriminately killed everything in their path that the blood, so Josephus writes, “insomuch that many things which were burning were extinguished by the blood.” More than a million people in the city were killed, and 250 thousand in the surrounding countryside were put to death, many of them crucified to the point that--as Josephus writes--“the Roman soldiers nailing them (out of the wrath and hatred they bore to the Jews), one after one way and another after another, to crosses, ‘by way of jest,’ until at length the multitude became so great that room was lacking for crosses, and crosses for the bodies.”

The Lord’s warning in verse 27 where He says, “For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” doesn’t indicate a shift in the central thought, but a contrast to those “false christs and false prophets” that He warned them about beginning in verse 24.

This section of the Lord’s message concludes in verse 28 with “Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather;” most likely a confirming

testimony of the destruction of Jerusalem as the bodies of the massacred Jews become carrion for the vultures.

Thus far in the Lord's answer to the disciples' question, He's been talking about the horrific end of the holy city of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. With verse 29, His comments now turn to the first half of their question: "what will be the sign of your coming?" He begins with "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Following His remarks about the horrific tribulation that would come upon the city of Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus continues the theme of tribulation by speaking of the tribulation that will follow. There's no indication of a break in the tribulation, only a transition to a new phase of the tribulation; in fact, Jesus' words in Luke, chapter 21, verse 24 confirm this as the Lord speaks of this tribulation continuing "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," an idea that Paul speaks of in his letter to the followers of Christ in Rome, chapter eleven and verse 25, but which he doesn't explain, as if what it meant was understood by his readers. It seems clear that the punishment of the Jews is still proceeding and will continue until the Lord returns as "through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous," as Paul writes in Romans, chapter eleven, verse eleven. It also seems clear that this particular tribulation is experienced by the Jews alone and not by the Church.

It's only reasonable to expect that the tumultuous end of this age should be accompanied by radical changes seen in nature, hence the Lord's announcement that "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its

light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Peter speaks of this as being literally fulfilled--Second Peter, chapter three, verses ten and twelve. Our Lord’s prediction echoes announcements often found in the Old Testament that are not always to be taken metaphorically; for example, Isaiah, chapter thirteen, verse ten; Ezekiel, chapter 32, verse seven; Joel, chapter 2, verses 30 and 31 and chapter three, verses fifteen and sixteen. Although some Bible students have attempted to identify these natural events as representing supernatural personages, there’s no indication that the Lord Jesus intended for His words to be interpreted allegorically.

These events, whether symbolic or actual, will precede the return of Jesus Christ--verse 30: “Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” His long-awaited, glorious appearing will happen just as the angels announced to the disciples when the Lord ascended into heaven after the resurrection--Acts, chapter one, verse eleven: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” This, by the way, was also the vision that Daniel wrote about in chapter seven, verse thirteen of the book that bears his name: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.”

When the Lord Jesus was called before the high priest after His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Caiaphas said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” Matthew tells us that Jesus replied, “Yes, it is as you say. But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Wasn’t that what Daniel said?

John reminds us of what the Lord said in verse seven of the first chapter of The Revelation: “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see

him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.” The clouds will be creation’s majestic backdrop for the Lord’s return in glory.

But that’s just the beginning of the wonderful events on that day--verse 31: “And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” The angelic host will gather believers from throughout heaven and earth--those who were chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world unto salvation through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit / wherever they are.

Of course, the disciples are still wondering when these things are going to happen. For the reason He’ll tell us shortly, the Lord Jesus doesn’t give them a date, but gives them a picture of what to look for as they anticipate the approach of the day of His return--verse 32: “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.”

Sitting with His disciples on the Mount of Olives at springtime, surrounded by olive and fig trees that were producing leaves, He uses the fig tree to illustrate another lesson He wants to leave with them. The point should have been clear to them: when a fig tree starts to put on leaves, you know that winter is passed, spring has come, and summer is near. So, since you know the signs of the fig tree telling you that summer is near, don’t wait until the signs of what’s about to come upon Jerusalem pass / before you draw your own conclusions and prepare yourselves to respond to what’s about to happen. This is the primary theme of the Lord’s entire answer: “Be ready!”

“In the very same way as the fig tree,” He says, “you should be able to recognize the signs of My return”: “when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door.” The sequence of historical events is as certain as the sequence of natural events.

So what are “these things?” Well, they’re the things that He’s been talking about in the first 28 verses of this chapter--the destruction of Jerusalem and everything that would accompany that disaster. But, as we read this passage today, haven’t all those things happened in the past? Yes, they have, especially if the idea of Jesus being near--right at the door--is confirmed in The Revelation, chapter three, verse twenty when the Lord tells the angel of the church in Laodicea to write, “Here I am! I am standing at the door ....”

That’s why He adds in the next verse, “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” Since the word “generation” means the sum total of those living at any particular time on the earth, the prediction would hold true as far as the destruction of Jerusalem was concerned, because it took place within the limits of those living in Matthew’s day; and there were be some of those to whom Jesus was speaking who would live to see the event.

Although Jesus refers back to the “end of the age” part of the disciples’ question by way of illustration, there are Bible students who think the passage focuses on the timing of the Lord’s return, so they have to explain away this literal definition of “generation.” Some suggest that it refers to the continuing existence of the Jews as an ethnic group, reading “generation” as the Jewish people as a whole and not limited to a single person’s lifespan. But there’s no real compelling reason to understand it in a way other than the generation that lived in the time Jesus spoke these words. And, every time the Lord uses the word, “generation,” He’s speaking of those living at that time.

// Unless // there’s a primary and a secondary or spiritual meaning to the Lord’s words here. There are those say that “this generation” refers to “spiritual Israel” which, like in the previous explanation, believes that the existence of God’s chosen people is “the generation” Jesus refers to here--one that’s not limited by an individual’s lifespan. Those holding this view look to Psalm 24, verse six as an example where David asks, “Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands

and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob.”

According to this idea, the lineage of the descendants of Abraham **by faith** will not end until all these things are fulfilled, which would require that “all these things” refers to something beyond the destruction of Jerusalem. So, although we begin with remembering that / every other time the Lord uses the word “generation,” He’s speaking of those living right then, at that time, // there is the very real possibility that there’s a far-future in addition to a near-future fulfillment of His words, just as there was in many of the prophecies we find in the Old Testament.

Most of all, however, we have to remember that Jesus is leading His disciples away from the question, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?” to “How should you prepare yourselves for what’s coming?” It’s an extremely poor reflection on believers who are more concerned about getting the timing of the Lord’s return right / than living in watchful readiness for His return.

Seventh-Day Adventists and Jehovah Witnesses emerged from the late 19th century focus on the imminent return of the Lord Jesus, and this fervent focus on the Lord’s return is not limited to a time two hundred years ago. Already this year, you may have heard about a prediction that the Lord would return on March 25th, on Easter Sunday, or June 6th--6/6/26. The “Rapture Dashboard”--a supposed speedometer that measures the speed at which we are approaching the Rapture stands at 193 out of a top speed of 200. Muslims in Iran are looking for the Islamic Messiah, known as the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam who has been in hiding since the ninth century, and the current conflict there has only heightened this fervor. And such futile, pointless speculations aren’t going to end.

So, in order to focus their thoughts and our thoughts away from a question of “when” to a question of “what do I do **now**?” Jesus says in verse 35: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

As time rolls on, as one generation follows another, as nations rise and fall, the Word of the Lord will stand forever. It matters little when these things will take place. The disciples’ focus and our focus should be on living all of life in accordance with the Word of the Lord. All the things that He just said about what would happen / would and will take place. If we could imagine heaven and earth passing away--disappearing into nothingness as Peter says it will happen, the Word of the Lord will still remain--unchanging, eternal, always relevant and powerful, and those things He says about the future will come about just as He said they would.

Then, to put to rest the disciples’ question about the “when” of the destruction of the temple and the events that would follow, Jesus says in verse 36, “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.” As you can imagine, this verse has led to many disputes among scholars as to why Jesus didn’t know the day or the hour when these things would happen.

Most likely / Jesus, in His humanity, set aside that knowledge when He humbled Himself and came to the earth in human flesh. Jesus knew the day and the hour as the Son of God, but didn’t know it as the Son of Man because, in His human nature, He had chosen to set aside certain things from His memory, / which is why He **did** know that the current generation would not pass away until these things were fulfilled as well as what lay before Him in the week He’s now in, but had **chosen** not to retain knowledge of the day and hour of either the destruction of the temple or His return--or both.

So what’s the practical effect of this uncertainty? If we don’t know when, / how should we live **now**? That’s the heart of the question that Jesus intends to answer throughout this conversation, so He drives that very point home in

the rest of this chapter and the next with an example from scripture, four illustrations from life, two parables, and a glimpse into the final judgment. Do you think He's serious about insisting that we be prepared for His return and not being consumed with constructing timelines and theories? Lest anyone miss His point, He makes it clear in verse 42: "Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming" and again in verse thirteen of the next chapter: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

And so the Lord illustrates the urgency to be prepared, first, with a reminder of the days of Noah--verses 37 through 39: "As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 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, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." "They were unaware. Don't you be unaware."

Verse forty: "Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left." Although some might disagree, Jesus is speaking of the suddenness of His return and the urgency of being prepared, not of what some understand to be the rapture. In this illustration, one man is "taken." Although the word **can** mean "to take one's betrothed to his home," the context here does not allow it to be so translated. In verse 31, the angels "gather" the elect. As in the previous example from Noah's day, the focus is on those who were unprepared, so the man who was taken was the one who was **not** watching, as someone who was not prepared for an invading army might be unprepared to escape capture. The same applies to the next example of two women grinding grain.

Again, the message is "don't be unprepared"--verse 42: "Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." That's the cord that binds these verses together.

A parable follows about how the master of a house should have known what part of the night a thief was coming. “Therefore” --verse 44--“you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Once again, the central truth the Lord is trying to impress upon His disciples then and now is “Be ready.” Don’t wait for a “sign,” because the signs are all around you; besides, even the Lord Jesus in His humanity didn’t know the times, and He told us so--not so that we would try to figure out when He would return, but so that we would be perpetually prepared for His return.

Although we’re encouraged to look for His return, we look with anticipation and expectation, not so that we can say as the Lord warned back in verse 23: “‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.” After all, we know why the Lord delays His return.

Peter tells us in First Peter, chapter three, verse nine, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” From our point of view, God has put the end of the world on hold because when it comes, the Lord Jesus Christ returns in judgment, and He would rather not have anyone to condemn. He would like all to be safe in Christ. God doesn’t want anyone to perish. We shouldn’t either.

God is patient, delaying--at least from our perspective within time--the Lord’s return so that one more person would entrust his or her life to Christ. To some extent, we’ve been entrusted with the keys to the Kingdom. Our study last week included a brief consideration of the Lord’s Great Commission, and that commission is an imperative binding upon each and every one of us. There are many who still need to hear and respond to the gospel--not just in deepest, darkest Africa, but in our own homes and in our

own neighborhoods. If you're truly prepared for the Lord's return, you're busy preparing others for His return as well.

How do you stand watchful and ready for our Lord's return? You live as if He were returning today. You seize the moment to live in the light of eternity. K.P. Yohannan, writing in his book, *Living in the Light of Eternity*, quotes from a letter he once received: "The Lord has given every [person] his work. It is his business to do it, and the devil's business to hinder him if he can. ... My dear Christian friend, *keep at your work*. Do not flinch because the lion roars; do not stop to stone the devil's dogs, do not fool away your time chasing the devil's rabbits. Do your work. Let liars lie, let religious sectarians quarrel. Let corporations resolve, let editors publish, and come what may, let the devil do his worst, but see to it that *nothing* hinders you from fulfilling the work God has given you to do. Keep at your work. Let your aim be as steady as a star. Let the world brawl and babble and bubble. Keep at your work. You may be assaulted, wronged, insulted, slandered, wounded and rejected; you may be abused by foes, forsaken by friends and despised and rejected by men, but see to it with steadfast determination, with unfaltering zeal, that you pursue the great purpose of your life and the object of your being, until at last you can say, 'I have run the race ... I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do'" (105f).

Faithful believers seize the moment in engaged anticipation and expectation of our Lord's return. They stay the course, knowing what to expect along the way, "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.... Consider Him," the writer of the letter to the Hebrews encourages us, "Who endured such opposition ... so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Then, to test whether or not the disciples fully understand the Lord's imperative to watch, He asks a question through yet another parable--verse 45: "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant

whom his master will find so doing when he comes.” Commentators struggle with the application of this parable, particularly in the identification of the servant. But trying to identify which group of people this applies to / misses the point of the parable which is to compare and contrast the one who waits expectantly for his master to return and takes advantage of every opportunity to fulfill his master’s instructions--identified as the “faithful and wise servant”--and the one who disregards the will of his master, not expecting his imminent return--identified as “the wicked servant.” Everyone knows that it’s better to be the faithful and wise servant than to be the wicked servant.

So, the parable closes with a dire warning of the consequences of not being a faithful steward of what has been entrusted to him--verse 48: “But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Here again, the point of the Lord’s parable is not to draw attention to the various rewards and punishments of faithful service or lack thereof, but to underscore the absolute necessity of a constant state of readiness and faithfulness to the work of the Lord.

“Stay awake.” “Take heed.” “Keep on the alert.” “Watch and pray.” “Be ready.” Although the time is uncertain and intentionally withheld from us, the actual event itself is most certain, and it will come suddenly and unexpectedly, but those who are ready, those who are wise and faithful servants are busy about the work God has entrusted to them. If we’re living in a persistent state of readiness for the Lord’s return, we’ll faithfully be about the work He has for us and preparing others for the Lord’s soon return, as the writer of the letter to the Hebrews instructs us in chapter ten, beginning in verse 23: “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on

toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

So the Lord concludes His answer to the disciples about times and signs by saying: “What I say to you / I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’” The Lord Jesus could return at any moment. He’s ascended into heaven. He is returning. While He’s away, He expects us to be about the work He has entrusted to us, and the work He has entrusted to us is of eternal consequence. For that reason alone, we should be wise and faithful stewards.

If we’re watchfully, expectantly anticipating the Lord’s return and making the best of every moment He gives us, we won’t be deceived by those claiming to come in His Name; we won’t be discouraged or fainthearted when we face persecution; we’ll boldly speak for Christ when we’re threatened for being His followers; we’ll stand firm to the end even when our families and friends stand against us; and we won’t be deceived because we are the elect of God--all those things the Lord warned about in the first part of this conversation.

Alexander MacLaren writes, “What is this watchfulness? Not constant fidgety curiosity about the coming of the Lord; not hunting after apocalyptic dates. The modern impression”--now remember, MacLaren died more than 200 years ago, but things have not changed-- “The modern impression seems to be that such study is ‘watchfulness.’ Christ says that the time of His coming is hidden. Ignorance of that is the very reason why we are to watch. Watchfulness, then, is just a profound and constant feeling of the transiency of this present. The mind is to be kept detached from it; the eye and heart are to be going out to things ‘unseen and eternal’; we are to be familiarising ourselves with the thought that the world is passing away. This watchfulness is an indispensable part of our ‘work.’ The true Christian thought of the transiency of the world sets us to work the more vigorously in it, and increases ... our sense of the importance of time and of earthly things, and braces us to our tasks by the thought of the brevity of opportunity, as well as by guarding us

against tastes and habits which eat all earnestness out of the soul. Thus 'working and watching,' / happy will be the servant whom his Lord will find 'so doing,' i.e., at work, not idly looking for Him. Our common duties are the best preparation for our Lord's coming."

As the return of the Lord Jesus Christ is a day closer today than it was yesterday and two thousand years closer than it was when the disciples asked their question, are your eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your salvation, and are you living in faithful, productive, watchful anticipation of His return, / busy about His work in the world today, looking forward to the time when you'll hear Him say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

John records the Lord's conclusion of His revelation to the disciple He loved in the closing verses of The Revelation: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.'" And John replied, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"

Thank you for being a part of our extremely brief glimpse into the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus as seen through Matthew's eyes as he leads us to understand Who Jesus is through His works and His words so that we might be the people of God He's calling us to be for such a time as this. Next week, following Pastor Trey's message from chapter 25, we'll conclude our study of Matthew's gospel as we turn to chapter 26 to learn of the anointing of Jesus in Bethany, the events and conversations at the Lord's Supper, the events that followed in the Garden of Gethsemane, His trial before the Jewish leaders, and Peter's denial.

As always, as it's still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

The resources for this lesson include Notes on the Bible by Albert Barnes (1834), text courtesy of Internet Sacred Texts Archive; The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, text courtesy of BibleSupport.com; The Expositor's Bible, text courtesy of BibleSupport.com; The Expositor's Greek Testament - Nicoll, Text Courtesy of BibleSupport.com; Exposition of the Entire Bible by John Gill (1746-63), text courtesy of Internet Sacred Texts Archive; ICC New Testament commentary on selected books, Text Courtesy of BibleSupport.com; Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical (John Peter Lange) text courtesy of BibleSupport.com; Expositions Of Holy Scripture, Alexander MacLaren, text courtesy of BibleSupport.com; and The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database, copyright © 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2010 by BibleSoft, inc.