

Let's read Luke 12:35-40... We are in the 'Travel Narrative' section of Luke's gospel - ten chapters beginning with Lk. 9:51. It is called the Travel Narrative because it contains the content of Jesus' teaching on his journey from Galilee to Jerusalem for the last time. He is teaching His disciples how to live the Kingdom life as He prepares them for his departure. In Luke 12, right after Jesus warns the disciples about the anxiety caused by worldly possessions, he changes the subject to being spiritually prepared for His return. The disciples are not to be enticed by the temptations of this world but to spend their time wisely knowing that someday this play will come to an end. During the delay between the resurrection and second coming, we will be tempted to become weary or lazy or self-indulgent. Jesus explains that disciples need to be ready for his unpredictable return.

Unfortunately, the second advent (parousia) of Christ is a theme that is seldom discussed in the church today. This doctrine is important because the promise of Christ's return is the crowning event of all biblical prophecy. In fact, it is the inspiration for the entire NT. There are 250 chapters in the NT. The return of Jesus is mentioned 318 times. The only books that do not mention the Second Advent are Galatians and the tiny letters of 2 and 3 John. (Hughes). Here are a few examples:

"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels and will then repay every man according to his deeds." Mt. 16:27

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." Acts 1:11

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Phil. 3:20

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." 2 Tim. 4:7-8

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Titus 2:11-13

"And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him." Heb. 9:27-28

"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near." James 5:7-8

2 Peter 3:10-12, he says, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are

done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.” (2 Pet. 3:10-12a).

I want to take a shot at Peter’s question – “what sort of people ought we to be?”

But first, let me address another question: If the return of Christ is so important why don’t we give the same prevalence to it that the Bible does? Why doesn’t the return of Jesus matter as much to us as it did to those in the first century?

One reason is what I call **“the wacky factor.”** There have been a lot of people who camp out on the return of Jesus, set dates, identify the antichrist and suggest all sorts of doomsday scenarios that lead to the end of the world. We don’t want to be lumped in with some of those wacky ideas, so we avoid the subject altogether.

A second reason for our casual indifference is because **prosperity muzzles urgency.** We know the Bible teaches that Jesus is coming back, but we don’t really feel like we need Him to. We live in a prosperous country where we have access to everything we need. We have been lulled to sleep by the myth of continuity. We resemble the church at Laodicea in the book of Revelation, the church with the lukewarm faith. “For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.” That is why hardship can be a gift. Coronavirus can be a gift. When this life gets really hard, we long for the next one.

So, let’s return to Peter’s question, “what sort of people ought we to be?”

1. We should be patient people. “Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” James 5:7-8. But we are not patient people - we don’t like to wait! Woman whose car broke down...man honked. No one likes to wait. But waiting is the process God uses to make us who He wants us to be. What God does in us while we wait is as important as what we are waiting for. God uses time to teach us.

“Have you ever stopped to think that maybe God established time as a platform so HE could communicate something so complex that it needed to be presented strategically over time? Why didn’t God send Jesus as soon as Adam and Eve ate the fruit? He could have resolved the issue then and there. But He waited... He used time. He gave Abraham a son. He let Joseph sit in jail. He sent Moses to deliver a nation. He let a nation wander in the desert for decades. Have you ever thought about why? It was as if God decided, I can help you understand something with time that you could never understand in a moment.” Reggie Joyner

So, be patient, after all, if a day is as a thousand years to God then Jesus has only been gone a couple of days. There is something we can do while we wait...

2. We should be a prayerful people. Our waiting means that we give God the benefit of the doubt that he knows what he is doing. Waiting is God's way of seeing if we will trust him before we move forward. So, as we wait, we pray as Jesus instructed His disciples to pray in Lk. 11:1-4. The priorities of a disciple.

3. We should be prepared people. This is the primary thrust of Jesus' teaching in Luke 12. The servants are sitting by lit lamps, watching out the window, waiting for their master. Vv. 35-36. They were to be ready even if he came in the middle of the night. This passage conveys a sense of alertness and anticipation.

In vv. 39-40 the imagery shifts from servants awaiting a Master to the scenario of a thief in the home! The meaning is similar - be alert that Jesus could come back at any moment so be dressed and ready for service. No time to get ready later. Are you prepared for the second coming OR are you living as if it will never happen? In the story of the Ten virgins...5 didn't have oil for their lamps and while they were out the groom arrived! Mt. 24:36-25:13. The parable ends, "the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." Be prepared.

4. We should be positive people or parousiastic. We should be the most positive people on the planet. While we encounter disappointment, despair and disillusionment, we have hope. We live with the hope that no matter how bad things get, it will not always be this way. We have faith in the promises of God. "What else will do except faith in such a cynical, corrupt time? When the country goes temporarily to the dogs, cats must learn to be circumspect, walk on fences, sleep in trees, and have faith that all this woofing is not the last word." (Keillor, Current Thoughts and Trends, Jan. '94, p.6)

The promise of His coming can motivate us negatively or positively. We can believe the scriptures and be filled with fear. As a child, my mom used my father's coming negatively, "You just wait until your father gets home." She outsourced all corrective discipline to my dad. Sadly, I have heard this motivation used by preachers - "Jesus is coming back and you better make sure you are not doing something bad when He does."

How much sweeter the positive motivation captured in Lk. 12:37-38.

Jesus paints a picture, one they will see in the Upper Room, of His kneeling down and serving them. Those who are looking for His appearing, will receive His affirmation and approval, “Well done my good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your Master.” So, we wait for Jesus like the grandkids wait for grandma and grandpa to show up for turkey dinner. They don’t have to be begged to open the door!

5. We should be purposeful people. Knowing that Jesus will come for us either through death or through His second coming we look for opportunities to represent Him daily. Patiently waiting, prayerfully engaging, alert and prepared for anything while living purposeful lives. Our purpose is to represent Jesus on the earth.

We are ambassadors for Christ. Let’s never forget that while we are discussing the second coming half the world has never heard of the first. So, let’s keep our lamps lit. Forty days after Jesus appeared in that room with the disciples, He met with them one last time. “So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” Acts 1:6-11

I knew a lady whose husband fought in the Korean War. While he was away, they had no communication. She lived with the expectation that, one day, he would come home. So, each day, she got up, made sure everything was in order in the house, and dressed in something that she would want her husband to see her in. Days passed without a word from her husband. Then one day he came home. She was ready. Are you?

There is an Aramaic expression that was part of the liturgy of the early church. Marana tha. It means, “Lord, come.” When the early church gathered, they longed for His appearing and they often said as a benediction, Maranatha! So, as you go, keep your hand on the plow with one eye on the sky looking forward to that “great getting’ up mornin’. Maranatha. Say it with me, Maranatha.