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Series: Power of Moments

Title: Make Ready for the King

Text: Matt. 24:36-51, Matt. 24:29-31, Matt. 24:25; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

Let's begin with a question - when is Jesus going to come back? I mean, really, don't we all want to know the answer to that question? The irony of it all is that this is a question that people have been asking for two thousand years.

And over the course of those years, there have been many who have taken advantage of this question by attempting to predict His arrival. In the second and third century, a Roman clergyman predicted Jesus would arrive in 500, using a calculation based on the dimensions of Noah's ark. On January 1, 1000, many Christians in Europe believed this to be the date of Jesus' arrival and the end of the world. Many believed this to the degree that it gave birth to what we know as the Crusades where armies went out and forced people to convert or be killed. In 1415, a group of people called the "Taborites" believed Christ would return when they defeated all of Christ's enemies. They disbanded after being destroyed by the German army. In the Middle Ages Pope Innocent III took the number 618 (the year Islam was founded) and 666 (the number of the beast) and added them together to get the year 1284 as Jesus' return. Since then, countless people such as Joseph Smith (founder of Mormonism - 1835), William Miller (1843), Charles Russell (founder of Jehovah's Witnesses - 1874), Whisenant Edgar (1988), Colin Deal (1988), Lee Jang Rim (1992), Edgar Cayce (1998), Harold Camping (2011) - we could go on and on - have publicly predicted and even written books on the return of Christ. By the way, many of these folks made millions on these so-called, "predictions" and yet, every one of the predictions have been found to be false.

Why do you think that is?

Let's find out. Meet me in Matthew 24:36. This is Jesus speaking of His second coming. *"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."*

Here is the irony of the last two thousand years - people have been predicting the return of Jesus only for Him to say, "It's a vain pursuit." Why? Because Jesus himself says that no one knows - the angels don't know, He didn't even know at the time when He will return. So, what makes us think that we have the intelligence or even the spiritual giftedness to discern His coming? The simple answer is, we don't.

So, if we can't know when He will return, **what do we know?** Four things...

1. We know that His return is imminent.

In Matthew 24:29 Jesus says, *“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.”*

In this passage, Jesus himself proclaims His return. Now, some might say, “Okay, but this is some strange terminology - can Jesus’ words be trusted here?” The simple answer is “yes”. We can trust Jesus’ words for many reasons; but in its immediate context, we can trust Jesus’ words because much of what He said has already come true. In Matthew 24, Jesus predicted the destruction of the Temple as a sign of the end. Most scholars agree that this was fulfilled when the Romans sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple in 70 AD. Remember, Jesus is talking to the disciples here and in v. 9 He told the disciples they would all be killed because of their association with Him. We know from history that all of the disciples were martyred. John was exiled and eventually died alone, all for His name. As such, their testimony gave birth to the greatest missionary movement of all time as the gospel was spread to the ends of the earth. If Jesus says it, we can trust it.

2. We know His return will be obvious.

Look in v. 25, Jesus tells His disciples, *“See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. 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.”*

Just after telling the disciples that there will be plenty of people who will come in His name and will predict His arrival, He says, “Don’t buy it!” For He says, “When I come, it will be as obvious as lightning flashing from one end of the sky to the other. The whole world will know when I show up.” To that point, we also know that His arrival will be awesome!

3. We know that it will be awesome.

It will be unlike anything that anyone has ever seen. V. 27 says it will be like lightning across the sky. A kind of lightning that will light up the darkness prophesied in v. 29. He will arrive with an army of angels blaring trumpets declaring His return. It is fair to say this will be a very different arrival than the first. While King Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey with the shouts of people declaring His arrival, at His second coming He will ride on a war horse as thousands of angels declare His arrival with trumpets – a true royal caravan for the only true King. To this point, one author wrote, *“Jesus’ coming will not be an isolated, secret, or local event. But it will be witnessed by the entire world. Everyone will see His arrival.”* In this sense, there will be no need for witnesses to prove His arrival, for all will be witnesses to this grand event.

4. We know that it will be unexpected.

Because v. 36 tells us that while we know His arrival is imminent, it will be unexpected. So, Jesus tells His disciples in v. 44, *“Therefore you must also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*

His return is certain, but His arrival will be unexpected. Which begs the question, **“What do we do as we await the unexpected?”**

1. We trust the process.

When Jesus was preparing His disciples for what was to come, here is what He said: In v. 4, *“Do not be led astray”* by false prophets and prophecies. In v. 6, He tells them, *“Do not be alarmed.”* In v. 13, He tells them do not give up but *“endure to the end.”* Jesus told His disciples these things so that they would be prepared for the days ahead.

Then, Jesus tells His disciples in v. 44 they are to be “ready” for His arrival. To be ready is to be in a state of preparation for immediate action. Notice that this word tells us that we are to always be preparing for immediate action as we anticipate His unexpected return. It is the same picture that we get of sailors onboard a ship always prepared for an unexpected attack and waiting for the alarm to sound. As followers of Jesus, because we know His arrival is imminent, we live prepared for the sound of the trumpet.

In v. 37-51, Jesus gives three illustrations that teach us that as we prepare for the unexpected, we are to live and work as those who are faithful to Him and His commands, mindful and attentive to His return. In other words, we live in light of His return. Let’s break that down.

2. We live and work mindful of His return.

v. 37, *“For 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 all **unaware** (key word) until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”*

The key to the story of Noah and the ark is to realize that the people were caught unaware; but they were also indifferent to what was coming. In a location far from any major body of water, there would have been no reason for Noah to build a large boat. In addition, the boat would have been so large it would have created some questions. Nevertheless, Noah lived and worked, knowing that the flood was coming, while everyone else went about with life in ignorance, unbelief, and indifference.

So, like the people in Noah’s day, we, too, go about normal life, but we do so as those who are anticipating the moment of Jesus’ arrival. Martin Luther is famous for this quote: *“Christians are to live as if Christ died yesterday, rose today, and will return tomorrow.”*

3. We live and work attentive to His return.

In v. 40, Jesus says, *“Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay **awake** (key word), for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house*

*had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed **awake** and would not have let his house be broken into."*

In this illustration, the theme is work and v. 42-43 seems to indicate the difference between the workers. While both are at work, one is so caught up with work and life that they have fallen asleep and grown indifferent to Jesus and His commands. If you keep reading in chapter 5, three parables describe this well. The two workers weren't prepared for His arrival, they weren't good stewards with what God had entrusted to them, nor were they active loving God and loving others. Spiritually, they have fallen asleep and grown indifferent to Jesus and His priorities for their life. While the other remains awake, attentive, and focused on following Jesus anticipating His arrival.

4. We live and work to serve the King

Jesus asks a great question of us in v. 45. He asks, *"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?"* In other words, who is the one who is ready? He answers the question by contrasting them with the wicked servant. He says, *"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."*

This is tough for us to hear because it is all judgment language. But the reality is, the entire passage is pointing us to Christ's ultimate return where He will separate His followers from the crowd. His followers will come and join Him while everyone else will experience final judgment. While this may seem hard to hear, is the onus of responsibility on the judge or the one offered the free gift of salvation, but he or she refuses to accept it?

The wicked servant helps us see that the faithful servant is one who remains faithful to love God with total commitment, total self, to total excess, and loves others as themselves as they wait expectantly for the return of Christ. While the wicked servant says, "I will get it together when or if He returns. Until then, I will live it up. I will live as I please – I will live to please me."

Whereas, the prescription of this text is you only live once, use your time wisely as one who knows that time is short, and our King is coming at just the right time. I want to be working for Him and His Kingdom upon His arrival.

Here is the point: Knowing Jesus will return ought to change the way you live today.

As we transition to the Lord's Supper, I want us all to stop and reflect on our lives. I love how God lines up our timing here. On His last night before His death, Jesus is preparing His

disciples and He leaves them with a glimmer of hope – His second coming. So, He tells them that they are to take of the Lord’s Supper as a way to remind their hearts and others that, while He will be gone for a time, He will return. Observing this event, Paul commands us to continue partaking of the Lord’s Supper until He comes.

So today, as we take of the Lord’s Supper, we, too, are reminding ourselves of His arrival and we are proclaiming the Lord’s death until He comes. Wow. I want us to really take that to heart this morning.

1. Do you believe He is coming? It is difficult to proclaim something without believing it to be true.

2. Are you ready for His arrival?

- That may mean that you need to accept His free gift of salvation.
- It may mean that you need to repent of being unaware or indifferent to His coming.
- It may mean you need to re-align your priorities with His.

Take time to wrestle with that this morning so that we are able to take of the Lord’s Supper and with confidence proclaim His return.

As we continue, I would like to ask Brandon, the chairman of our deacons, to come and pray over the meal.

In 1 Corinthians 11:23 Paul writes, *“I have received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’”*

Together, let’s take and eat as we remember the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf.

Paul continues in v. 25. He writes, *“In the same way also he took the cup, after supper saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”*

Together, let’s take and drink as we proclaim His death and look for His arrival.

Amen.