

“Waiting for Your Savior”

Text: Matthew 24:36-44

As He explained the Parable of the Sower to His disciples, Jesus said: *“For truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”* (Matthew 13:17) What a position the disciples were in! God had made the promise of a coming deliverer; the Messiah and God’s people of all ages waited for His coming, but did not see it.

Many had thought that they would see it during their lifetime. The people of old waited for this great coming. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews concludes chapter 11 by saying: *“And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that that apart from us would they should not be made perfect.”* (Hebrews 11:39-40)

Today we wait as well. What many had waited for has come with the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. His birth is not the end of the story. He was born, lived on this earth, died and rose again. Because of all that He has done we are justified before God and considered as His own children because of what Jesus has done for us. This is not the end of the story either. Scripture promises that He will come again. This is a joyous event for us and not a fearful one. He comes to take His church to be with Him in heaven forever. We don’t know when that will happen, but it is a time we anticipate as we are-

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- I. But the time of His return is unknown to you**
- II. Your faith prepares you for His arrival**

I.

A. Matthew chapter 24 is perhaps the best chapter in the Bible to speak regarding the return of Christ. Since the time of Jesus there have been many misconceptions of what will happen. Every couple of years, someone seems to know the exact details of what will happen. Throughout history there have been those who have incorrectly predicted this event.

Jesus tells us in the verse 36 *“But concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.”* Jesus has deferred on the knowledge of knowing this so as not to give people a false sense of security. Have you ever considered what it would be like if we knew exactly? I’m reminded of a comment that I made in Bible class my first year as a pastor. I told the class that none of us had the luxury of knowing when it would be that we would die. A retired pastor was a member of the congregation. He raised his hand and pointed out that it would be no luxury to know the time of our death.

Our sinful human nature would play all kinds of tricks with that information wouldn’t it? Perhaps we would live with great anxiety. Maybe we could see how much we could sin until the time of death drew closer. Then we would clean up our act. The fact remains that we don’t know the time of our death or the Lord’s return. That is information for God the Father only. In His grace, mercy, and wisdom He knows how to handle it.

B. What do we do then? We wait in faith. Our faith always has us ready for the return of our Savior, for His coming once again. We need not be distracted by events in the world around us. This can be easily done. If we don’t do it ourselves there will be others who will be more than happy to help us out.

Jesus speaks of this phenomenon earlier in this chapter. He says: *“See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ’ and will lead many astray.”* (Matthew 24:4-5) Jesus goes on to mention what is often

mentioned today: war and natural disasters. Jesus reminds us that these are only the beginnings of the birth pains.

While we cannot be deceived or sidetracked by the predictions of others who are alarmists, certainly the events of our world of today may cause us concern. Our focus needs to be on our Savior and His many promises to us as those He died for and raised again that we would be assured of life forever with Him.

II.

A. On the other hand, we can't make the same mistake as the people in the time of Noah. They were numbed to the realities of life. The same was true in the time of Lot with Sodom and Gomorrah. People at both times were caught up in the events of the world around them. They lived for feasting and pleasure seeking and were caught unaware of God's coming judgment. This is a danger we cannot afford.

This certainly is a distraction for Christian people at all times, especially at this time of year. We know the reason for our celebration; it is the birth of our Savior and His return. Yet, all the trimmings of the season can be so distracting can't they? We worry about gifts, parties and waiting. Speaking of waiting, we dare not lose our focus that is centered on the "coming one", our Savior Jesus Christ.

People in the day of Noah were living life as they always had conducting their normal activities as usual. As Christians we cannot remove ourselves from the world around us. We live our lives enjoying all that God has given to us, but there is one difference—we live by faith in our Savior Jesus Christ. We do that in the power that He provides for us to live in His presence. St. Peter warns of the danger before us: "*Knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say: 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.'*" (II Peter 3:3-4)

There are two dangers: one is to know the exact time of the return of Christ and the other is to believe that it has been many years and will continue to be the same.

B. We stand firm in the midst of these dangers and temptations when we are ready by our faith. In spite of all the gloom and doom we often hear in Christian circles, the coming of our Lord is a time of rejoicing for you and me. Jesus says in the Gospel of St. Luke: *“Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near.”* (Luke 21:28)

Waiting is always a challenge to faith. Certainly it was true of God’s Old Testament people. It is also true of us today as well. Faith calls upon us to trust in God’s promises. In our own lives we see it many times. You as servants of God do waiting from time to time. Knowing God’s greatest deliverance in your Savior Jesus Christ, you know that God will always deliver you aw well.

Together we all wait during this season and always for our Savior to return again, or for His coming. The unbeliever faces God’s sternest judgment. The mind of the world believes either that He doesn’t exist or that they can appease Him by what they have done. We know it is not what we have done, but rather what Jesus Christ has done for us that really matter. In appearance one cannot tell the difference. Outwardly the believer and unbeliever look the same to us, but not to God. The Lord knows those who belong to Him. In faith, we joyfully await our Savior’s coming for so He has promised. Amen.