

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 27 November 2022
Services: *Across the Diocese*
Series: Advent: Jesus is coming
Passage: Matthew 24:36-44
Title: Be ready
Outline: **Two key questions**

- 1 When will Jesus return?**
- 2 Are you ready?**

- Let me get straight to the point this morning and ask – **when is Jesus coming back?** And **are you ready??**
- Because Advent is about lifting our eyes from **earth** to **heaven** so to speak – and looking forward with **great expectation** to Jesus' **return**.
- You've heard me say before that Advent **not** a countdown to **Christmas**.
- It's not about getting **ready** for **Christmas**, **waiting** for **Christmas**....
- It's not a method of telling **your** children or grandchildren how many more **sleeps** until **Christmas** //
- **Jesus is coming back**... and we are to be **looking** for him, **expecting** him, **waiting** for him and **ready** for him!
- Ok – so **when** IS he **coming??**
- Its been **2000 years** now... many have expected him a **long time** before **this** – it seems some of the **apostles** expected him within their **life times**... what is the **delay?** //
- This is not just an **academic** question is it?... for we look at this world and we see the big **mess** we're in and we long for his **return**...
- We look at **Russia** and **Ukraine** and we want an **end**
- We look at **Myanmar**, **China vs Taiwan**, **Nigeria**, **Afghanistan**, **Sri Lanka**, **Ethiopia**, the **Sudan**, **DR Congo** and we want an **end**.
- We think of **Baz Porter** – one of our **Anglicare** workers and an **SRE teacher** and **God squad member** - who died suddenly in recent weeks leaving his **wife** and **four grown up kids**.... , or of **others** we know who are facing a much **slower death**... and we feel our own **health issues** with some **sadness** for what we **used** to be able to **do**... and **yes, sometimes** we **long** for Jesus' **return**...
- we look at the **apathy** toward the **Lord Jesus** and **increasingly** – **outright opposition**... as people want to be rid of **God** and **Christians** all **around** our **nation** and of our **schools** and **football clubs**... and in the **face** of such **opposition** - we want an **end** – we **long** for Jesus' **return**.
- we look at the **church** around the globe and in the **Western world** at **least** we see **division** and **moral decline** right within the **church** – and we **want** an **end**!
- we look at our **own lives**... our feel our **struggle** with sin, the **pain** in our **families** and **marriages**, the **challenge** of our **children**, the **pressure** to keep our heads above **water**... and we **long** for Jesus' **return**... /// before **Christmas** if **possible**!! ///

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- **When** does the **Bible** say it will be... how will we **know** when its **close**? That's my **first question** this morning.
- And my **2nd question** is – are you sure you are **ready** for his return? – and that is certainly more than an **academic** question – that has great **pastoral implications... eternal implications!** //
- My prayer is that by the end of these few minutes, you may be able to answer **both** of those questions - “when is he coming?” and “are you ready?” – with **great confidence** and **clarity** – and I plan to take a moment on each ...
- Please have open in front of you, **Matthew 24:36-44**.
- And let me just set these verses in **context** for you.
- I wonder if you have ever been to Jerusalem and seen the site of the **temple** in Jesus' day..?
- At the **beginning** of Matthew 24, we are told that Jesus had left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to called his attention to its **buildings**. Mark in **his** gospel records the disciples saying “*Look teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!*”
- Can you imagine their surprise when Jesus responds by saying “*I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down*” This massive, impressive temple, proclaims Jesus, will be destroyed!
- Jesus and his 12 disciples then walk down the **Kidron ravine** to the **east** of the **temple** and up the **steep slopes** of the **Mount of Olives**.
- And possibly even looking across the ravine to the temple perhaps the marble dazzling in the sun, the disciples ask him – *Tell us, when will this happen* (that is – the one stone not left upon another – *when will this happen* they ask *and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?* v3
- Will you notice that in the **disciples'** minds **Jesus' coming** is linked with the **destruction** of the **temple**...
- But in the teaching that follows, Jesus **separates** the two events – the **destruction** and his **coming**... and talks about the **timing** of **both**.
- We don't have time to explore in detail the early part of the chapter which deals **entirely** and **specifically** with the **destruction** of the **temple**... which we know occurred in **AD 70** at the **hands** of the **Romans**.
- This was utter **disaster** for the Jews.
- No more temple, meant no more **presence** of **God** with **them**, no more **sacrifice**.. no more enjoyment of **God's people**... **again** God had **left them!**
- So in the **early** part of Matthew 24, Jesus is helping his disciples **prepare** for and be **informed** about all that will happen leading up to **this shocking disaster**...
- For example, vv4-8 Jesus tells them that there will be many people **pretending** to be **him** and many will be **deceived**... He tells them that there will be **earthquakes** and **famines** and **wars**... and this was just the **beginning** of the end of **Jerusalem** and the **temple** – like **birth pains!**
- In vv9-13 he warns them they will face **terrible persecution** and the love of *some* will grow **cold** in the face of it... but that those who **hang in there** // will be **saved**
- In v14 he tells them that the gospel will be preached in the whole world... and **then** the **end** – the end of **temple** and **Jerusalem** will **come**.

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- Jesus warns his disciples to get **out** of **Jerusalem** when they see the **temple** being **desecrated**...
- And in the midst of the crisis of **fleeing** the city there would be those claiming Jesus has **returned** // but they weren't to believe a **word** of it – v23...
- ... Because **Jesus'** return will be **unmistakable!**
- **everyone** will know of that **great event** when it **happens!** ///
- The **fall of Jerusalem**, the **destruction** of the **temple** was a **watershed.** //
- His disciples were to **read** the **signs** of the coming **destruction** on their city – just as they read they signs of the **seasons** from the **fig tree**. The **false Messiahs**, the **escalating persecution**, the turning **back** of **some believers**, the **gospel preached** to the then **known world**... all **signs** that this magnificent **temple's** days were **numbered.** ///
- But about Jesus' **return?** //
- When will **that happen??**
- That is a **different matter.** //
- And certainly at a different **time** to the **destruction** of the **temple**.
- Perhaps we are even to understand – **quite some time later!**
- And in fact there will be **no signs** of his impending return.
- **Nothing to warn us** – and vv36-44 – indeed on in to Ch25 are meant to tell us just that.
- V36 – *No one knows about the day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*
- So this massive event of Jesus' return will be completely unknown and unknowable – totally unpredictable!!
- Life will be completely **normal** – just like in Noah's time when the flood came – people just getting on with every day life – *eating, drinking, marrying*...suddenly Noah entered the ark and it started raining and they were **swept away**.... Suddenly **Jesus will return** – **unmistakable** as we heard – and people will either be **ready** or **not**...
- And we are told to expect a great **separation** of people – two **colleagues** working side by side – and the **ready** will be separated from those **not-ready**.
- So – this is very **different** to the **destruction** of the **city** and **temple**... there won't be **any sign**, no **early warning system**... no **indication** – it will take us all by **surprise**, catch us all off **guard** – **unless** – **UNLESS** – we are **ready** – **watchful** //
- Will you notice then how many people get this **wrong?**
- Will you take note of how much **ink** is **spilt** and how much **energy** is wasted trying to work out to the **year** and **month** and **day** of Jesus' second **coming?**
- Like those who set up grandstands on **Balmoral Beach** in Sydney, in the **30s** **waiting** for Jesus to come through the **heads** on a **Barge?**
- And the group in Ryde some 30 years ago who had sold up property and cars and were locked up in a room in **Gladesville** waiting for Jesus to turn up at **midnight?**
- And the **Jehovah's Witnesses** who say the second coming of Christ occurred in **1914**...

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- And a group known as the **Course in Miracles** who teach that Jesus came back come **45 years** ago and dictated their **course** which you can now **study**...
- And **countless Christian churches** who spend **hours** searching **Daniel and Revelation** and watching the **movements in Palestine** with great **interest** working out all the **details**
- And all the while Jesus says – **not even he knows!** //
- I reckon if not even **he** knows – we ought not to waste 1 minute of time **contemplating it**.
- No good even saying – “ I don’t think it will be too much longer” – for we have no **idea** and there **are no signs**.
- All that leaves for us to do, is to be **ready** – to be **ready ALL the time** – because says v44 – ***the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.***
- **My two questions... When will Jesus return?** – answer – no idea
- **Second question...**
- Are you **ready?**
- Let’s read now beyond the set gospel reading...
- *45 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ 49 and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. 50 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. 51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*
- **Sobering** parable isn’t it?
- But the message is **clear** – if you are a **servant of Christ** – and are busy **servicing** – then you are **ready!**
- Are you **trusting** in the Lord Jesus and in his **death** to **reconcile** you to the **Father** and take you to **heaven?** –
- Then you’re **ready!** //
- And what will you do when you **enter** that **relationship?**
- You will **love** the Lord your **God** with all your **heart soul** and mind – and love your **neighbour** as yourself!
- Is **that** what your life is all **about** – not perfectly no – but is that your **orientation**, your **direction**, your **desire?** –
- then you are **ready**.
- Its exactly like **Noah** and his **family**.
- They **trusted** God for their **salvation** – **knew** that he was their only **hope** – and **entered** the **ark** – the **means of salvation** provided by the **grace of God** - and they were **safe!**
- While those who **ignored** God, suffered God’s **judgement**. “Don’t tell me about my need for a **boat** – that Noah is **mad**... don’t tell me about a **judgement** – **no such thing as far as I am concerned**” ///

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- **WE // trust** God for our **salvation** – know its our only **hope** – and enter – as it were - into **Christ** – we get on board with Jesus -the **only** means of **salvation provided** by the **grace** of **God** - **relationship** with him – and we are **safe** – **safe** now, **safe** when he **returns** – **safe** for **eternity**.
- While those who **ignore** God – will suffer God’s **judgement**. “Don’t tell me about my need for **Jesus** – you’re mad... don’t tell me about a **judgement** – no such **thing** as far as I am **concerned**.”
- If you are in **Christ** – you are **ready** and **safe**...
- keep **servicing**, keep **watching**, keep **expecting** him at any **moment**...
- **Love** him with all your **heart, soul** and **mind**... ////
- How could we NOT love this **one**?
- How could we NOT love this one who left the **glory** of **heaven** for the **muck** of our **world**... took on our **likeness**... **revealed** the **Father**, **bore** all our **sin**, **conquered** **sin** and **death**, went to **Father** and who will **one day** – any **day** – **return**. ///
- **Do you love Him?** ///
- We began with two questions – “when is Jesus coming **back**?” and “are you **sure** you are **ready**”?
- I can’t **answer** the **first** – we don’t **know** – we will **never** know – until it **happens** – then we will **ALL** know – **unmistakably**. //
- Only **YOU** can answer the **2nd** ////
- have you **entrusted yourself** to Christ? – are you actively **servicing** him? Loving him with all your **heart** and **soul** and **mind**?? – then without **question** - you are **ready!** //
- Jesus **kept** all his **promises**... he **promised** he would go up to **Jerusalem** and be **killed** and he **was**
- **He promised he would rise again** – and he **did**.
- He **promised** that when he **ascended to the Father**, he would send the **Holy Spirit** – and he **did**...
- The **only promise** we still await to be **fulfilled** is the **promise** of his **return**...
- He **will come**... he’s coming **back**... //
- So we **look** and **wait this Advent**, and we keep trusting him... and we **continue loving** and **servicing**... and we **pray** – **YOUR KINGDOM COME – AMEN – COME LORD JESUS !**