



Matthew 24:42–44

42 “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Reflection

Yesterday, Jesus described his Second Coming, the day when he will return to judge the living and the dead and usher in the new heavens and the new earth, as: sudden, universal and eternal. Just like the flood in Noah's day. So will be the Second Coming of Jesus. People will be going about their daily lives just as they were in the time of the flood. Some were marrying, some were being given in marriage, others eating and drinking. It will be the same when I return says Jesus. Two people will be working in a field; one will be taken. Two people will be working at home; one will be taken. Sudden, universal and eternal judgment; one to eternal life and the other to eternal suffering. Those who are prepared for my coming, who've turned

back to me in repentance and faith and who are living lives that prove it; they will go onto eternal life. But those who are unprepared, those who are living lives without any acknowledgment of me, they will face eternal judgment. ‘Therefore,’ Jesus continues in today’s passage,

‘keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.’

You need to be prepared. You need to be vigilant. And then to illustrate his point he gives us a brief parable.

43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and

would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

The day of the Lord will come suddenly, like a thief at night. And this picture of Jesus' Second coming isn't an isolated one in the New Testament. Paul wrote,

2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. (1 Thess 5:2–3)

Peter wrote,

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. (2 Pet 3:10)

And John records the ascended Jesus saying in Revelation 3 and 16,

3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. (Rev 3:3)

15 “Look, I come like a thief! Bless-

ed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed.”
(Rev 16:15)

The Second Coming will be sudden, universal and eternal – so stay awake, keep watch, be prepared. Thieves come when you least expect it. They catch you off guard. What is most precious to you is lost in a moment. And the whole experience is devastating. It can ruin your life forever. And in the ancient world there was no police force, so it was up to you to secure your house, to be vigilant and to keep watch. If you were caught unawares, there was no one to blame other than yourself.

It's the same with Jesus' Second Coming. Everything is on the line. No-one knows

when it will happen but it is certain that it will happen; at any moment, or on the other side of the grave which can rise up and take you at any moment. It will happen. So be vigilant. Keep watch. Be prepared. Or lose it all and be filled with regret forever.

Jesus is teaching us to live a vigilant life, to keep watch. But watch for what? What are we to keep watch for? Lightening in the sky that lights it up from east to west that signals his Second Coming? No, I don't think so. Not watching the sky, but watching our life.

Are you watching your life? Are you ensuring that you'll be prepared for Jesus' return? Paul says in 1 Timothy,

16 Watch your life and doctrine

closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim 4:16)

1 Peter 2 says something similar,

12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. (1 Pet 2:12)

Think

Are you watching your life and doctrine closely? Are you prepared and making advance preparations for Jesus' return? Are you preparing others? Take the time today to take a close look at your life. You might like to do so according to what we've seen

in Matthew's gospel so far. Are you living a kingdom life? Jesus described the kingdom life in Matthew 5 when he said,

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger
and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of

God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. (Matt 5:3-12)

Do you resemble these words? Is this you? Jesus also said, in Matthew 16,

26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? (Matt 16:26)

As you look over your life and doctrine

(the beliefs that you live your life by), how much of your life is focused on gaining the world and how much of it is spent in the pursuit of souls? And in living such a good life in this world that others might be moved by it to follow Jesus?

Pray

Close our time this morning in prayer. Pray for vigilance, preparedness, urgency and self-control in your Christian life. Pray for honest introspection and the help of the Holy Spirit to shine his light on areas of hidden sin, and potential entanglements that might distract from being ready for Jesus' return. And pray for the many people around us who go about their daily lives without a second thought towards God. Pray that God would be merciful to-

wards them and that they would awaken to his presence and power and fall on their knees in repentance, faith and joy at finally coming to understand the meaning in life and the meaning of life. Pray too that you might be the messenger that brings this good news and that the quality of your life lived in their presence might be the door that opens the gospel to them.