

Sermon for the last Sunday of the Church year—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—11/25/07

Title: “When Jesus Comes Back”

Text: Matthew 14: 24: 23-44

Intro.: *Ills.: Ready or not—here I come!*

Theme: Jesus’ coming will be associated with unmistakable signs which are meant to draw us into a heightened expectation of Jesus promised coming as we await his final return.

- **Jesus’ Second Coming will be preceded by “me-too” false Christ’s and prophets (Print vs 23-38)**
 1. Overt attempts by the world to interpret the end times by taking our focus off of Jesus
 - a. Media/world leaders ringing our hands over global warming, pandemics, nuclear saber rattling
 - b. **Ills.: Domsday clock moves ahead 2 minutes in 2007**
 2. Substitute life philosophies that sound good and moral but take our focus off salvation by grace through faith
 - a. **Ills.: The Oprahization of religion**
- **Jesus’ Second Coming will be announced by creation’s groaning (Print vss. 29-31)**
 1. *The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed . . .that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. Rom 8:19, 21*
 2. Heavenly orbs, designed to mark “time’s beginning” (Gen 3:14), will be extinguished to mark “eternity”
 3. It is so that no one will be able to explain it away
 - a. *Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. Rev. 1:7*
 4. For the believer it will be the sign of their final deliverance
 - a. *So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. Hebrews 9:28*
- **Preparing for Jesus’ Second Coming by being in God’s Word (Print vss. 32-35)**
 1. Although it should be plainly evident, spiritual discernment can only come through Gods’ Word
 - a. Analogy of predicting the seasons interestingly lost among the worldly because they leave God out of it (vs.32)
 - b. Hurricane predictions miss the mark; global warming/ice age dire predictions are world’s frenetic and frantic sense something amiss but unwilling to turn to God for the answers
 - c. *The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. 2:14*
 2. As believers we need to avoid the hand-wringing of dooms-day predictions and calmly live in the knowledge of a the Lord who controls **all things** (*All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me. Matt 28: 18*)
 - a. God’s sure word will not pass away (*“All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.” 1 Peter 1: 24-25*)
- **Jesus’ Second Coming is not about being Left Behind? (Print vss. 36-41)**
 1. Sensational and scare-tactic theology misses the contextual meaning of this text
 - a. **Ills.: Scene from left behind movie**
 - b. Problem with this interpretation is that it actually hinders preparedness by creating a second chance theology
 2. Principles which Jesus taught about the last day
 - a. No one knows its timing or prediction (vs. 36)
 - b. As in Noah’s day, perfectly “noble” citizens will be divided based upon their relationship not activity (37-40)
 - c. Personal preparedness in one’s faith is crucial at any moment because the next might be your Judgment Day

d. *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. Hebrews 9:27*

• **Jesus' Second Coming watch word is "WATCH!" (Print vss. 42-43)**

1. The word base word literal meaning (awaken) — Believer, wake up!

a. *"Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." Eph 5: 14-16*

b. *Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philip. 1:6*

2. **Ills.: Watching for the return of the light**

Ready or Not, here I come

Like most couples preparing for a wedding, Dave Best and his fiancée are probably worried about whether or not everyone will show up on time for the ceremony on July 6, 2008. They need not worry about their friend Dave Barclay, though. He was so excited about the wedding that he showed up a year early! When Dave Best wrote Barclay, telling him about the July 6 wedding in Wales, Barclay assumed Best meant July 6, 2007. So Barclay bought a plane ticket from Toronto for \$1,000. Once he arrived in Wales, he called Best to get a few details about the location of the venue for the ceremony. It was only then that Barclay discovered he was a bit ahead of schedule. When another year passes, Barclay will give it another try. He says, "At least it's assured me a mention in the speech next year." **Brian Lowery, associate editor of PreachingToday.com and Anthony Delaney, West Horsley, Surrey, England; source: Reuters, "Wedding guest turns up a year early," www.uk.reuters.com (7-11-07)**

Doomsday clock moves ahead in 2007

Since its birth in 1947, the world's eyes have been on the famous Doomsday Clock. This symbolic timepiece measures how close the world is to "midnight"—that is, a nuclear or environmental apocalypse. It is officially set by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists magazine, a resource dedicated to educating the world about global security. The magazine made news in 2007 when physicists collectively decided to set the clock ahead two minutes to 11:55 pm. The jump forward was in response to the continued dangers of ongoing wars, the worldwide increase in nuclear weapons, and the ever-growing threat of climate change. The closest the Doomsday Clock has ever been to midnight was two minutes, when the U.S. successfully tested a hydrogen bomb in 1953. The furthest it has been from midnight was 17 minutes, after the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union. **Bill Ray, Litchfield Park, Arizona; source: Associated Press, "Doomsday Clock moved ahead 2 minutes," The Arizona Republic (1-18-07)**

Watching for the return of the light

There is a town in the extreme north of Norway where each year, about January 18th, the people climb a hill that looks out over the western sea. They do this in the cold to see the first sun rise after long months of night. They brave the bitter cold to see only the hint of the sun's rays on the horizon before it dims in the arctic night. However the people are satisfied. They know that the days are not far behind in which the sun will once again shine and eventually shine so far into the day that there literally is not sunset. In a similar way believers anticipate the return of the Son, not with fear or regret, but with anticipation and great joy.

Matthew 24:23-44

²³At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. ²⁴For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible. ²⁵See, I have told you ahead of time. ²⁶"So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.

²⁷For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

²⁸Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

²⁹"Immediately after the distress of those days '*the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.*'

³⁰"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

³²"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁴I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

³⁶"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴²"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³But 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. ⁴⁴So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.