

Are You Ready for His Return?

Matthew 24:36–44

Let us pray: Father God, feed us today with the bread of life. Through Your Word, awaken our hearts and spirits, and prepare our minds and bodies to be worthy of Your Kingdom. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Advent has begun. This season is a time to lift up our faith as we wait for the Lord's second coming with the same longing spirit as those who once awaited His first coming.

In today's passage, there are two exhortations given to those who await the Lord's return: first, *"Stay awake,"* and second, *"Be prepared."* We must stay awake because *"no one knows the day or the hour."* Jesus says, *"Not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father knows."*

Why does God keep it hidden? Because if we knew the exact time, we would likely live however we pleased and then pretend to be faithful only when the time drew near. Even though we do not know the precise day, Scripture does give us signs. It says the Lord waits until the full number of Gentiles has come in, as Romans 11:25 says, and that the gospel must be preached to all nations before the end will come, as in Matthew 24:14.

Today, the gospel has reached many nations across the earth. Yet it seems more time is needed before Christ returns, because many groups still lack the Scriptures in their own language. A Bible in one's mother tongue is essential for a community of faith to be established. According to Wycliffe Bible Translators, translation work is underway in about 4,400 languages, but in more than 500 languages it has not even begun. Thanks to advances in transportation and technology, translation is moving faster than before, but both translation and church planting take time.

If we want to hasten the Lord's coming, we must support and participate in Bible translation, distribution, and gospel proclamation. This prepares us not only for the cosmic end but also for our personal end. The end will come suddenly—like a thief in the night.

Mondovi: Our Savior's, Gilmanton & Montana: Salem United Methodist Churches
11.30.2025, 24th Sunday after Pentecost, Rev. Hyuntae Kim, Ph.D.

When Christ first came to earth, He came as a baby. A baby is utterly vulnerable, unable to survive without care. Why didn't He come as a king from the start? Because a baby evokes peace, and our Messiah came not to judge but to reconcile us to God as the sacrificial Lamb.

He also came to share in human weakness, to sympathize with us, and to become our mediator. By being born, growing up, living, and working through the full course of human life within thirty-three years, He lived a righteous life of sinless obedience on our behalf and bestowed it upon us as a gift. In contrast to the life of disobedience of the old Adam, He has given us the life of the new Adam through the cross.

But on the last day, Christ will come as the Judge. He will judge all people and grant His saints authority to reign with Him in the millennial kingdom.

Jesus said the coming of the Son of Man will be like the days of Noah. People were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage until the flood came. Why were these ordinary activities a problem? Because, as Genesis says, they had become "flesh" estranged from God. Romans 14:23 teaches that whatever is not done in faith is sin. To "eat and drink" the world's opinions and to "marry" the world is to live apart from God. But the new creation in Christ feeds on God's Word and becomes the Bride of Christ.

The Westminster Catechism asks: *"What is the chief end of man?"* The answer: *"Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."* To be awake and prepared is to delight in the Lord through His cross and resurrection.

Paul the Apostle also said in 2 Timothy 3:1-2 that in the last days, people will love money and love themselves, meaning they will not fear God. Like in Noah's day, they will live as flesh.

The Apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:7 that *"by the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly."* The visible heavens and earth will pass away. The church exists to bring people back to the Lord, building the new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem.

Spiritually, however, this old creation has already been judged at the cross. Christ's death, burial, and resurrection are effective as the eternal present, applied within human time. We must understand deeply what happened in His death.

At first glance, Jesus' words in today's passage seem to describe events at the end of history. Yet we can also read them as describing the ongoing work of Christ's salvation, which has already ended the old world.

The flood in Noah's day swept away the old world and its people symbolizing our old selves before knowing Christ. In His death and burial, our old selves were judged, died, and were buried with Him. The ark that saved Noah's family points to Christ, but even the flood itself points to Him, because it swept away all that was old. The old world tormented Noah. But the flood delivered him from the corrupt world, just as the cross delivers us.

Noah himself also foreshadows Christ. People in his day did not recognize his righteousness, nor understand his building of the ark. Likewise, most did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, and even His disciples struggled to understand Him. Many still do not know Him today.

We can experience the coming of the Son of Man even before His final return. Like Noah, we can encounter the Lord now, for He continues to come to people by His Spirit.

Jesus said that when the Son of Man comes, two men will be in the field—one taken, one left. The field represents our daily life. In Christ, our old self is left behind in the old world, while He takes us as new creations into His kingdom.

Two women will be grinding at the mill—one taken, one left. Grinding grain is like reading Scripture, the spiritual grain. In the Word, our old self is cast aside, and we are taken as new people into Christ. This is the gospel.

As we read and meditate on Scripture, our old doubts, fears, and worries are swept away, replaced with faith and joy. During the COVID pandemic, a missionary in Japan struggled so much that he considered quitting ministry. He began quarreling with his wife, and their marriage suffered. But after hearing a lecture encouraging Scripture memorization, he began to recite and meditate on the Word. Within three days, his heart was restored, he reconciled with his wife, and regained strength for ministry. He continues to serve faithfully today.

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The first step in staying awake and preparing for the Lord's coming is simply to delight in God through His Word. May we all, during this Advent, glorify and enjoy Him with the faith supplied by Scripture. Amen.

Let's pray: Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus. Dwell abundantly in our hearts today and draw us into deeper intimacy with You. We thank You that the flood of the Lord has carried away the old things, rescuing us from the former world and bringing us safely into Your ark. Open the eyes of our faith to see that You have seated us with Yourself in the heavenly places through the work of Your cross, resurrection, and ascension. Now, as we await the wedding feast of the Lamb, adorn us daily in Your Word with faith, hope, and love, that we may be prepared as Your bride. In the name of Immanuel, Christ Jesus. Amen.