

Looking Forward to the Second Coming of Christ

Ps Craig Mobey

Scripture: Matthew 24:36-44 (NIV)

³⁶ But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

³⁹ and 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.

⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴¹ Two 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.

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."

Introduction

Shall I greet by saying "Happy New Year" since today is the first Sunday in Advent and therefore, also the start of the church year?

Today is also the first of four Sundays to Christmas and an ideal opportunity to celebrate how Jesus comes to us in three ways and to then decide how we might respond.

Since today is the start of the church year, technically, you don't have to wait until 1 January to implement a new year resolution! You can do it today, and it is my prayer

that following this message, this is exactly what you will do.

Jesus Comes to Us in Three Ways at Three Times

At His Birth

The first way in which Jesus came to us was with His birth, some 2000 years ago. God became man, and this is what we celebrate each December at Christmas time.

Being the start of Advent, today is the day when most begin preparing for the celebration of Christmas. Some churches begin to light candles, they sing Advent hymns, they prayerfully wait and prepare. They re-enact His birth in the pageant and they sing carols. Emmanuel, God is with us.

At the Present

The second way in which Jesus comes to us in Word and Sacrament. Jesus comes among us in one another, when we gather as His Body, study His Word and partake in Communion.

In Communion, we remember Jesus' death and resurrection and we look for and forward to His glorious return, the second coming.

At His Second Coming

The third way in which Jesus comes to us is at His second coming.

In His first coming, Jesus was the suffering Servant. In His second coming, Jesus will be the conquering King. In His first coming, Jesus arrived in the humblest of circumstances. In His second coming, Jesus will arrive with the armies of heaven at His side.

That Jesus came to us 2000 years ago is a reality. That He comes to us now is a reality. That He is coming again is a reality. What does this mean?

It means that your existence as you know it is going to change:

- Either you will die and go ahead of us to be with Him.
- Or He will return while you are still alive.

You don't know which and you don't know when. Importantly, it also means that

whichever one it is to be, for us who are in Christ, we do not fear it.

The Reality of Finality

In 2020, some of us lost loved ones. We were confronted by the reality of finality. When our departed loved ones were born, they had no idea that somewhere in 2020, they would have their last month, last week, last day and last moment. Between their birth and departure, life happened. Just as they did not choose their birthday, they didn't choose their last day. Finality is a reality which all of us will face, ready or not.

Jesus is coming again, ready or not. His coming is a finality for the people of the earth, according to Matthew 24:30, "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." Things will change.

Many people want to know the time and spend much energy in trying to discern the time of Jesus' return. As far as I can tell, there were about 46 failed end-of-the-world predictions between 1900 and 1999. Since 2000, I counted about 55 predictions. There are about 28 predictions already in place to take us up to 2085, and yes, predictions are extending into the 23rd century and beyond.

It is safe to say that most of these predictions are about bad news: Earthquakes, fire, asteroids and calamities involving great human suffering. This may be profitable for Hollywood, but not so profitable for Bible studies. The Book of Revelation may take centre stage in Hollywood's work but the focus is almost always on the bad news and end-time signs and not on the Good News which John proclaims at the beginning of the Book, "The revelation of Jesus Christ."

The desire to know when the end will be is very much a part of society. It's almost as if those in the world have the mindset of, "If we know when the end will come, then we can do pretty much as we like until then." If we know the end, then we can make a final rush preparation, but in the meantime, we do what we want. And this is what we see in the world: "People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:2-4).

The problem is that nobody knows who will live to see the sun set on today and who will see the sun rise over tomorrow.

But know this, our citizenship is in heaven, we are waiting for Jesus Christ and as such, we are not of this world anymore.

Moving Toward the Reality of Finality

Today's text from Matthew speaks of the "ordinariness" of Jesus' second coming. People will be eating and drinking, getting married, working in the field and generally speaking, doing the things of life when Jesus returns.

Martin Luther is supposed to have said that if he knew the end of the world was coming tomorrow, he would plant an apple tree this afternoon. Luther, instead of speculating about the end times, rather focused on the purpose of the world which God intends for the present time.

Although there is much good news ahead according to the Book of Revelation and other Scriptures, the reality is that what may happen in the future does not excuse you from what God requires of you here and now.

Perhaps we should separate ourselves from speculations and start listening to what God is calling us to do today. Advent is also about removing the noise from our lives so that we can hear and see the coming of Jesus Christ among us today, with the certainty that He has already come and is coming again.

Jesus came as a baby; God became man and this, we celebrate. Jesus will come again, of this, we are assured. Christ comes into our midst today and that is where the living is today.

We are to live in constant readiness, focusing on Jesus who gives us hope for today and tomorrow. We need to take our time together seriously and in hope and joy. Our hope is in the one who came, who is among us, and who will come again. We are to heighten our awareness of his coming. Advent is a time to refocus and regroup.

Conclusion

Colonel Davenport said, "The Day of Judgment is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to be found doing my duty.

Therefore, I wish that candles be brought.” He meant, rather than fearing what is to come, we are to be faithful till Christ returns. Instead of fearing the dark, we're to be a light as we watch and wait.

Yes, we live with uncertainty, but an uncertainty about those things that really do not matter. So approach your days of uncertainty with the certainty that Jesus Christ came, He is amid the happenings of our lives, and that He is coming again at a time appointed by the Father.

Make then this resolution: I will live out every moment of my life by faith in God who saved me, empowers me, seals me for heaven, and by whose power I am kept forever.

Amen.