

Sunday Sermon: December 1, 2019

Sermon Text: Matthew 24: 36-44

Sermon Theme: Keep Watch!!

<sup>36</sup> "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>37</sup> As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> 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; <sup>39</sup> 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. <sup>40</sup> Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

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

When I was growing up, there were many times my dad would come into the room and we would have a conversation similar to this one.

"Children, we are going to do something special later on. I want you to be ready."

"What is it? What are we going to do? Tell us so that we know."

"I'm not going to tell you. I just want you all to be ready to go when I say it's time."

This conversation usually happened on a Sunday evening. That was the night that we might go into town and go shopping or go out to eat. The Sunday services would be done. The afternoon chores, yard work, or nap had been completed and dad would come and say something like this to us children.

This was a special kind of torture for us children because we would always want to know more. We would pester our parents, but my dad would stay silent and keep the details to himself.

There are a lot of things that the Bible reveals to us right now because we need to know them right away and there are others that the Bible remains largely silent about. The things that the Bible shows us clearly are crucial for us. We need to know the plan of salvation so God lays out that full plan of salvation for us. He does that so that we know that our Savior has completed the work of saving us. We need this information because we need to know the comfort of our forgiveness and where our faith and trust should be right now before it's too late. These important, urgent things, God reveals to us right now.

There are some other things though that are not crucial for our here and now. They won't change how we live our life. They won't change God's promises to love us and be with us. They won't change what Jesus has done to save us. Yet, instead of dwelling on the greatness of God's eternal promises and living by faith we want to know details. One of those things we want to know about is the end of the world. But of filling in every detail, Jesus acts kind of like my Father. He tells us that something special is coming, but he keeps silent on many of the details. Instead Jesus tells us to keep watch so that we are ready in faith when he comes.

Of all the topics that people want to study in Bible Study, Revelation is one that always tops the list. The end of the world peaks our interest. Yet, the Bible says a lot about the end of the world and not a whole lot at all.

That doesn't seem to make sense, what do I mean by that? There are any number of sections of the Bible that speak about the end of the world and the last days. Yet, these are some of the deepest and most challenging sections of Scripture because many of them are visions.

While we want to delve into those visions and try to explain every last detail and explain everything God gave us those sections of Scripture so that we will know some truths. God's first truth is that he bring an end to this vale of tears. The second truth he wants us to know is that he has something better that awaits. The final thing he wants to teach us is that we do not been be afraid. Those who are standing firm in faith are ready when he comes.

Every now and again my dad would give a little hint of what the special thing would be. He would tell us to dress warmly or bring along some special thing that would give us a little hint, a little clue of what we might be doing.

In his Word, God does the same thing. He does not want us to be completely ignorant about the end of the world. He wants this doctrine of the end of the world to be a blessing for us and for our faith. Instead of leaving us completely silent about the end of the world he does give us clear words about the end in our sermon text for this morning.

Of all the places where God talks about the end of the world and the days that are leading up to that time, none are clearer than Jesus own words Matthew 24. In fact, Jesus words from Matthew 24 and 25 help us to understand those visions and the book of Revelation better because he is so clear in how he talks about the end of the world.

The disciples and others in the Bible were really no different than us today. Like us, they also wanted to know about the end of the world. In our sermon text, the disciples ask Jesus when he would return and bring about the end of the world. Some of Jesus answer is pretty well known to us. In the beginning verses of chapter 24 we hear about the signs of the end of the age: the wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, earthquakes and natural disasters and false teachers.

These are words that people of many ages have dwelled on. The first century Christians were convinced that the persecution they faced was a sign of the end of the age and that Jesus was coming again. Those who lived during the Middle Ages were convinced that the Muslim invasion of Jerusalem was a sign of the end of the Age and the Crusades which followed were just more evidence. Those who have lived through the World Wars were convinced that the end of the world was near based on these same words. Even today in the internet age, we are convinced that the end of the world is almost upon us because we hear about every single war, natural disaster, and terrible teaching that leads people from Jesus. They are splashed across our screens in real time. We too have reason to think that the end of the world is coming soon.

The truth is, Jesus never gives a time when these things would happen. Instead, he just tells us to be ready and keep watch always so that we will be ready. <sup>36</sup> **“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>37</sup> As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> 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; <sup>39</sup> 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. <sup>40</sup> Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.**

Jesus makes some simple points here. No one will be able to tell you when the end of the world will come. Watch and wait in faith.

Then Jesus starts talking about Noah and the flood. This seems difficult, but is actually pretty simple. God did not tip his hand when it came to the flood. There was no sign in the heavens or on earth that the flood was coming. People were living ordinary lives, going about their business as usual, and then one day it began to rain and the flood came.

In much the same way, the end of the world will come without any special signs in the heaven or earth. People will be living their lives, going about their business as usual and then the end of the world will come.

What about that part about one will be taken and one left? Again, that is part of Jesus point, we will be going about our business and the end will come. Jesus talks about this in chapter 25 as the separation of the sheep and the goats. These verses are also explained earlier in the chapter in verses 30 and 31. **they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> And 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.**

We want more don't we? We want answers, we want details, we want to know when..... just like the disciples. But Jesus had a different point in telling us this: to be ready.

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

Jesus point is to be ready, keeping watch in faith because the end will come quickly. He uses the illustration of a lazy home owner, who is too lazy to secure his house. After the thief has broken in it is too late,

the damage has been done. It is better to be prepared with your house secured so that when the thief comes he cannot get in.

In the same way Jesus tells us don't wait, be ready and prepared now. Don't be lazy with our faith and wait for better days. Be prepared and keep watch now because when the end of the world comes it will be too late to come to faith.

We are keeping watch, we are preparing, when we are digging into God's Word. When we are doing that the Holy Spirit is at work through the Gospel in Word and in Sacraments. We are keeping watch in faith, when we are surrounded by the Gospel through which the Holy Spirit works in worship and when we dig into in Bible Study. We are keeping watch in faith when the Holy Spirit has made our faith confident in the promises that Jesus gives, even those about the end of the world.

Our God tells us that something special will happen one day. He tells us to be ready. Are you ready? Are you keeping watch standing firm in faith? May God help us to answer yes, through the Holy Spirit. May he send us his Holy Spirit to build us up in that faith so that we are ready and prepared to meet our Savior at his glorious return. Amen