

Matthew 24:36-44 ESV

Are You Keeping Watch?

Services: **Sunday**, 11/27 at 8:00 & 10:45 + **Monday**, 11/28 at 7 PM

Church Year: First Sunday in Advent – 2016

During Advent: Wednesday Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Are you keeping watch?

- If a major snow storm was predicted, we might gather food, blankets, and candles; *then we would keep watch!*
- If our military unit was in enemy territory *and we were on guard duty that night*, we might gather ammo and night vision; *then we would keep watch!*

When we expect something significant, we get ready; *then we keep watch*. Today, as we hear Jesus tell us about His promised return, *it is vital for us to prepare and keep watch!*

1. **No Person Knows:** ³⁶ **“But concerning that day [the day of Jesus’ return] and hour [the precise time] no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.”**
 - a. The day is set: God “has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed” (Acts 17:31 ESV). We might say, “should I, or shouldn’t I,” but God is very decisive; *the day for Jesus’ return is **fixed!***
 - b. We live in readiness: Since Jesus is coming, we live in repentance, thus with an **▶ongoing sorrow** for our sins, **▶ongoing desire** to turn from our sins, and **▶ongoing trust** in Jesus as our Savior!

- c. We want others to be ready too: The Bible gives us this instruction: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15 NIV). Through *knowing* Jesus, we have been **changed**, we are **different**, so: ✓ we try to avoid sin, ✓ we worship our great God, ✓ we serve with our abilities, and ✓ we desire for others to know Jesus as their Savior! We can do that by ♦telling how blessed we are to know Jesus, ♦sharing a Bethlehem resource, or ♦inviting them to attend.

2. **Just Like Before the Worldwide Flood:** ³⁷ “For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and ~~giving~~ **[being given] in marriage** *[thus, going through the normal activities of life]*, **until the day when Noah entered the ark,** ³⁹ **and they were unaware** *[of the life-destroying flood]* **until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be [also] the coming of the Son of Man.”**

- a. Activities will seem normal when Jesus returns: Try to imagine being actively engaged in a battle; you certainly would **not** be eating **or** drinking **or** getting married; instead, *you would be completely focused on winning the battle!* However, when Noah entered the ark **AND** when Jesus comes again, things will seem **normal**. “...the LORD said to Noah, ‘Go into the ark, you and all your household.... For in seven days I will send rain on the earth...’ And after seven days

the waters of the flood came upon the earth” (Gen. 7:1, 4, 10 ESV). Even as the ark neared completion – *the urgency to repent did not grow*, even when Noah finally entered the ark – *the urgency to repent did not grow*. Even today, many go through life *as if Jesus is not coming*.

- b. There will be no opportunity to repent: As the door of the ark was *already shut* when the flood waters came, so the door to heaven will be *already **shut*** when Jesus comes. Furthermore, sometimes people think are ready when they are not. Writing *over 90 years ago* about sexual immorality, Dr. Kretzmann wrote, “...while the majority of so-called Christian people do not yet openly profess free love, a great many come dangerously near... For them... the Day of Judgment will truly be a cataclysm [*disaster*], bringing them sudden, terrible punishment” (NT1:137). So let no one **put off** being **sorry** and being **saved** through Jesus!

3. **Some Taken; Some Left**: ⁴⁰ “Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.” // Think about your coworkers; you gather together at the same place each week; for some it’s a grind that seems to have no end, *but suddenly **separation** will occur between those who believe and those who do not!* Jesus said that when He returns “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” (Matt. 24:31 NIV).

4. **Constant Readiness Is Essential:** ⁴² “Therefore, stay awake [*literally, keep watch*], for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night [*literally, in what watch, 6-9, 9-12, 12-3, 3-6*] the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake [*kept watch*] and would not have let his house be broken into. // As we are unaware of when Jesus will return, so we don't know when a thief might try to break into our homes. Since in both cases we cannot know when, it is essential to always be **ready!**

Conclusion: ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. // Dr.

Kretzmann made this final comment on this passage, “The Son of Man is coming, a stern and [ruthless] Judge upon the unbelievers that left His warning unheeded, a merciful and kind Judge upon the believers that were always ready for His coming” (NT1:138). So, by God's grace, let us ♦remain serious, ♦remain sorry, ♦remain in the faith, ♦remain in the Word, ♦remain faithful, and ♦remain confessors of God's saving truth! As we remain in such ways, God will grant us *a blessed Advent season and a wonderful Christmas celebration!*

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, amazingly You came to win our salvation; then, *possibly soon*, You will come to gift us with the fullness of Your saving work, so keep us watching and ready, and move us to kindly and boldly tell others ♦the *horrible news of sin* and ♦the *wonderful news of Your finished work!* And all God's people said: **Amen!**