

LIVING FOR TOMORROW - TODAY

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Mark 13:32-34

Matthew 24:23-51

Luke 12:35-40

2/14/10

A preacher came to a small southern town to conduct a revival. Walking down the street, he began a conversation with a man and invited him to the revival. “What are you preaching about, Reverend?” the man asked. “I’m going to be preaching on the second coming of Christ,” the minister replied. “And when will that be,” asked the man? “Maybe today,” the preacher said, “or maybe tomorrow, or maybe the next day.” “For goodness’ sakes,” said the man, “Don’t tell the Missus. She’ll want to go all three days.”

The church has been waiting 2000 years for the second coming. Though a thousand years may just be a day to God, 2000 years is a long wait for human beings. By the time of the writing of Paul’s letters, the earliest writings we have in the NT, the church was already beginning to question whether Jesus was coming back. Nevertheless, the early church concluded that the return of Jesus was at the heart of his teachings about the coming Kingdom of God.

Jesus declared that the Kingdom of God was near, but the culmination of the kingdom would come to the world only upon his return to the earth. Though the church is the sign of the kingdom of God in the world, and we are partners with God in building the kingdom in the church and in the world, the kingdom of God will only be fully established when Jesus returns. That is why Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come they will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” God will bring the kingdom to the earth through the return of Jesus Christ.

Only God knows when Jesus will return.

Jesus said, “But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the son, but only the Father.” (Matthew 24:36) The bible says this many places, and yet some people have made a career of “reading the signs” and predicting the return of Christ. In my cynical moments, I think it is done to scare people in order to sell books and get a following. We will hear rising cries of the end times as we approach 2012. The end of the Mayan calendar, the convergence of planets, solar activity, changes in the magnetic polarity of the earth, and cryptic predictions of Nostradamus are all being interpreted as signs of the end of the age in 2012.

But do you know what the Bible says? No one will know when the end of the age will come. Like a thief in the night, Jesus will sneak onto earth when no one is expecting it. It will be like the days leading up to the flood, people will be going about their business as usual when the rain begins. Remember, it wasn't raining when Noah began to build the ark. No one knows when Jesus will return.

Consequently, we must always be ready for the return of Jesus.

The message throughout the New Testament is to live in active expectation of the coming of the Son of Man. In Matthew, there are seven parables in and around chapter 24 which emphasize being alert and prepared for Jesus return. In Luke, Jesus said, *“be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks.”* *“You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”*

Candy flew to Florida Tuesday to visit her mother. I have to admit, I have let things go a bit, since she left. It is just me and the dogs, so what does it matter if the bed is made and the dishes washed? She is coming home tomorrow, and I must say, I have new motivation to get ready for her return. Friday night I did the dishes and cleaned up the kitchen. Yesterday I washed some clothes and even made our bed. (Of course I had to sleep in it again last night.) Frankly, if I didn't know when she was coming home, I would probably keep the house up better every day. I would be embarrassed if she came home and the house was a mess. I feel a sense of accountability to my wife.

I have thought of the second coming of Christ in the same way, but I realize that there is something much more profound in both instances. The issue is not a matter of getting caught with a mess when Candy gets home or when Jesus returns. The issue is living every day in a manner that is faithful to my relationship with my wife and my Lord whether they are present or not. Were I to have a wild night of partying with other women, drinking heavily and taking drugs when my wife is gone, but get it cleaned up by the time she gets home, I am still guilty. I have violated my marriage vows of faithfulness and lowered my moral standards. Jesus may come back today, tomorrow or the next day, or he may not come back in our lifetimes, but how we live each day is an expression of our faithfulness to him. And whether upon his return or upon our deaths, we will be held accountable for what we have done with our lives.

Are we ready to face Jesus? Is your life in such an order, that you are ready to stand before Jesus today? Is the life you are now leading the

kind of life Jesus expects of those who bear his name? None of us know when Jesus will come back. None of us know just how long we have to get our lives in order and to live a life that really matters to anyone else other than ourselves.

So we need to live each day as though it were our last. We need to live with a sense of urgency realizing that our time is running out to do something of real significance with the life God has given us. If our time is running out, then it is time to forgive that person against whom we have held a grudge. If our time is running out then it is time to put our relationships with our families above our business and jobs. It is time to use the incredible resources God has placed in our hands to really make a difference in the world. It is time to place our spiritual lives above all the other stuff in our lives that claim our time and energy. It is time to put serving Jesus first, before serving ourselves. Life is not a dress rehearsal. It is show time! It is time live the life God meant for us to live.

I don't know how much time I have to get it all done. You don't know how much time you have either. But I know it is time to put first things first and to live my life for Jesus. Isn't it time for you to do the same?