

Left Behind

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the gospel according to Matthew and chapter 24.

Matthew 24, and if we read again at verse 36. Matthew 24 and verse 36.

Where Jesus says, But concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away.

So will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field, one will be taken, and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill, one will be taken, and one left.

[1 : 15] Therefore stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake, and would not have let his house be broken into.

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

As you know, this past week it has marked the beginning of December. And I don't know about you, but I can hardly believe that another year is almost over.

It seemed, this year has seemed to have gone past, like all of them, just gone past in a flash. And with a new year now on the horizon, it's not very far away, and Christmas is hastening towards us again.

Everyone around us, and even ourselves, we're all preparing and getting organised for what is often the festive season. But as we were saying to the children, in order to count down to Christmas, the children have these helpful Advent calendars, where they open these little doors every day of December, leading up to Christmas.

[2 : 36] And as we said to the children, it's called an Advent calendar, because the word Advent means arrival, or coming. But as we were saying to the kids, the purpose of the Advent calendar, it isn't to count down the days of December until the children open their presents at Christmas.

No, the purpose of the Advent calendar is to count down the days of December until Christmas.

Because Christmas, whatever view we take on Christmas, Christmas marks the first Advent.

Christmas marks the first arrival, the first coming of Jesus Christ into the world. And of course, with Christmas being so commercialised nowadays, so many people have actually lost sight of what it's really all about.

But it's about the first Advent. It's about the first coming. It's about the first arrival of this saviour of sinners coming into the world. And God willing, over the next couple of weeks, we'll look at the incarnation and the birth of Jesus in time.

But you know, when you consider the nativity story of Jesus, or the birth narrative of Jesus, what becomes glaringly obvious is that no one was ready for the first Advent.

[3 : 53] No one was ready for the arrival of Jesus. No one was ready for the Christ to come into the world. Because when he arrived, we're told that there was no room in the inn. When he came to his own people, we're told that they wouldn't even receive him.

When he preached sermons and performed miracles and spoke of salvation, what did they say about him? Away with him. Crucify him. My friend, no one was ready for the first Advent of Jesus. No one was ready for the arrival of the saviour. No one was ready for the Christ to come into the world. But now that was 2,000 years ago. What we need to be ready for today is when he comes again.

My friend, we need to be ready for the second Advent of Jesus. We need to be ready for the second arrival of the saviour. We need to be ready for the second coming of Christ into the world. Because the promise of scripture, which is also the promise of Jesus the saviour, the promise is that he's coming back. Therefore, you also must be ready for the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

[5 : 08] He's coming back. He's coming again. Therefore, you need to be watching. You need to be waiting. You need to be ready because you don't want to be left behind.

And you know, my friend, we can put up all our Christmas decorations and we can make all our preparations in order to remember the first Advent. Advent. But what Jesus wants to make absolutely clear to us this morning is that you need to be ready for the second Advent.

You need to be ready for the second arrival of Jesus. You need to be ready for the second coming of Christ. Because in these solemn words, Jesus explains three things about his second coming. He explains the suddenness of his coming. He explains the separation at his coming. But he also explains the solution to his coming.

They're the three things I'd like us to look at this morning. Jesus explains three things about his coming. The suddenness of his coming. The separation at his coming. And the solution to his coming.

[6 : 18] So first of all, the suddenness of his coming. The suddenness of his coming. Jesus says in verse 36, But concerning that day and hour, no one knows.

Not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark.

And they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away. So will be the coming of the Son of Man. And so in order to emphasize the suddenness of his second advent, Jesus brings us all the way back to the time of Noah.

Now many of us know the story of Noah because, well, we grew up with it as children. But the children's story of Noah, it's often portrayed to us as a nice little story of Noah's faithfulness to God and God's promise to Noah after the flood.

God's promise to Noah with this bright rainbow in the sky. But as we all know, the story of Noah, it wasn't a nice little story. It was an account of God's judgment towards unrepentant sinners.

[7 : 37] Because we're told in the Bible narrative, we're told that for 120 years, which was a lifetime in those days, 120 years, Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

And while Noah was building the ark in what was a desert place, and he was building it in a place where there had never been any rain, and Noah was preaching, preaching to the people there that God was going to flood the world in judgment.

And as a preacher of righteousness, Noah urged his community, he urged them to be ready. Noah pleaded with the people he knew and loved to come into the ark.

Noah exhorted and encouraged sinners to flee to safety and security by coming in with him to the ark. But we all know what happened.

We all know how the children's story goes. Or the children's song, Mr. Noah built an ark. The people thought it such a lark. Mr. Noah pleaded so.

[8 : 41] But into the ark they would not go. My friend, as a faithful servant of God, Noah preached the way of salvation. Noah heralded the name of Christ.

Noah pleaded for his community to be saved. Noah urged the people in front of him to be ready. But the awful tragedy was that they refused to listen.

They ignored all the warnings and they just walked away from the preacher of righteousness. My friend, the people of Noah's community, they became complacent.

They were comfortable in life and they were content with their lot. But the thing was, they weren't ready. They weren't ready. They weren't waiting. They weren't watching.

And what happened? they were left behind. Because when God shut the door of the ark, when that door shut, God shut the door of opportunity to all these people.

[9 : 43] And for the unrepentant sinners who were left behind, they were faced with and left with just the wrath and judgment of a holy God. And you know, my friend, Jesus is saying to you today, as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be with the coming of the Son of Man.

No one knew the day, no one knew the hour when the flood would come. No one knew the day or the hour when the Lord would flood the world in judgment. No one knew because it was just a normal day.

It was just another day. As Jesus says, in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day when Noah entered the ark.

It was just another day. No one knew the day or the hour when judgment will come. And you know, this is what's terrifying, to me anyway. I don't know if it terrifies you.

Jesus says, they were unaware. They were unaware. Noah's community was unaware of the danger they were in. The people Noah preached to week by week, year by year, they were unaware of the judgment that was awaiting them.

[11:03] Those whom Noah loved and pleaded with, they were unaware of their end that was imminent. They were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away.

And Jesus says, so will it be. So will it be with the coming of the Son of Man. But concerning that day and hour, says Jesus, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

And you know, my friend, Jesus is reminding us this morning of the suddenness of his coming because it will just be like the days of Noah. it will be a normal day.

It will be just another day in Barbas. There will be people eating and they'll be drinking and they'll be marrying and they'll be giving in marriage and they'll be working and they'll be going to school and they'll be traveling and they'll be resting and there'll be people retired and people doing this and people doing that.

It will be just another day in Barbas. No one will know when Jesus is coming. No one will know the day nor the hour when the second Advent will take place. No one will know when judgment is coming.

[12:18] We will all be unaware. We will all be unaware. But some will be prepared.

Some will be prepared. We will all be unaware. But some will be prepared. But sad to say there will be many in this community who will be unaware and unprepared for what they face. There will be many in here who have sat in church week by week who will be unaware and unprepared for the judgment awaiting them. There will be many whom the preacher of righteousness loved and pleaded with who will be unaware and unprepared for their end. There will be many who heard the call to come to Christ but didn't because they were complacent.

They were comfortable in life. They were content with their lot. But they also will be unaware and unprepared for eternity.

So will it be with the coming of the Son of Man. And you know it was J.C. Ryle wonderful commentator.

He solemnly says in his commentary on this passage he says that the world will not be converted the moment Christ returns. It will be found in the same condition that it was in on the day of the flood.

[13:47] When the flood came men were found eating and drinking marrying and giving in marriage. They were absorbed in their worldly pursuits and utterly regardless of Noah's repeated warnings. They saw no likelihood of a flood.

They would not believe that there was any danger. But at last the flood came suddenly and took them all away. All that were not with Noah in the ark were drowned.

They were all swept away to their last account. Unpardoned. Unconverted. Unprepared. And unprepared. To meet their God. And our Lord says so will it be with the coming of the Son of Man. My friend with the suddenness of Jesus' second coming we will all be unaware. But some some in here will be prepared.

Some in here are prepared. But the question is will you be prepared? Are you ready? Are you waiting and watching? Or will you be left behind?

[14:55] Or will you be left behind? Because that's what we see secondly. We see the separation at his coming. Jesus has explained to us the suddenness of his coming but then he explains the separation at his coming.

The separation at his coming. Look at verse 40. Jesus says Then two men will be in the field. One will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill.

One will be taken and one left. Therefore stay awake for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. Stay awake. You do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

In these verses Jesus describes the separation and division that will take place at his second advent. because at the moment we all live together in the same community.

At the moment we all work together on the same island. At the moment we all worship together in the same congregation. But the question that Jesus wants us to ask is will we all be together with Jesus when he comes again?

[16:04] Because as Jesus promises here and assures us there will be a separation at the last day. there will be this great division and this separation says Jesus it will affect homes and families.

It will affect workplaces and work colleagues. It will affect congregations and communities. There will be a separation because our God is a separating God.

Our God is a separating God. Do you know we see that throughout the Bible. when God created the world the first thing he does is separate.

He separates the light from the darkness. He separates the heavens from the earth. He separates the sea from the dry land. He separates the night from the day.

Our God is a separating God. When he calls his people to himself he calls them to be separate. He called the children of Israel to be separate from the other nations.

[17:05] He calls the church to be separate from the world. They're to be separate from the world by living a distinct and holy life. And when you come to the gospel you hear Jesus speaking again and again about this separation and division that will exist on the last day.

And we know the parable so well. The parable of the wheat and the tares. The parable of the wise and the foolish builder. the parable of the broad road and the narrow path.

The parable of the sheep and the goats. Jesus emphasised that there will be a separation at his second coming because our God is a separating God.

But you know what always gets to me is what Jesus says about the sheep and the goats. He mentions it in the following chapter in chapter 25 just over the page in verse 31.

Jesus says there when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him then he sits on his glorious throne and before him will be gathered all the nations and he will separate them.

[18:15] He will separate people from one another. He will separate homes and families and children and parents and friends and neighbours and work colleagues and congregations.

the Son of Man will separate them as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats and Jesus says that he will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left and Jesus will say to those on his right come you blessed of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world and then Jesus will say to those on his left depart from me you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

My friend our God is a separating God and Jesus is lovingly warning us today that there will be a separation at his coming and you need to be found on his right hand and not on his left.

You need to be gathered in as wheat and not left behind as a tear. You need to be a wise builder who built upon the rock not a fool building your life upon the sand.

You need to walk the narrow path through this life because it leads to life rather than walking the broad road that leads to destruction. You need to be a sheep that trusts in the good shepherd rather than a goat that is lost for all eternity.

[19:45] My friend you need to be ready. You need to be watching. You need to be waiting. Or the sad reality will be you will be left behind. you will be left behind.

And this is what Paul mentioned to the Christians in the early church when he spoke about the second coming. He says in 1 Thessalonians the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

After that we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will ever be with the Lord.

You know my friend the loving warning of the New Testament is that at the second coming of Jesus Christ the converted will be caught up the unconverted will be caught out.

The converted will be caught up the unconverted will be caught out and that's what Jesus is warning here and he makes it very very personal to us because he says in verse 40 two men will be in the field one taken one left the converted will be caught up the unconverted will be caught out

then he says two women will be grinding at the mill one will be taken one will be left the converted will be caught up the unconverted will be caught out in Luke's gospel when you look at Luke's account Jesus says there will be two in one bed a married couple one will be taken one will be left the converted will be caught up the unconverted will be caught out now Jesus doesn't mean that we're suddenly going to disappear but he does mean that at his coming there will be this great separation and you will either be caught up or you'll be caught out and you know

[21 : 56] Jesus makes this separation and division so personal to us because it is personal it is personal he says that at his coming there will be a separation and division between those you have spent your life with mother and father son and daughter brother and sister husband and wife granny and shenna aunties and uncles relatives and neighbours friends and work colleagues minister and congregation with all these intimate and personal ties that mean so much to us in life Jesus says there will be a separation that is coming all these people that you've met in your life my friend all these people that you've got to know all these people that you've shared your life with those you've even shared your home with and you've shared your experiences with you've shared your joys and even your sorrows with

Jesus says there will be a separation that is coming and you know my friend do you know the word goodbye it's often the hardest word to say but it's even harder when you know it's for all eternity and you know I never say this lightly eternity is not trivial to me it's a reality I see it far too often people taken from the scene of time into eternity but you know these intimate and personal ties with people that mean so much to us our separation from them as we were saying it will not only be a reality at the second coming of Jesus for many of us they've already become a reality through the painful experience of separation at death of course the hope of the Christian and it's a wonderful hope the hope of the Christian is that death is not the end it's only the beginning of eternal life it's only the beginning of eternity and glory but for the unconverted the unconverted friend death is the end of life and it's also the beginning of eternal death in hell and as I said

I don't say this lightly because separation for all eternity it's a possibility and if you're not ready my friend one day it will be a reality and you know for some of you some of you especially who are fit and healthy sitting here today I wonder do you put the thought of death and eternity far away from you do you put the realities of life far away from you and that when you hear of someone else who's diagnosed with an illness whether it be cancer or something some illness you say well that won't be me or you see someone having an accident an accident that maybe changes their life completely and you say to yourself you wouldn't say to anybody else but you say to yourself that won't be me or you stand over the grave of a family member or a friend or the grave of a work colleague and you convince yourself well that won't be me that won't be me not just now that won't be me because I'm fit and healthy that won't be me because I have time but who told you you had time my friend time is one commodity that none of us are promised you know there are five people in the hospital that I have to visit tomorrow and I want to visit them but they're all ages one in their 30s two in their 50s one in their 70s and one in their 80s illness and the reality of eternity is no respecter of persons my friend we need to be ready for eternity we need to be waiting and watching because

Jesus is coming and he's going to call us out of the scene of time and into eternity and Jesus says to us verse 42 stay awake for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming but what is the solution to his coming Jesus has explained to us the suddenness of his coming he's explained to us the separation at his coming but what's the solution to all of this what's the solution to his coming well we see that in verses 43 and 44 the solution to his coming Jesus says but know this that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming he would have stayed awake and would have not let his house be broken into therefore you also must be ready for the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect and so having explained the suddenness of his coming and the separation of his coming

Jesus now gives to us the solution to his coming and what we ought to notice is that Jesus is firm with us he's loving but he's clear he's compassionate but he's authoritative because he doesn't want us to get this wrong which is why he says at the beginning of verse 43 but know this but know this in other words this is something you need to know this isn't optional this isn't an extra this isn't a take it or leave it this is something you must know before you leave the scene of time and enter into the great eternity but know this he says that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into and with this exhortation Jesus just describes the second coming like a burglary

because as you know a burglary is sudden it's unexpected it's invasive and because it goes to your house it's personal and the truth is well none of us sit up all night every night waiting and watching for a burglary or a burglar to come into our house no we ensure that we're ready and prepared we ensure that we're safe and secure we ensure that everything is in place for when the burglar does appear that way we can sleep soundly and Jesus says it's the same with his second coming because the second advent of Jesus as we've seen it will be sudden it'll be unexpected it'll be invasive and it will be personal my friend

[29 : 37] Jesus promises that he'll come like a thief in the night but what's the solution to his coming what's the only way for you to sleep soundly at night to be ready and to be prepared you need to ensure that you're safe and secure at his coming which is why Jesus says in verse 44 therefore you also must be ready for the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect my friend the solution to Jesus is coming is to be ready it's to be safe and secure it's to be wholeheartedly trusting and committing your life to Jesus Christ and I want to be clear about this don't look to anyone else around you don't compare yourself to anyone else around you don't even worry about anyone else you have to be prepared you need to be ready you need to be watching you need to be waiting you need to be safe you need to be secure you need to be committed to Jesus

Christ because he's coming soon he's coming soon you know that's his promise when you read the book of Revelation the last book of our Bible Jesus says again and again throughout that book I am coming soon I am coming soon I am coming soon I am coming soon and you know my Christian friend you might be ready you're ready by trusting in Jesus but that does not give you the authority to sit back and relax you know these words of Jesus they should urge us to make sure that when Jesus comes we are waiting we are watching and we are working we need to be working because as Jesus says in John's gospel we must work the works of him while it is day because night is coming when no man can work and you know apathy is no preparation for the second coming apathy is no preparation for the second coming we need to be watching and waiting and working for the night is coming when no man can work we need to be ready and so at this time of year we can put up all our decorations we can make all the preparations for the festive season we can remember the first advent of Christmas but you know in 2019 what Jesus wants us to make absolutely clear on is that we are ready we are ready and prepared for a second coming you need to be waiting you need to be watching you need to be safe you need to be secure you need to be wholeheartedly committed to Jesus

Christ or the sad reality is you will be left behind you will be left behind and what do you call something that is left behind if you leave something behind in church you leave something behind somewhere else what do you call that you call it lost and that's what you'll be if you are left behind you will be lost for all eternity my friend you need to be ready because the converted will be caught up and my unconverted friend if you are still in the same state when Jesus comes again and calls you out of the scene of time into eternity you will be caught out caught up or caught out may the lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray oh lord our gracious god that we would be ready we thank thee lord that thou art one who helps us prepare for the coming of Jesus lord a god who reminds us that lord one who will come again that that was Jesus promise to his disciples that if I go I will come again and receive you unto myself that where

I am there you may be also and lord we pray that oh that none of us none of us would be lost none of us would be left behind but that all of us would come we would commit our lives to Jesus because we have heard so much about him all that we are without excuse lord bless thy truth to us we pray bring us lord to our knees where we must confess to be saved to trust in Jesus for all eternity lord bless us then we ask continue with us in the week that lies ahead a week lord that is unknown to any of us but known only to thee help us then to trust thee with everything with our life and even our death keep us then we ask for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake amen we're going to conclude our service this morning by singing to

God's praise in Psalm 96 just picking up where we left off Psalm 96 at verse 10 page 359 in the blue psalm book Psalm 96 at verse 10 among the heathens say God reigns the world shall steadfastly be fixed from moving he shall judge the people righteously let heavens be glad before the Lord let and let the earth rejoice let seas and all that is therein cry out and make a noise and we'll sing on down to the end of the psalm of Psalm 96 to God's praise among the heavens say God reigns the world shall steadfastly be fixed from moving he shall judge option behold how threaten

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[37 : 14] Let cease and all that is therein Cry out and make a noise Let fields rejoice and everything That springeth all the earth Then woods and every tree shall sing With gladness and with myrrh Before the Lord because he comes To judge the earth comes he

He'll judge the world with righteousness The people faithfully The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all now and forevermore Amen