

Guest Preacher Rev. Kenneth I Macleod

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Preacher: Rev. Kenny I Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read in Matthew 24. Matthew chapter 24, and we read verses 12 and 13.

And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold, but the one who endures to the end will be saved. Now, we know that the future has always held a fascination for us.

I suppose that's one of the reasons why so many people look at the book of Revelation, because it is a book that, yes, it is dealing with past, it's dealing with present, but it is also dealing very much with the future.

And there's always been a fascination in people's minds about what does the future hold. And, you know, when you think about it, we're very thankful that the Lord has hidden so much of our future from us.

Because I'm sure as you look back over your life, there are many things that have come into your life and that you're thankful that you didn't know beforehand. God in His mercy hides so much from us, because we probably wouldn't be able to deal with or cope with if we knew certain of the things that were going to come into our life.

[1 : 22] But there is this fascination with the future. And every so often you will hear people making predictions as to when the end of the world will be. And you have various sects and various cults sometimes will come out with declarations like that.

Scientists may tell us that at such and such, the way things are going, if the world continues in this way, that eventually things will run out and they'll maybe tell us this and tell us that.

But Jesus tells us very clearly that nobody knows. Not even the angels in heaven know that. Tells us that. But concerning that hour, that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven.

But the one thing that He does say to us is, Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.

In fact, if we had carried on reading in this, we would have seen that when the Lord returns, one of the features of the day is the normality.

[2 : 30] Because it's just like before the flood. For as they were in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of 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.

There's a degree of normality, although there is so much that's going to precede the actual return of Jesus. The day He comes will be just like any other day.

Because when the flood broke out, it was just a day like any other day. Although Noah had been a preacher of righteousness for 120 years, nobody listened to him.

He was preaching to deaf ears. But there was nothing that was going to indicate, other than what Noah had said. And the ark that Noah was building was testimony to what God was going to do.

But there was nothing around to declare of what was going to happen. And then all of a sudden, the waters of the deep broke, and there was this incredible global flood. And Jesus is saying that's what it's going to be like when the Son of Man returns.

[3 : 41] Because on the day of the flood, when it talks about they were eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, it was talking about the normality of life, of just what goes on day by day.

And that's what it's going to be when the Son of Man returns. But all the time, Jesus is warning. It's the one thing. You don't know when He's coming, but be ready.

That's the all-important thing. Be ready. And the question you have to ask, I have to ask myself tonight, you have to ask yourself, are you ready? Supposing Jesus returned tonight.

Because there's going to be two different reactions to the return of Jesus. We're told that to those who have rejected Him, they're going to call on the mountains and the hills and the rocks to cover them and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

Those who have accepted Jesus and loved Jesus will say, even so come, Lord Jesus. That's what the church tonight is saying. If you in your heart of hearts are able to say, even so come, Lord Jesus, you're in a good place.

[4 : 53] It shows that you have come to accept Jesus and that you're looking forward to being with Him forever and ever and ever. But if not, if you're not ready, then it's imperative that you become ready.

And tonight is another night where we have that opportunity of becoming ready. Because the Lord Jesus is present here. He has promised His presence. Where even two or three gather in His name, He says that He will be there in the midst.

It's a wonderful privilege. And we often, we take it for granted, but we shouldn't. And there is no better place or no better time than to ask Jesus into our heart, into our life.

And the wonderful thing is that the Lord has made known to us how things are because we know what happened and how our first parents fell and we fell with them.

And our default position in life is that we are rebels of God. We want a way from God. We don't want to. Oh yes, there might be moments in our lives when you think back, if you're a Christian tonight, you might think back before you were converted, there were times maybe of trouble, difficulty, and there was a quick prayer here and there.

[6 : 14] And you say, oh Lord, I pray you have to help me here. But by and large, there was no real desire for the Lord. And that's how it is naturally.

But the wonderful thing is the Lord didn't leave us like that. He could have, but He didn't. And the Lord made clear to us that there is a way of salvation.

He provided that way. He did all that was necessary. He sent His Son into this world in order to live for us and die for us. And He has told us, not only has He made the way for us, but He has revealed to us in the Word, the Bible is so clear, the way of salvation.

The Bible explains so clearly to us of the way of salvation. And so Jesus, throughout this chapter, is telling us to be ready.

But here we find that He's speaking about many of the things that are going to happen before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And He speaks about what is very obvious that we're living in such a time, because when you read what is spoken about there, when you read that the nation will rise against nation, and there will be famines and earthquakes and wars and rumors of war, just put on any news any week.

[7 : 41] And that's exactly what you're seeing. One nation rising up against another. Another rumor of a war. There's a sudden earthquake here, and there's famines. It's exactly what Jesus declares.

But the wonderful thing is that the Lord remains in control over it all. And you say, is He in control? Of course He is. Part of the control is in Jesus telling us this 2,000 years ago, that this is what it's going to be like before the tribulation, before it's like the birth pains.

We're living in that time. And so we have to look at what the Word says and look around us at the same time.

But one of the sad things that we see here is that it's like sin is gaining momentum. Sin has always been gaining momentum, but it seems like sin is gaining momentum and lawlessness is abounding.

And as a result of that, it tells us that the love of many will grow cold. Now, I believe it is speaking here largely about the Christian because the verse which is tied into it is very evidently speaking of the Christian.

[9 : 01] And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold, but the one who endures to the end will be saved. Now, as we know, the love that we have for the Lord is a love that began when the Lord first loved us.

That's the order. We don't love the Lord all of a sudden. We don't decide one day, oh, you know what I'm going to do today? I'm going to start loving the Lord. We love the Lord because He first loves us.

And can I say to you tonight, if there's anybody here, and you're beginning, you don't know what's going on, but there's a drawing in your heart to the Lord, to the things of the Lord.

It didn't used to be there, but it is now. Well, that's the Lord that's working in your heart. It's not natural. That's not a natural reaction in any patient's heart.

That comes from the Lord. And if you're following the Lord tonight, it is because the Lord first drew you to Him. And when we begin to love the Lord, we begin to think about Him.

[10 : 13] That's the natural thing. If you love somebody, you think often about that passion. That passion's in your thoughts. You think about that passion quite often in the day. And that's what love does.

Love likes to be close to the object of love. If you love somebody, you like to be with that passion. And that's what you find as you become a Christian, that there's a drawing in your heart to be with the Lord, to be where the Lord is.

That's part of what's happening. And this change begins in a person's heart. And their lives begin to change. You know, particularly people who might not have been really big churchgoers.

And they're living in the community, working in the community. Everybody knows them. And the Lord begins to work in their heart. And people sometimes can't understand what on earth is going on with them.

I know a man and he was telling me one day, he was talking about his brother who was a hard character. Nice fellow, but quite a hard character.

[11 : 25] And he went in to see him one day and he says, phew, he couldn't understand. And when he went to see his mother, his mother was an old woman. He said, I don't know what's wrong with my brother. He's not growling today.

Usually, anything I said, he was scowling and snapping at me. But he's gentle. He says, there must be something wrong. Well, what was happening is the Lord was at work and the Lord wonderfully transformed his life.

But it became obvious that something was going on. And this is what it is that God's love had become had started to invade his life and began to change him.

And it became obvious. And sometimes, as we say, people don't understand just what's going on. But God's love, when God's love comes into our heart, it changes.

It affects our whole being, our will, our affections, our emotions, our mind, our heart, everything. Everything is changed. And we find, of course, that the love that we find here is that we say to ourselves, well, how do I know that the love of God is in my heart?

[12 : 40] Well, I think it's obvious that all the things that belong to the Lord, you love. For instance, you love his day.

The Lord has given us this day, this one day in seven. It's the Lord's day. He has set this day apart. And it's a day that we are to focus upon him.

Yes, it's a day for our bodies, rest for our bodies, rest for our minds, who are able to pull back in the main from all the normal things of life.

But above all, it's a day where we're able to focus upon him. That's why we come to church. And it's a day where we can be revitalized, and nourished and re-energized.

God in his wisdom has given us this day. And so we begin to love the Lord's day. You know, before you became a Christian, maybe the Lord's day was the worst day of the seven.

[13 : 42] And you found it a drag and a boring and you say, oh man, I hate this day. But you know, when you become a Christian, it changes. And it's the same with God's word. God's word becomes precious.

It's at the very center of your life. Before you were a Christian, you might have read little bits of God's word. You might have done that simply out of duty. But now it's key to your life.

It's at the very heart of everything. And the word is a, it's, well, it's a love letter. It's God's love letter to you. If you love somebody and they send you a letter, that they've, supposing they've, the love of your life has gone abroad and they send you a letter.

Well, you wouldn't just pick up the letter and have a quick glance and throw it away. You would read it. You would digest it. You would pore over it. You might put it aside and then read it again because of your love for that passion.

And so it is with God's word. It becomes an integral part of our life. We want to read it. The desire is there to read it because we want to meet with the Lord. And we get so much from the truth.

[14 : 57] Open now mine eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of your law. And he does that over and over and over again. And it's the same with God's house.

I joyed when to the house of God go up, they said to me. Maybe in the past you went to God's house just out of duty. Or you thought, well, I'd better put in an appearance now and again.

But when you come to become a believer, a follower, there's a desire to go there because the Lord is present here. It is a wonderful privilege and opportunity to be gathering where the Lord has promised to be.

It's wonderful. And we should always, if we have the health and strength and everything is working all right around us, make every effort to go. Because God does great things in his house with his people.

You remember one of the classic examples is Asaph. You remember Asaph in Psalm 73. And Asaph was in a bad place. He was going through trouble at difficult times. And life was really hard.

[16 : 04] It was so bad, in fact, he began to envy the wicked. And he was looking at them and he was looking at their lives and he was saying, oh, look at their lives. They're having a great time.

No troubles, no hassles. And they don't care about God. And he says, I've washed my hands in vain. This has been almost like a waste of time.

He was in a bad place till he went to God's house. And when he was in God's house, God restored his vision. You know, that's one of the things God does when we come to his house.

He brings us face to face with reality to how things are, to what it's really like. And Asaph saw that these very people that he was envying were in fact on a slippery slope heading to destruction and he saw he was the most privileged person because he had the Lord.

Whom have I in the heavens? I, but thee, O Lord, alone. And in the earth whom I desire, besides thee, there is none. You could hardly believe it's the same man. But that's the change that God's house brought into his life.

[17 : 13] And that's why God's house is precious to God's people. And again, we love other Christians. It becomes an evidence, a mark of becoming a Christian.

We know that we've passed from death to life because we love the brethren. There's a new desire within your heart. You feel at home. Here is your extended family.

All one in Christ Jesus. We develop new bonds, new togetherness. That was one of the great things of the communion times where Christians went about and they met and there were bonds, lifelong bonds forged at these communion times where God's people met together and where iron sharpened iron.

But sadly, our verse tells us here that the love of many grows cold. You know, that's really sad. The love of many. The love of many.

Now, we live in this kind of day where lawlessness abounds. And the frightening thing is that our lawmakers are trying to make it compulsory in some areas of life for us for us to live in lawlessness against God.

[18 : 35] That's the state of things today. It's quite frightening. And so, lawlessness is abounding more and more and more and more.

But you know, part of the solemn thing about this is that it has a huge impact upon our lives. Because when the culture of the day and the very breath of the day is lawlessness against God, rebellion against God, iniquity, do you know what happens?

It begins gradually, not over a day or over a week or over a month, but over the years. We begin to tolerate and we begin to accept things that several years ago we would never have accepted.

because of how society has so changed and it has impacted and has burrowed itself right in that we now are almost kind of accepting and we go along with this and we say, well, that's just the way things are.

And the deceitfulness of our own heart sometimes sides with this, but at a terrible price because this deadens us.

[20 : 00] There is no two doubts about it, that it has a huge impact upon our soul, upon our spirituality, about our life in Christ. And so we find that the love of many grows cold.

And how do we, how will we know if that love grows cold? Well, in the very things that we looked at with regard to, in a positive way, of what it is for a Christian, the things that a Christian loves, the very same things will evidence that God's day is no longer so important to us, that we've lost its meaning, we've begun to compromise, that we have begun to allow different standards into our thinking.

And again, when we come to God's Word, we no longer have the hunger for it. We read it. Someone will say to you, did you read the Word today?

Yeah. What did you read? Can't tell them. Because it had made absolutely no impact whatever upon you. It went in one ear and out the other.

And that's how it's been day after day. There might be one day you focus a wee bit more. But your desire for the Word, there was a day when you couldn't get enough of it, but now it's just, it's no longer holding the place that it did.

[21 : 27] God's house. You don't any longer go with joy in your heart. It's kind of reluctantly. Oh, I better go. If I don't go, what will people say?

I'm not saying, I'm not saying that's how it is, but that's a kind of evidence of how the love has begun to get cold within our heart. same with our church family, our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Don't care for them as we used to. You know, we live in a day, we live in a vicious day. The world is vicious, and it's always devouring one another, biting.

And there's just this trying to expose every fault in every single person's life. That's the kind of deities. And you know, we can begin to see that come into the church as well.

The church, we're told, love covers a multitude of sins. You know, when love is at work, we're looking out for one another. Rather than exposing, we're wanting to conceal and to cover.

[22 : 40] Because that's the way love operates. And so we need to find, as we look at our own lives, I must examine my life, you examine, and say, well, have we drifted?

When I look back, have I gone from where I once was? Well, if so, we need to repent. But we see in verse 13, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

And how encouraging that is, despite all the lawlessness, despite all the forces and powers that are at work, despite the fact that so many are growing cold, the Lord will see to it that His people will be kept safe.

And even although we may wander and we may stray, we may fall, we may backslide, the Lord will take us back. You look back over your life, and I don't know how long some of you have been Christians.

Why are you still following tonight? after all the ups and downs that have been taking place in your life, all the temptations that you've confronted, the trials that you've faced, you're still following.

[23 : 55] There have been days Satan has whispered into your ear, go back, give up. There are days when the deceitfulness of your own heart has said, how can everybody else be wrong than just a few of us right?

And there's all sort of things go on. But you know, you keep going. Why? Because you are being kept. You know, that's one of the great, great words in Scripture, kept.

And how are we kept? Do we keep ourselves? Not a chance. We are kept by the power of God. Kept by the power of God, we're told, unto salvation, ready to be revealed at the last time.

It's not easy being a Christian. The Lord told us that. It's a way of offense. It's a way of self-denial. It's a way of taking up the cross and following Jesus.

Remember, there was a time when Jesus had fed the thousands and they wanted to make him king. And there were thousands following Jesus.

[25 : 02] Oh, who's like Jesus? And then Jesus began to teach them about what discipleship really meant. What it really meant to be a follower, to follow him.

And what do we find? They began to leave him in their droves. I think it must be one of the saddest pictures in Scripture where thousands are deserting Christ.

And it has come to the point in John chapter 6 where Jesus says to the twelve, will you also go away? Are you going to go too?

And Peter, great Peter, Peter comes forward and says wonderful words, to whom else can we go? For you have the words of eternal life. And that's what you and I say as well.

Despite all that has happened and all the temptations and the trials, we have to say, to whom else can we go? we've been elsewhere. And we know that there is nowhere else but with Jesus.

[26 : 09] And we are, so we are being kept. How are we being kept? Well, we're kept by the power of God, by divine power. And that works in two ways. First of all, protecting us.

You and I have no idea the amount of protection that goes on in our lives day by day. sometimes by this Holy Spirit protecting us, by an angelic protection.

You remember that it tells us that the ministering spirits, that the angels are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation.

If you're a child of God, the angels are ministering to you. How many times have you been set free? How many times have you been protected and delivered? We don't know.

But not only is there an outward being kept, but there's an inward where the Spirit is influencing us. Remember what it tells us in Philippians.

[27 : 11] It is God who works in you both to will and to do so that we have this spiritual influence inclining us towards good.

salvation. And so we're told here that those tells us that they will, that the one who endures to the end will be saved.

You say to yourself, how does it mean be saved? If I'm a Christian, I'm already saved. Well, we know that there are three aspects to salvation.

There is first what we would term justification. It's a legal term where God pronounces us just because of what Jesus has done for us.

God the Father looks at us through Jesus. And it's like in the law court. He pronounces us just because of what Jesus has done.

[28 : 14] So that's part of our salvation. There's also the ongoing part of our salvation where we're being sanctified, where we're being conformed to the image of Christ.

But there's a final part of our salvation which is our glorification because at death there's going to come a point of where our body and our soul will separate.

The soul will be taken to glory and the body will be put into the grave. But we're told that's not the end. You know people talk of the finality of the grave.

It isn't. Every grave, every single grave will yet open. And that's what we, the resurrection of Jesus is the great guarantee to us that we too will rise.

We're told it over and over. Remember how the short catechism which defines and summarizes scripture, the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness.

[29 : 18] Isn't that amazing? Because you can't imagine how can this sinner that I am enter into glory in a moment made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory and their bodies being still united to Christ in a mysterious way united to Christ to rest in the grave till the resurrection.

And on that resurrection morning the graves will open. Your body, not somebody else's body, but your body will rise. And people will say, well, the body has decomposed.

Do we think it's a problem to the God who in the very first instance, out of nothing, brought this world and this huge universe into being by the word of his power and took the dust to the ground, something that had never been there before, made man and out of man made a woman?

Do you think there's any difficulty to the great power and divine creator to do just that very thing, to raise every single body and we will be made perfect in holiness?

Not only our souls have already been transported to glory and are holy, but so will our bodies be. they will go through a transformation and we will be fitted for the glorious environment that we will be in and then we will receive the fullness of this salvation.

[30 : 58] You know, it's a wonderful thing to be a Christian because we have a future. You can ask so many people tonight who live in the world and for the world, what's your hope for the future?

Well, there might be a temporary hope for some, but the Christian has a living hope that is eternal forever and ever and ever.

No wonder it's a great gospel. I hope tonight that every single one of you has Jesus Christ as your Savior. If so, your future is guaranteed.

if not, as things stand, you're all on your own and it's a lonely, harsh world that has nothing for your soul.

Don't go out the door tonight from the presence of Jesus without asking him, Lord, have mercy upon my soul and come in to my heart.

[31 : 59] Let us pray. Lord, our God, we pray to bless us and as we reflect on your word, we're so often brought face to face with how things are and where we are.

And we pray that you will give us a heart for yourself, a growing desire for the things of God. We pray that you will deal with us graciously and mercifully and that you will guide us throughout this week, that you will lead us in the way of truth, and that you will deliver us from temptation.

Watch over us all, we pray. Part us with your blessing. Do us good. Take us home safely, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask all. Amen. We're going to conclude in singing from the Scottish Psalter and Psalm number 80.

80. We're going to sing the last three verses of the Psalm. Psalm 80. Psalm 80. Psalm 80. Psalm 80. And she'll find on page 334 of the Psalm books at verse 17.

Oh, let thy hand be still upon the man of thy right hand, the son of man whom for thyself thou madest strong to stand. So henceforth we will not go back, nor turn from thee at all.

[33 : 26] O do thou quicken us, and we upon thy name will call. Turn us again, Lord God of hosts, and upon us vout safe, to make thy countenance to shine, and so we shall be safe.

These verses, Psalm 80 from verse 17 to the end. O let thy hand be still upon. O let thy hand be still upon the man of thy right hand, the son of man who for thyself thou made us strong to stand.

So henceforth we will not go back, nor turn from thee at all.

O do thou quicken us, and we upon thy name will call.

Turn us again, Lord God of foes, and upon us vout save, to make thy counten us to shine, and so we shall be saved.

[35 : 26] Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.