

We Are All Precious to Jesus

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Preacher: Pastor Chris Baker

[0:00] Good morning. Thank you. Welcome to Bethel Christian Church.! For announcements today, first of all, before I forget, if you're a visitor, there should be a visitor card in the seats in front of you.

! We like to fill that out and drop it in the plate. We appreciate that. For announcements, I was told there are a lot of veggies outside and they don't want any left, so when you leave, please take some veggies out there.

Thank you. Ron, do you want to give a little thanks for your... Yeah, I do want to thank everybody for the results from last week for coming to the chili cook-off and we raised right around \$700 for missions for this coming summer.

And if you weren't here for the announcement, actually Tina got the most offering for her chili. It was a white chili. It was very wonderful. So if you need a recipe, see Tina.

But again, thank you so very much. Thank you, Ron. All right, the bulletin there, also with the Bethel Care Card Club is meeting Monday, November 11th.

[1:09] There's a soap-making class there on the 16th. And down there at the bottom, you see Thanksgiving Eve service, Wednesday, November 27th.

And don't forget, our Thanksgiving dinner will be the 24th after church. All right, Pastor Chris has something to do. Good morning, everyone.

Good morning. I know we had the Fall Fest yesterday. We couldn't attend, and sorry to miss that, but it sounds like it was a wonderful turnout, and everybody must have partied too hard at our Fall Fest.

I see we're missing a few folks this morning, but it's good to see you all out this morning. And just a couple quick things that I wanted to mention. Again, I praise God, too, for what was raised last week towards missions, and I hope you enjoyed the chili.

I know my favorite response of the day was Grayson. At one point he said, Have you tried number, and I forget what number it was, three? And he said, You put it in your mouth, and it's like an explosion.

[2:08] It's like a nuclear bomb. So I made sure that I avoided that particular one. But thanks to all who helped with that, and praise God for what was raised there.

Just one quick thing that I wanted to mention. I wanted to invite you all out. I'm also going to be doing revival services this week at the DuPont Church of the Brethren, starting this evening and going through Wednesday night.

And that's going to be each night at 7 o'clock. So feel free to come on over, and we're just going to have a good time praising God together and sharing together. So I just wanted to make sure I invited you to that, and I hope to see some of you over.

Is there any announcements I'm missing? Anybody got anything? Will you please stand and join me in a word of prayer before we greet each other? Dear only Father, again, we come to you and we thank you for this beautiful day.

We thank you for the harvest this fall and everything that you've done for us. We ask that you be with us today and be with Pastor Cressy to bring that message to us. That we hear that message and take it out of others. And that we be the water and feed your sheep and show those people.

[3:15] We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Ready to? Amen. Somebody's like, ready to what?

We just sang about it. Fly away. You know, it's something we can sing about and talk about, but I hope we have in the back of our minds that it's a reality.

It's going to happen. Christ is going to return. And we're going to talk about that more later in our service this morning. But we need to be anxiously waiting for that. I'm looking forward to it. But while we are spending our time here on this earth, we can also praise God that we have a God we can go to.

When we have concerns in our lives, when we have trials and difficulties, we have a God who's ready to help us. To give us strength and to get us through those times. And that's part of the reason that we take some time to share our prayer requests and concerns so we can pray for one another.

So this morning, what concerns and what requests are on your heart? Pat? Praise God that surgery on the left eye went well.

[4:20] And now we're praying the surgery on the right eye goes just as well. So prayer for Pat if she has cataract surgery again this week. Fanny? Spoken prayer requests this morning. Again, praise God.

He knows exactly what these are. Carol? Remember Carol and Lee as they'll be traveling this week. And also, I want to be praying for all the victims in the Philippines of the storm that went through there.

I know I'd read reports as many as a thousand or better dead. And I just really need to be praying for them. Just for strength and for God to meet the needs that are there.

Shirley? Hospital now? Shirley? Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. I want to remember Shirley as she'll be traveling.

Also Shane who has a stomach infection. And Zane and Liam for just continued healing and health. Any others this morning? Celia?

[5:21] Okay. I'll pray for Scott as he'll have a surgery coming up. Edgar? Okay. I'll pray for churches just as they minister that people be brought close to Jesus.

Chris? Ant? Sherry. Okay. I'll remember Sherry and Doug with cancer. And Chris's dad as he has a liver biopsy done.

So I'll keep them. Mary? Okay. I'll remember some friends that have lost loved ones. And for trials that they're going through. I'll remember Joyce who had knee surgery and is recovering.

And some more unspoken. Alexis? Alexis? Becky's birthday coming up on Tuesday. Becky is always so wonderful in helping me when we have to sing happy birthday to others.

I think we need to sing happy birthday to Becky this morning. Okay. I want to remember Jan's. What's that? Oh, and today's Jan's birthday as well.

[6:27] All right. I want to remember Jan's son, Matthew, was shot this week and just needs prayer for healing. And he is doing much better than he was, but certainly still continues to need a lot of prayer.

So I want to remember him this morning. Carolyn? Ralph, who had a stroke. Item A for health. Remember Bud's brother, Dick, who's in the hospital and just for health.

Tammy? He's sick and continued prayer for Hannah. We were there to see her yesterday and she's doing better and her leg is healing up. But she still needs prayer just for any pain that's still there.

And as she tries to get back in the swing of things, just be praying for her. Mark? Pray for Mark and Donna as they'll be traveling this week and going down on Thursday to Columbus to see the doctors again.

And we'll just be praying for safe travel and good reports. Any others? Celia? Praying for Alyssa, whose parents got a divorce and just for decisions that need made there that are difficult.

[7:37] All right. Let's bow our heads then as we go to the Lord in prayer and take these requests to him. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we just come to you right now and we just thank you that you are the God that you are.

That you're a God that is above all. That you're a God that is over all. That you're a God that knows the past, the present, and the future. And that you're a God that holds all things in the palm of your hand.

And Lord, we just want to come to you right now and bring these requests to you knowing that you're a God that can. A God that can do all things. And Lord, knowing that you're also a God who has all the answers.

So often in life, Lord, we come on situations that we don't know all the answers. We don't know all the right decisions or the steps that we should take. But we thank you that we serve a God who does. So Lord, this morning, we just want to bring all these requests to you.

Lord, I pray for Pat. And Lord, I thank you that the cataract surgery on her left eye went well this week. And just pray as she has her other eye done. That it would go just as well and just as smoothly. And Lord, just give her the good sight that she needs.

[8:42] Lord, I pray that you would be with all the victims in the Philippines. Of the storm that went through and just all the devastating loss of life that was there. And Lord, as people try to recover and put lives back together.

And as many, I'm certain, are still waiting on news of whether their loved ones are still alive. Lord, we just pray that you would work there and just give strength where it's needed. And Lord, I pray that they would look to you.

Lord, just work there and meet needs. Lord, this morning, we pray that you'd be with those that are traveling. And just be with Carol and Lee and be with Shirley and be with Marv and Donna. And Lord, as they travel this week, just watch over them and give them safety.

And Lord, for Marv, as he has tests done and sees his doctors. And Lord, we just pray that all is well. We thank you for the tremendous healing that you've given Marv. And just pray that you continue to give him the health that he needs.

I pray that you'd also give health to Zane and Liam as they're recovering from being sick. And be with Shane who has a stomach infection. Lord, just give them all health. Be with Scott who has surgery coming up.

[9:46] Be with Chris's dad who has the liver biopsy coming up. And Lord, with Doug and Sherry who were mentioned that have cancer. Continue to be with April's dad.

Stand and watch over him, Lord. And again, Lord, you're a God that can heal all things. Doctors can do great things. But Lord, nothing compared to your power and your work.

Lord, we pray that you'd be with Joyce who was mentioned that is recovering from knee surgery. Give her strength in her knee. Lord, as Mary mentioned friends that have lost loved ones and just going through trials.

Lord, we pray that you'd give strength there. Lord, we pray that you'd be with Jan's son. And Lord, as he recovers and heals, we thank you for the recovery that's happened there already. And just pray that that would continue.

Take away any fever that's there. Just help his body to heal and to mend. I pray that you'd be with Ralph who had the stroke. And Lord, just give his body strength. Be with Dick, Bud's brother.

[10:43] He's in the hospital and just needs your touch, Lord. I pray that you'd be with Hannah as her knee continues to heal. Just be with her. And Lord, help her to get back into her routine and back in the swing of things.

I pray that you'd be with Aviva as she's sick. Lord, just restore her health. Lord, as Celia mentioned this morning, I pray that you'd be with Alyssa. And as her parents are getting a divorce and just difficult decisions that need made, Lord, just give her wisdom and take care of her.

And Lord, you know that there are many unspokens that were mentioned this morning. And you know each and every need. You know people, you know hearts, you know situations that are involved. And we just pray, Lord, that your will would be done in each one of those.

And not just in the unspoken prayer requests, but in all the prayer requests this morning. Lord, we always have notions and ideas of things we'd like to see happen, of ways we'd like to see it come out.

But Lord, we just pray that your will would be done because we know that's best. Help us to have faith in that and trust in that. Be with the continuing prayer requests that are on our list and more than any that I've forgotten or missed this morning.

[11:45] We just put them in your hands. And again, we thank you for being the God that you are. We leave these with you in the hands of a loving and faithful God. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ.

In all God's people's sake. Amen. Keep praying for these. There is power in prayer. I know that we talk about that quite often. And it's sometimes very exciting to go back and look at lists of prayer requests and see later the way that God works, the way that God answers those.

So be praying. And we need to pray together as a family for all these requests. Junior? Absolutely. Let's go back to the Lord in prayer.

Just thank him for all those that have served and given their lives for our nation. Thank you, Junior. Let's bow our heads. Again, Lord, we come to you. And, Lord, so many things we have to thank you for that it's hard even to begin.

But, Lord, we do thank you for this nation, for this country that we live in. And, Lord, although we can look around and see so many things to find fault with, we thank you for the freedoms that we do have. We thank you for the freedoms that have been fought for and the freedoms we have just to come together and worship you in your house in the way that we know you, that pleases you.

[13:00] So we thank you for that. And we thank you for those that have given their lives, that have given their strength towards that purpose. Lord, for those in the military that have died serving our nation, Lord, we just thank you for them.

We pray that you would be with their families and give them strength as well. And we thank you for all of our veterans, Lord. And in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Thank you for that, Junior.

Thank you very much. All right. Oh. Please stand. One shared joy is double joy. And that's what we get to do right now.

We share our joys, share our praises to God. I know he always is tickled and blessed by this time that we have in our service. And I personally am, too.

I don't know about you, but when I hear the praises of others, it blesses my heart. But it's truly, truly a joy to hear what God is doing and how he's blessing others.

[14:01] So what do we have to give God the praise for? Donna, those that have served in the service, stand please. And we do have a lot to be grateful for, for our freedoms.

Doug? That's neat, yes. Yes. What other praises do we have? Ray? We're what, five years old then? That's awesome.

That's awesome to be able to see family. Thank you, Danny and Mary, for hosting our festival there. That was wonderful.

Mary? It was beautiful. A little windy, but it wasn't bad. Yes. Yes. Yes. We praise God for that. And I know last week I mentioned and thanked you all for coming to the Chili Supper, but really I appreciate those that just stepped up without even being asked to help set up, to help serve the chili, to clean up.

[15:20] It just amazes me. You don't even have to ask people when they're willing to serve. That's a blessing, a real blessing. What other praises do we have?

Mary? The glory goes to God, because believe me, I can't draw, so... To have something turn out halfway decent, it's a God thing.

But thank you. It's fun. It's a lot of fun. Tim? Good. Amen.

Yeah. You're an awesome God. And I just pray that we'll not take for granted all the blessings that you pour upon us.

It's so easy, so easy that we forget and we take for granted every breath. Our jobs, our homes, the little luxuries that we enjoy.

[16:23] It all comes from you, and I just pray that we'll remain humble and remain grateful and give you the praise. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. All right, if you have your Bibles, take them. Turn to Revelation. Chapter 1 is where we're going to at least be starting this morning.

And actually, get your Bibles out and get them ready, because there are several different places we're going to look at this morning, several different scriptures. So follow along. You know, it's God's Word. We need to be in it, and we need to know it, and we need to be using it.

So if you didn't bring a Bible with you this morning, you should be able to find one underneath a chair in front of you or nearby you or somewhere around. So take it and get it out and follow along.

And again, if you don't have a Bible at home, put your name in it and keep it. Revelation chapter 1 is where we're going to begin. I'm going to share the first three verses of Revelation chapter 1.

[17:20] This is what God's Word shares. Revelation chapter 1 is where we're going to read.

For the time is at hand. Let's bow our heads for prayer. Heavenly Father, again, as we come to you this morning, I just thank you so very much for this morning that you've given us. And Lord, I pray that you would just remind us that every one of us are here for a reason.

That we're not here by accident, but Lord, we have an appointment with you. That Lord, you have a message that you want us to hear, that you want to go into our minds and sink into our hearts. And Lord, a message that you expect will impact the way that we live and the way that we think.

And so, Lord, I pray that your Word would do just that. That it would accomplish what you want it to. And Lord, I pray this morning that we'd be attentive. Lord, I know that there are so many activities that we have going on in our lives.

So many things that we're involved in. And places to be and to go and people to see. And Lord, help us to set all that aside for the next few moments. And just to focus on your Word and what you have for us.

[18:44] And we ask and pray this in Christ's name. Amen. What's the most important thing on your schedule right now? Think about that just for a minute.

I mean, we all have schedules, right? And it's something often that we live by from day to day. We have to look at our schedules and see what's on it. What things we have to get done. What places we have to be. And where we have to go.

And sometimes we need reminded. What things in that schedule are the most important, don't we? Because sometimes we have to make some choices even between activities. And have to decide what's important in our lives.

And when we come to church, I hope we also understand that. That we need to remember what's important right now. What is the most important thing on my schedule right at this minute? And I want you to know the answer to that is this.

This is the answer to that. God's word is the most important thing on our schedule right now, isn't it? Isn't it?

[19:44] Because God has a message that He wants us to hear and to understand. A message for you and for me. For everybody that's in here. The message is for us. And the other question that I have for you this morning.

Are you ready? You don't even know for what yet. And you're answering yes. I like that. Are you ready?

How often do you hear that question asked? If your house is anything like our house, that question is asked numerous times every day.

Especially on Sunday mornings. Is your house like ours? Every day of the week, that question is asked many, many times. Usually with a little frustration behind it.

Truth be told. That's probably true for many of us. The question is asked, are you ready? And then maybe a little time will go by. Are you ready?

[20:48] And then a little more time goes by. Are you about ready? We're crying out loud. We need to go. No. And again, the frustration can kind of build.

But that simple question, are you ready? Is what I want us to think about a little bit this morning. Because as Christians, that's a question that should be in our minds all the time, shouldn't it?

All the time. You know, these scriptures that we just read. These three verses, and we're going to look at several others. Tell us something that we need to be aware of on a daily basis.

That we need to be ready. Because there is something coming. Something that's going to be here before we know it. I mean, already, if you're out and about, if you go and do any shopping at all, what do you see already?

Christmas stuff. Already. I don't even start thinking about it until after Thanksgiving. But you see it all over. And you know in the back of your mind that Christmas right now seems quite a ways off, doesn't it?

[21:50] At least, I think it seems like quite a ways off. But before you know it, what's going to happen? It'll be like two days before Christmas, and you'll be thinking, Well, I better start my shopping.

Because we know time goes fast. And even though something seems like it's so far away right now, it'll be here before we know it. We need to take that thought and apply it to God's Word.

There's so many things it talks about. We need to realize they're going to be here before we know it. We need to realize that they're just around the corner. Look at these verses that we read. And a couple things I want you to think about in them.

The first verse. The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servant things which must, what's that word, at least in the King James? Shortly come to pass.

That word that's in there makes a difference. Shortly come to pass. I mean, that means it's going to happen soon, doesn't it? And I know we can think of that and think, Well, that was written a couple thousand years ago, and it hasn't happened yet.

[22:54] Do you believe God's Word? Does it say shortly? Then you better believe it. And it doesn't just say that. Read on. Shortly come to pass.

And then look down in verse 3. Blessed is he that read it, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is near or at hand.

I mean, it's all saying the same thing. We're on the verge of it. Isn't that what that means? The time is at hand. It's almost here. It's near. It's right around the corner.

And what is it that it's talking about that's right around the corner? Christ's return. Christ's return.

The question that I started asking you this morning, Are you ready?

This is what I'm talking about. We as believers sometimes need reminded, because we're forgetful. God knows that. So He reminds us over and over again in His Word, that Christ is coming back.

[23:58] And because of that, we need to be ready all the time. And that needs to be a thought that is constantly in our minds. Because often we forget, and we kind of put that thought on the back burner, and live our lives without thinking about it, without realizing that over and over, God is trying to tell us, Folks, be thinking about it.

It's almost here. The time is at hand. It's going to shortly come to pass. You need to be prepared.

You need to be ready. That's what God is trying to tell us over and over and over again in His Word. Just in the New Testament alone. The return of Christ. If you start looking at verses that talk about it, or mention it in one way or another, it's like over 60, 80, I don't know.

It's more than that. Verses you can find that talk about Christ's return. Over 60 or 80 times just in the New Testament. Do you think God wanted us to understand that?

Do you think God wanted us to be thinking about it? I mean, if I want my kids to understand something, I'll tell them once, and do you think I leave it at that? No. I'll tell them over again.

[25:09] If I really want them to understand, do you think I'll leave it at that? I'll continue to tell them. And you know the response I usually get? I know. God is trying to tell us this over and over and over again.

And you know, when my kids say, I know. You know what? I sometimes say, Do you really? Have you really been listening to what I'm telling you? Listen one more time.

And I think that's what God wants to tell us. Are you really listening to what I'm saying? Do you really understand what you're saying I know about? Well, I'm telling you that Jesus Christ is going to come again shortly.

The time is at hand. Are you ready? And that's what He's saying to us over and over and over again. As His children, He's trying to get that point across to us. Are you ready? And folks, as believers, I don't think we talk about it nearly enough.

And even in the nation that we live in, in the world that we live in, so many people will acknowledge that Christ is going to come back again.

[26:15] But then the other question is, Are we living like it? That's the real question. Are we living like He's going to return again? I know I came across some statistics, the Pew Research Center.

This was from 2011, I believe. But just surveying believers, Christians, 27% believe that Christ is definitely going to return before the year 2050.

That's not that far away, is it? It's almost 2014 already. 27% believe He's definitely coming back before that. 20% say probably He's coming back before that.

So 50% of believers think He's either probably or definitely going to come back before that. But are we living like it? You know, I think sometimes we're living like the other percentage.

38% say He's definitely or probably not coming back before 2050. I think sometimes we live more like we're in that group than the other.

[27:16] Because we don't maybe have it on our minds as often as we should. I want to look at a couple other verses that talk about it. Because I really don't think we talk about this enough in church.

We don't remind each other about it enough. That we need to live like Christ is coming back. I want you to look in Matthew, chapter 24. I told you there's several scriptures we're going to look at.

And I really encourage you to follow along. Matthew, chapter 24. I'll give you time to find them.

Matthew 24, beginning in verse 36. Matthew 24, beginning in verse 36.

A couple things we need to realize about Christ's return. But of that day and hour knoweth no man. No, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark. And knew not until the flood came and took them all away.

[28:28] So shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. Those verses, there's not a lot of verses there that we just read, but those tell us an awful lot about Christ's return. You know, the first thing that they tell us is the fact that nobody knows when it's going to happen, do they?

Does Christ know? Does Jesus know? No, only the Father. Only God knows when it's going to be Christ's time. You know, God's in heaven and Christ is with him, and I think God's going to say, all right, it's time, go.

It's time. And as quick as that, it's going to happen. But it says, no man knows the time. But, what it goes on to say after that, it says, But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

For in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. What does that mean? They were eating and drinking, they were being married and giving in marriage. What does that really say?

It means that they were just living their lives, isn't it? They were eating, they were drinking, they were going around with their normal, ordinary lives, their day in and day out lives.

[29:39] And then before they knew it, what happened? It started to rain. Noah had tried to tell them. He tried to tell them, You need to be ready, this is going to happen.

What do you think was on their mind as they heard that? Yeah, you're nuts. It's not really going to happen. Do you think a lot of people in our world today believe that about Christ's second return? I think it's very similar to what the days of Noah were. I think that there are many in the world that we live in think that we're absolutely nuts for thinking that Jesus Christ is going to come back. I think a good significant part of the population we live in thinks that that's a little crazy.

That's a little nutso. But it's going to happen, isn't it? The reality is they thought Noah was a nut, a kook. But it started to rain, didn't it?

And a flood came. And the majority, the vast majority, were not ready. And perished. They died. Folks, it says that's how the coming of Christ is going to be.

[30:47] People are just going to be living their day-to-day, ordinary, everyday lives. And we as Christians need to make sure we don't get so wrapped up in that that we're not ready. I mean, I know we have things to do on a daily basis.

You've got to go to work. You've got to get a paycheck. You've got to take care of your kids. You've got to go to this activity and that. And all that's good and fine, as long as in doing that, you don't forget about the fact that Christ is going to return.

That can happen at any time. Look in 1 Timothy. Now, let's go to 2 Peter. Go to 2 Peter instead. Sorry.

2 Peter chapter 3. 2 Peter chapter 3. Verses 8 through 10. One of my favorite scriptures, although I shouldn't say that because I find myself saying that a lot.

I like them all. 2 Peter chapter 3, beginning in verse 8. Listen to what it says. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

[31:57] The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth also, and all the works therein, shall be burned up.

It's going to come as a thief in the night, is what it says. But it also says, His second return is a promise, isn't it? Look in verse 9. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness.

It's been promised that Christ is coming back. Does God follow through on His promises? We talked about that, was it last Sunday or two Sundays ago? How important it is for us to keep our promises, for us to keep our word, because our God is faithful, and He always keeps His word, doesn't He?

Always. If God says it, it will happen. God has said that Christ is coming back, hasn't He? What does that mean? It means it will happen.

[33:05] Period. It will. It's just a matter of time. It's just a matter of when. And many people say, well, it's been a couple thousand years, so maybe you just forgot about it.

It's not really going to happen. It says the Lord is not slack concerning His promise. Why hasn't He come back yet? It's not time yet. And also, because He's a patient God.

Also, because He's a loving God. God is not slack concerning His promises, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

You know one of the reasons He hasn't come back yet? Because He's hoping more people will accept His Son, Jesus Christ, first. His desire is for more people to become Christians so they won't be lost when Christ does return.

It's out of His love is one of the reasons He has not come back yet. But folks, there will come a time when He says, it's time. There will come a day when He says, now is the appointed time.

[34:12] When could it be? When? Any time, couldn't it? And I know, some people say, well, people have thought that for ages.

Yeah, they have. You know, the only thing that tells me? We're closer to it now than we were then, aren't we? We're closer to it today than what we were yesterday. And we need to understand that it can happen at any time.

It could be two minutes from now. It could be later this afternoon. It could be 200 years from now. I don't know. That's up to God, not me. But what I do know is, it's going to happen.

And we need to, again, be what? Ready. All the time, don't we? It's going to come back, it says, as a thief in the night.

So what do we do? What do we do in this time while we're waiting? I want you to look in Mark, chapter 13. There's some things God's Word talks about that we need to make sure that is a part of our lives as we wait and as we prepare.

[35:29] Mark, chapter 13. Mark 13, beginning in verse 33.

Mark 13, 33 says this, Take ye heed, watch and pray, for you know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning, lest coming suddenly he finds you sleeping.

And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch. Watch. What's that mean? Be ready.

It means be alert. It means have it on your mind that it could happen any time. That it needs to be a part of our thought process as we go through our day-to-day lives.

[36:45] That it needs to be, even as we do our other activities, we need to have in the back of our mind that Christ is coming back and I need to be ready. It's kind of like, if you're at work and you know you have a deadline for something that has to be done.

You may be doing other things, but you still have that in the back of your mind, don't you? That's always there. Always kind of, in computer terms, it's always running in the background. I use the computer term.

That doesn't happen very often. But in our minds, that should be how it is. That should always be running in the background of our minds that Christ is coming back. So at all times, I need to be ready for that.

And anticipating that. The other example we could use. You know, when a couple is ready to have a baby.

When they're at about, what, eight and a half months, what do you start to do? Pack a bag? Get ready?

[37:49] I mean, what would happen if all of a sudden the woman says, it's time? And the guy says, oh, well, maybe I should start thinking about getting some things around for that. Let me go get some gas in the car.

I'll be back after a while. What would you think of that? Or if they said, oh, yeah, maybe I should have gotten the car checked out. It hasn't been wanting to start lately.

Would you do those things ahead of time? Why? Why? So that you would be ready. So that you'd be prepared. So that everything is in order.

So when that time comes, you're good to go. You're ready. And anybody that wouldn't do those things, what would you call them? Or what would you think of them?

I'm not saying call them names, but what would you think of them? I'm really not trying to encourage you to call people names, but what would you think of them? Irresponsible is probably a good word, isn't it?

[38:53] Lazy, maybe even a little foolish. To not prepare. When you know it's coming. And as the time goes by, you know that every day that goes by, that likelihood increases, doesn't it?

Folks, the same thing is true for us. Every day that goes by, that likelihood increases, doesn't it? And if Christ isn't coming back, until then, we're going to die.

One of the two is going to happen. And every day that we live, that likelihood increases, doesn't it? I have to tell you, you're not getting any younger. Or any of us. We need to be prepared.

We need to be ready. At any moment. Watch. Watch. That's our first responsibility. Watch. Be prepared.

Because we don't know when the time's going to be, but when it is, we need to be ready. Look in Philippians. Just a few more verses to look at. Look in Philippians. Galatians, Ephesians, and then Philippians.

[39:57] Look in Philippians. Chapter 3. Chapter 3. Philippians 3. Philippians 3.

Verse 20. For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I also want to read that to you out of the NIV. It says this. But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first thing we need to do is watch. The second thing we need to do is eagerly await it. Are we doing that? Are we eagerly awaiting Jesus Christ's return?

Think about that for a minute. Eagerly awaiting. When something is coming that you know of, that you're really excited about, are you eager about it? What do you do then?

[41:05] If you're really eager about something, what do you do? Get excited? Talk about it? If I told you that all of us were going to, I don't know, what's the best place you can think of other than heaven?

Hawaii? The Caribbean? I don't know, take your pick. If I told you I was going to foot the bill, we're all going next week. Pack your bags.

Would you be excited about it? I mean, if you could get off work and arrange it and all those kind of things, would you be excited? Free trip. Who wouldn't be, right? Would you talk about it?

As it got closer and closer, would the anticipation build? I know for a minute, I'd love to go on vacation. For me, it would. I'd start talking to Tammy, and oh, we've got to get everything ready. Get the snorkel out, dear. We're going. And get the flip-flops out, and the beach towels, and make sure you pack the sunscreen. And I think every day, I would come up with new things that I was anticipating and looking forward to about it.

[42:12] And as it got closer and closer, Tammy knows I wouldn't shut up about it, would I? That would be the topic of my conversation, primarily, in the days leading up to it.

Because it might even be a year away, and that would be the topic of my conversation quite often. It would always be there. In the back of my mind, like we talked about earlier, but as it got closer and closer, I would just keep talking about it.

And not to brag to other people, but I'd probably tell them about it too. Guess where I'm going? And I'm footing the bill, I'm paying for everybody, so I might even tell them, do you want to go?

Folks, that's how it should be as we think about Christ's return. I mean, that should be something that we're eager about. And I know sometimes, in the back of our minds, we think, well, I'm not really ready to leave here.

There are things that I want to do yet, things I want to accomplish yet. Folks, we need to get it in our minds that the things that we're involved with here, and the things we think we want to accomplish here, are nothing compared to what waits for us.

[43:14] They're going to just fade into the background when we see what God has prepared for us. Do we understand that? That, folks, should make us so eager for what God has for us.

We should be anticipating it so much that we're talking to each other about it. I mean, God talked about it 60-some or better times in the New Testament. He wanted to talk about it. Do we talk about it in our conversation with each other?

It should be a part of our conversation. We should be eager about it. Like a package in the mail, you know you're getting something good in the mail? Do you check the mail every day?

Do you ask your spouse, whoever lives in your house, did you get the mail today? Was it here?

That's eagerly waiting for something. That's how it should be with us in Christ's return. Look in Hebrews.

So we need to watch. We need to eagerly await. Look in 1 Thessalonians. What? Did I say both?

[44:16] We're going to look at both, so let's go to 1 Thessalonians first. Maybe I'm just getting so excited about it, I'm getting all out of order here.

1 Thessalonians chapter 4, and then we'll be in Hebrews after that. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, beginning in verse 15. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, beginning in verse 15, says this, For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore, comfort one another with these words. Let's stop there. Comfort one another with these words. Again, the NIV, the word's a little bit different.

It says, Encourage one another with these words. Comfort. Encourage. You know, as we're waiting for Christ's return, it says to encourage one another with these words.

[45:35] To comfort one another with these words. Are we doing that? Think about that. What does it mean to encourage one another with these words? It means to talk about it. It means to share it with each other.

To encourage one another as we think about where we're going to be together. What songs did we sing this morning? I'll Fly Away.

What did we sing before that? When We All Get to Heaven. I didn't pick the songs, by the way, either.

You know, God knows and puts things together, doesn't he? I never talk to Becky or Hope or Amy or anybody that picks the songs. I never talk to them about what the sermon's going to be because

a lot of times I don't even know too far ahead of time.

But I never talk with them. But God puts it together, doesn't he? When we all get to heaven, we need to encourage each other about that. I can't wait until I get there.

[46:34] I can't wait until we're there together. I can't wait until we're all there together. Comfort one another and encourage one another. You know, even when we're going through times of trial and difficulty, and those times happen, don't they?

Don't they? Is this important? Yes. Vitally. Because we need to be encouraging one another with this. Encouraging one another that even in our darkest times, even in the times that are the most trial and the most difficult, we can encourage each other with these words to say, guess what? It's not going to last forever. No matter how dark it seems, no matter how bad it is, this is the future that God has for all of us together. There will come a time today when we're spending eternity in heaven together.

And all these trials and all these difficulties is just going to be a thing in the past. I don't think we'll even remember it. We'll be gone. That's what God has waiting for us. That's what we need to encourage one another with.

Now turn to Hebrews chapter 10. I told you I'd get there. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 25. It talks about the same thing.

[47:44] Look what it says. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting or encouraging one another. And so much the more as ye see the day approaching.

What day approaching is it talking about? Christ's return. And what does it tell us to do in the meantime? Be ready? Encourage one another.

So much the more as ye see the day approaching. The closer it gets, the more we should be encouraging one another. Folks, that should be part of our day-to-day lives. Encouraging one another and reminding each other what's going to be happening.

It's part of our responsibility. To watch, to eagerly await, and to encourage one another. To do all those things, I think we need reminded of this stuff.

And we need to be reminding each other of this stuff. Folks, Christ is coming back. Hear that again. Christ is coming back.

[48:47] Do you know what's not going to matter when He comes back? I want you to take just a minute and think in your life, what things really won't matter when Christ comes back? Just think for a minute.

What things do you get so concerned about in life when the reality is when Christ comes back, it's not going to matter? There's a lot, isn't there? That really, in the grand scheme of things, don't matter.

Now think about what will. Your relationship with Him. Other people that you've shared Jesus Christ with. Your spiritual life.

Isn't that what will truly matter in the end? Isn't it? So which do you think we should be more concerned about? Which truly do you think we should be more concerned about?

You know, as I think about that question, I need reminding you of that sometimes. I can get pretty caught up with a lot of things that in the end, they're not going to make any difference.

[49:55] And I can sometimes forget about the things that in the end are going to make all the difference. Folks, in the back of our minds should always be the reality. Christ is coming back.

That's really the most important thing in life, is to be ready for that. You can be the most successful person in the world. Have all the success you want at your job, at your family, with any of that stuff. And that's all good. But if you're not ready, it's all for nothing. Nothing is more important than this, folks.

Nothing. He's coming back. You and I need to be ready, to be watching, to be eager about it, to be encouraging one another. And I want to close with one more scripture.

This is the last one we're going to look at. Revelation chapter 22. The end of the Bible. We started with the beginning of Revelation.

[50:56] We're going to end with the end of it. Revelation 22, verses 20 and 21. It says this, Who's saying that?

Jesus. Surely I come quickly. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Christ said, I come quickly. What does John say in response? Come. I'm ready. Come. Now it'd be good.

Now it'd be good. Folks, I hope for every one of us that we can say the same thing he did. That as we realize he is coming back, that we say, come, I'm ready. I'm looking forward to it.

I hope that we can say that with all of our hearts today. And know that he has things prepared for us that are far beyond what we can even begin to imagine. Tells us that in his word.

[52:08] More than what we can even begin to think. Folks, remind yourselves and remind each other he is coming back. Let's be ready. Let's get as many people ready as we can.

And not let that thought slide from our minds as we get involved in the busyness of our lives. But to have it always there in our minds that he's coming back. Let's bow our heads. Heavenly Father, I just thank you for your word this morning.

Lord, you make promises and you confirm those promises over and over again. And Lord, as we look at your word over and over again, you tell us that Jesus Christ is coming back.

It's not a matter of if. It's only a matter of when. And Lord, I pray as believers that you would help us to remember that. That we would be watching and ready.

That being more than just ready, that we would be eager about it. Anticipating it. And Lord, that we would be encouraging one another by talking about it.

[53:10] By talking with others about it. Lord, Lord, I pray that we would be able to say, like it says here at the end of Revelations, come, Lord Jesus. I'm ready. Lord, just help us to live like we know that.

Lord, I know it's so easy to forget. It's so easy to get caught up in the busyness of life and kind of let that thought slide. But I pray, Lord, this morning that you just bring it to the front of our mind and help it not to fade away.

Lord, if there are other things we know that have taken priority in our lives and we've forgotten that, Lord, help us to get those things straightened out. And help us to focus on you and your promise of Christ for coming.

And we ask and pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. As we close this morning, the altar is open. If you have any need, come and pray about it. He's ready to meet you here and talk with you. If you have a need, come and pray. Oh. Please stand. We're going to sing seven. Let's bow our heads. Close our eyes this morning. And as we close, I just want you to think about the fact that we will behold Him.

[54:20] I pray that when we behold Him, we're ready. This morning, if you know that there may be things in your heart that aren't right with Him, make sure it's right. Make sure your life spiritually is right with Jesus Christ, that He's forgiven your sin.

And when we know that, we can know we are ready. And we can eagerly look forward to it. I'm just going to encourage you to take a minute and talk with the Lord.

If there are things in your life you need to seek His forgiveness for, do it today. Do it right now.

Spend a minute and talk with the Father. Lord God, we thank you for the many blessings that you bring into our life.

But Lord, most of all, we thank you for your word and for the promises that it contains. And Lord, as we think this morning about the fact that Jesus Christ will return, Lord, I pray that we're ready. I pray that our hearts have been made right through the blood of Jesus Christ.

We've had His forgiveness in our lives so that we know when you return that we're ready. And Lord, I pray that because of that that we would eagerly look forward to it, that we'd be talking about it.

[55:49] And Lord, I just pray that you'd help that thought to be in our mind not just on Sunday mornings when we come to church but each and every day of our lives, each and every moment of our lives. Help us to know that you are coming back.

Thank you for that promise and for the hope that it brings to our lives. And we ask and pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. Are you ready?

Pray that you are. Have a wonderful week. God bless you.