

He Is Certainly Coming

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[0:00] This past week, I had an idea for a whole new product line. Now, let me show you what it is. I was driving, and I was behind this SUV, and we're at a stop sign, so I'm looking at this SUV, and in this sticker on the back left bottom of the rear window was this little three kind of line logo that says, Life is Good.

Have you guys seen those? Life is Good, and there's Life is Good t-shirts. And so I'm sitting there at the stop sign. I'm like, is life good?

I know God is good, and I know that this life has moments of goodness, but is life good?

And so that was all I needed to start developing my own product line. So here's my t-shirt. On the front, life is hard.

On the back, come Lord Jesus. On the front, life is hard. We're living in the birth pains.

[1:13] On the back, come Lord Jesus. He's one day closer. When we talk about, or you hear the word, those words, come Lord Jesus, we're talking about the bodily return of Jesus Christ.

The second coming of Jesus. And we're going to be looking at Matthew 24 this morning, where Jesus himself talks about his return, and he talks about himself in the third person as the Son of Man.

Here's what I'm interested in right now. As those words fall upon your ears, come Lord Jesus. How does that strike you?

What's going on inside of your heart right now? When you hear those words, what do they conjure up? Let's just say that Jesus comes back tomorrow.

When he comes back, what will be going on inside of you? Will you be afraid? Afraid because you know you have not been following Jesus?

[2:24] That you know he's made these offers and you've rejected them because you want to live your own way? Will you be afraid? Will you be ashamed?

Because you've professed to be a follower of Jesus, but your profession and your practice are quite at odds. And so if he were to come back tomorrow, you would be like a dog with a tail between your legs saying, I'm glad you're here, but I don't really want to talk about it.

Or maybe you're not afraid or ashamed. You're just disappointed because when Jesus comes back, you start thinking things like, Oh, man, I was going to go on a vacation in three weeks.

Oh, man, I've been saving for decades for my retirement. I've been wanting to travel the world. I'm not married yet. I don't have kids yet. There's a great movie coming out in December.

So the prospect of Jesus coming out is more like disappointed, like his coming back is not going to be the greatest thing that ever happened to you, or for some of us.

[3:38] Or maybe you're just going to be flat out delighted when he comes. You're going to see him coming in the air. It's going to be a panoramic arrival. And you're thinking, finally, you're back.

Finally, you've come for me. You've come for us. He's come to make all wrongs right. Finally, justice prevails.

Finally, this earth under its strain of sin will be released. And we'll be in a new heavens and a new earth. Finally. And your heart will just sing at the moment you see him.

Life is hard. We're living in the birth pains. Come, Lord Jesus. He is nearer than he has ever been.

This morning, I want to impress upon you that we're one day closer. The window's not getting longer. It's not getting wider. It's getting smaller. We're one day closer.

[4:48] We're going to learn next week that the Father has set a date on his calendar. He's used permanent marker on it. The day is set when Jesus comes back. Only he knows it.

And we're one day closer. In light of that, we've got to recognize the fact that life is hard. And we're in this moment where our hearts cry, must be, come, Lord Jesus.

And so here's how we're going to proceed this morning. We're going to look at Matthew 24. And we're going to take a good chunk of it. I know Billy preached 4 through 14 last week.

And I heard it. He did a great job. I need to come back to that a little bit just to kind of frame some things that I need to cover this morning. So life is hard. We're going to look at that in verses 4 through 28.

I'm going to breeze through that. And then we're going to look at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in verses 29 through 35. And then what I want to do is help you think through what this means for us today.

[5:49] So if your Bibles aren't already open, would you open up your Bibles to Matthew chapter 24. And I'm just going to read through Matthew 24, 4 through 28.

And Jesus answered, see that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name saying, I am the Christ. And they will lead many astray.

And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you're not alarmed. For this must take place. But the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation.

And kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. Does that sound familiar? All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death. And you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

[6:52] And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations.

And then the end will come. So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel. Standing in the holy place. Let the reader understand.

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house. And let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.

And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days. Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation.

Such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now. No and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

[8:01] Then if anyone says to you look here's the Christ or there he is. Do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders.

So as to lead astray if possible even the elect. See I have told you beforehand. So if they say to you look he's in the wilderness. Do not go.

Do not go out. If they say look he's in the inner rooms. Do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west. So will be the coming of the son of man.

Wherever the corpse is. There the vultures will gather. In verse 8. Jesus talks about these hardships that we will all experience as birth pains.

All these things are but the beginning of the birth pains. Life is hard. He kind of explains what some of these birth pains are.

[9:03] He talks about the international birth pains. He describes it as wars and rumors of wars. North Korea barking.

America barking back. There's been a missile launch into Saudi Arabia. We're hearing about threats from this country to the next country. We're living in it.

And then there are not just wars and rumors of wars. Nations rising above nations and kingdoms against kingdoms. But we are experiencing today all sorts of natural birth pains.

Natural disasters. Jesus identifies too. He talks about there being famines and earthquakes in verse 7.

But he's not being exhaustive there. It includes hurricanes. Has it occurred to anybody that Harvey and Irma, do you know what they are?

[10:05] Birth pains. It's part of it. We're living through it. I don't know where you come down on global warming. I don't know where you're at on terms of what's the cause of it.

But I think it's safe to say it's part of the birth pains. This is the first time. It's the first time. It's the first time. These international and natural birth pains are something that we will all go through together with everybody else.

So Christians are not exempt from kind of hearing wars and rumors of wars and wondering what's going to happen. We're not exempt of going through natural disasters. But we see another kind of birth pain too.

And that's uniquely for Christians. Verse 9, then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death. And you will be hated by all nations for my namesake.

So the world is going to experience hardships. They're going to experience pain. We're going to experience that with them. And on top of that, we're going to have another kind of pain. We're going to be hated for Jesus' sake.

[11:16] Jesus calls these birth pains. Lindsay was up front this morning.

I'm not sure if you noticed. We actually talked this week about what's the backup plan. If her water breaks, what do we do? If we're in the first song and her water breaks, what do we do?

Well, we didn't have anything brilliant. Lindsay is within days of giving birth.

And we're all looking forward to the arrival of Kingston. But we all know that Lindsay has some hard work in front of her.

In order to deliver this baby, she's going to go through some pain. Birth pains. Birth pains.

Contractions. The pain of delivery. Jesus uses those words, birth pains, to describe the hardship that we are encountering for a reason.

[12:22] Birth pains are not random pains. Birth pains are purposed pains. Moms endure birth pains in order to deliver a baby.

And then joy takes over. Do you know why Jesus chooses the words, birth pains, to describe the hardships that we're all going through? Because history is pregnant.

History is expecting. All of these things are moving towards a birth of sorts. Jesus is likening his second coming to a birth on historic proportions.

And so we endure these hardships like Lindsay will endure the hardships to come for this one to come.

These are birth pains. And what Jesus is making clear throughout this section is that these birth pains are going to be normal between his first coming and his second coming.

[13:31] It will lead all the way up to his second coming. We're going to go through them together. We are going through them together.

What Jesus spoke of is happening. And we're in the middle of it. Now Jesus speaks about these general birth pains in chapter 24, 4 through 14.

And he comes back to it in 22 through 28. But there's this section that's very interesting in verses 15 through 21. Would you notice this?

Jesus starts by saying, so when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place, let the reader understand.

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. So these kind of large scale events that we'll all be experiencing in terms of nation against nation, kingdom rising against kingdom, natural disasters, suffering for Jesus' sakes.

[14:35] That's normative. That's going to be the norm all the way up to Jesus coming back. But what Jesus starts talking about here in verse 15 is a very acute and specific birth pain.

He's got something very specific in mind. He quotes Daniel. So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, the abomination of desolation, that phrase is repeated four times in the book of Daniel.

[20:12] And we can learn from it that Jesus is true to his words. But what I want to now show you is what happens in this passage after this specific event.

Would you read with me, starting in verse 22? And if those days had not been cut short, I believe those days are talking about these general times of persecution. If those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved.

But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short. Everybody benefits because God cut short these hard days for the sake of his elect.

Those who are truly followers of Jesus. And then he says in verse 22, and if those days had not been cut short, no human being, I just read that. Verse 23, then if anyone says to you, look, here's the Christ, or there he is.

Do not believe it. For false Christ and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders. Now look up at verses 4 and 5. Jesus says, see that no one leads you astray.

[21:18] For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ. And they will lead many astray. Look at verse 11. And many false prophets will rise and lead many astray. Here's the deal. What happens to you when things get hard for you?

Things get tough, what do you start doing? Here's what I start doing. I start looking. I start looking for things like, how long is this going to last? I want to set my heart on something outside of this situation to deliver me.

I want, I'm craving something that will help me through this hard time. Do you know what happens when hardship comes on this scale?

These birth pains? Do you know what people start doing? They start wanting hope. They start looking for things. They start looking for a deliverer.

They like, start looking for something that's going to help them in their pain. And we've got all sorts of peddlers of hope around us.

[22:25] False prophets. False Christs. Peddling a false hope that doesn't help. It leads to destruction. This time of birth pains gets exploited by the devil.

The devil knows that people are going to be longing for something in the midst of hardship. Life is hard. And so he puts out false teachers all over the place.

And if you notice the wording very carefully, these false prophets and false teachers, they point to a present hope. Notice. In verse 24.

Excuse me, 23. Look, there is the Christ. There he is. Verse 26. So if they say to you, look, he is in the wilderness.

Do not go out. If they say, look, he is in the inner rooms. The classic mistake, one of the smells that gives off of a false prophet or a false Christ is, hey, deliverance has come right now.

[23:40] And what Jesus is going to call us to is a deliverance that is coming. A future hope. When people suffer, they want to futurize their faith.

They want to trust in something that's down the line that they can set their hearts on that they know will make things better for them. The devil exploits it.

God uses it. God uses it to expose people's need for the one true hope. Jesus.

The living hope. He's alive. And he will come back. So when we look at these birth pains, what we need to realize is that we're all going to go through them together.

We're living in them now. And as Christians, we're going to experience a unique kind of birth pain because we're going to suffer for the name of Jesus. We learn something from the sacking of Jerusalem that Jesus is faithful to his words.

[24:55] And so when we ask ourselves and experience hardship and we start craving hope, we start telling each other, life is hard.

Come, Lord Jesus. So let's look at the coming of the Lord Jesus. In verses 29 through 35, we have that spelled out.

I'm going to reach back into verse 27 because there's something in verse 27 and 28 that's significant. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, as will be the coming of the Son of Man, wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

Very interesting proverb. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, specifically the birth pains that we're all in right now. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man. And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

[26:11] And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other from the fig tree. Learn its lesson.

As soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near.

At the very gates, truly I say to you, this generation, this generation of disciples he's speaking to will not pass away until all these things, all these things take place.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Heaven and earth will pass away.

First in verses 27 and 28, Jesus is responding to these false teachers that talk about, hey, he's here right now. Jesus is saying, you know what, don't believe that.

[27:36] But if you're wondering if you're going to miss the boat, if you're going to miss his coming, Jesus says, no. His coming is panoramic. He says this, for as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

His coming is going to be public. Nobody's going to miss it. It's going to be announced in the sky like lightning that goes from the east to the west. The whole world will know when he comes back. It's a panoramic declaration of his return. And not only is it panoramic, it's powerful. Look at verse 29. The return of Jesus, his coming back, it's going to take place after the tribulation of those days, the days that we're now in.

And look it, the sun will be darkened. The moon will not give its light. The stars will fall from heaven, which means they're darkened. And the powers of the heavens will be shaken. What kind of stuff goes with that?

Do you know what kind of power it takes for that to happen? Think about it this way. Think about a drama, a play. And the lights drop.

[28:50] And then there is the spotlight on the one. When Jesus comes, the lights of creation drop.

And he is the one everyone will see. He shakes the heavens. His return is cosmic.

His return rattles everything. It changes everything. And it's announced with the darkening of creation.

It's a powerful return. And not only is it a powerful return and a panoramic return, he's returning in person. He's not Skyping in.

He's not sending a representative. Jesus himself is coming back in his glory. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man.

[29:57] What's that sign? The actual appearing of the Son of Man. With power and great glory. All throughout the witness of the New Testament.

1 Thessalonians 4. Titus chapter 2. 2 Peter 3. Revelation 19. Declaration after declaration.

When he comes back, he's coming back in person. Bodily. And when he comes back in person, you know what Revelation 19 pictures him as? He's coming back on a war horse.

And he's got four names. Faithful and true. The word of God. A name that nobody else knows.

Because we can't get our minds around him fully. And on his thigh is written, King of kings.

Lord of lords. And when he comes on his war horse, wars, that's going to be right at eye level for you. He's coming back in person.

[30:55] You'll see him. You'll hear him. You'll smell him. You'll feel him. He's coming back.

The birth pains don't last forever. They are leading up to his return. And his coming back is prophetic. Do you see how the son of man, that phrase is used three times?

We see it used in verse 27. For the lightning comes from the east. As the lightning comes from the east, it shines as far as the west. So it will be the coming of the son of man.

30. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the son of man. And they will see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Do you know what Jesus is talking about?

Daniel chapter 7 verses 13 through 14.

When the one like the son of man comes before the ancient of days. And the ancient of days gives this son of man all dominion forever over all things.

[31:58] When he comes back, the kingdom is consummated. He will reign on earth as he does in heaven. There will be, it will be a consistent, faithful, and full reign.

It will be absolutely glorious. And what Jesus is saying here is, hey, I am the one of Daniel 7. And when I come back, it all becomes full.

It consummates everything. And not just that. Not only is it panoramic, powerful, and person, and prophetic. It's provocative.

When he comes back, it provokes a response. Global response. Look at verse 30.

Then will appear in the heaven the sign of the son of man. And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn. Do you remember back in Matthew chapter 24 verse 14?

[33:00] Remember what must happen in order for the end to come. The gospel of the kingdom must be proclaimed to the entire world. And so you know what's going on right here? Jesus comes back.

The world has been made known of him. And so when he comes back in his glory, and those in the world see him, and they start to realize that they were wrong.

They will mourn. They will mourn. They know what it means.

But it's just not those who have not believed and bowed the knee to Jesus who will mourn. There's another group of people, and it's not explicit here, but I'm guessing I know what's going on.

If you look at verse 31, and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call. Do you know on 10.30 a.m. on Saturday mornings, do you know what happens around here? The sirens go.

[34:02] And it goes on. I'm usually writing a sermon at the time. And I'm like, okay, 10.30, all right. Good to know. The trumpet call of the return of Jesus is going to be that on steroids.

The whole earth will hear it. And everyone will know something cataclysmic is happening. And then at the sound of the trumpet, Jesus sends out his angels, and they gather his elect, all of his true followers, from the four winds.

It's a picture of the compass, north, south, east, and west, from all over, all over the world, from one end of heaven to the other, and they're all gathered to him. You know when he comes back, if you're a follower of Jesus, you know what you're going to be doing?

One, rejoicing. You know what's going to be going on in the face of the planet when Jesus comes back? There's going to be mourning, and there's going to be rejoicing.

It's going to be a mixed response, but it's provocative. In verse 32, we see that Jesus says this, his coming, learn the lesson from the fig tree.

[35:16] It's predictable. As soon as its branch becomes tender and puts on its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

One of the ways that we can start to figure out how close Jesus is coming back, we don't know specifically the day or hour. We'll learn that next week. But one of the things is, okay, where are we at in terms of global evangelization?

There's this website called the Joshua Project, and what they're tracking is the number of unreached people groups on the planet, all seven and a half billion people. And right now, it's got us at, there's 42% left unreached.

We're over halfway there. If that's any indicator, we got work to do before Jesus comes back. We got to be on mission.

But it's predictable. We're in the birth pains. The gospel's going forth. We're living in the last days. Welcome to the last days.

[36:25] We're in it together. It's predictable. His coming is pending. When we read here that, so also when you see all these things, you know

that he is near at the very gates.

He's one day closer. The day of his return is fixed by the Father, and we're one day closer.

Tomorrow, if you wake up and he's not back, you're one day closer.

We're one day closer to his return. His panoramic, powerful, in-person, prophetic, provocative, predictable return. And I want you to see now that it's promised.

Verse 35. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. You can bank on what he's saying. He was true about Jerusalem.

He was right about that. He's right about the fact that we are enduring all sorts of wars and rumors of wars. He was right in the fact that we're dealing with all kinds of natural disasters. He's right in the fact that many of his followers are suffering for his name's sake.

[37:33] He's been right. And so when he says, I'm coming back, you can bank on it. You can bank on it. And when he comes back, he's going to make all wrongs right.

He's going to bring judgment with him. Matt Sear's going to preach on the final judgment in a few weeks. But he's also going to bring with him the renewing of the heavens and the earth.

He's going to make all things new for us to dwell with him in his place. The first, the front of the t-shirt, life is hard.

We're in the birth pains, right? Back of the t-shirt, you say it with me. Come, Lord Jesus. Now let's spend a couple minutes on saying, so what does this mean for us today?

How do we respond? Four E's. Expect, engage, endure, encourage.

[38:36] I hope that you are at a point this morning where you're realizing that the return of Jesus is not something that you just agree with doctrinally. I hope you've come to the point where the doctrine of the return of Jesus changes the way you live.

The first E is expect his coming. Are you thinking about Jesus coming? Is his coming on your mind? Are you afraid of his coming?

Are you afraid you're going to mourn when he arrives? You know what you just need to do? You just need to bow to him today. Just repent of your sin, turn to him, confess him as your Lord, and you have nothing to fear on that day.

If you think you're going to be ashamed of his coming because you know right now that your life is inconsistent with your profession, you just repent. You confess that to him.

Let the return of Christ purify you. If you're disappointed at the thought of his coming, you just need to regather yourself. You need to reset your heart on things that are passing away, on the thing that's coming of eternal importance.

[39:54] Realize his coming and what he brings with you, him is better than any vacation or retirement or anything you've got on your calendar right now. God wants us to be eager for Jesus' return.

He knows life is hard. He wants us to live in the promise of Jesus' words that he's coming. We live eagerly expecting Jesus coming back.

Our words are similar to the words of Revelation 22:20. Come Lord Jesus. Come Lord Jesus. Not only do we expect his coming, we engage in his ministry.

When you start thinking about yourself and thinking about the return of Jesus and you're like thinking, okay, I've got a growing excitement for him coming. Do you know what's going to happen?

Here's what's going to happen. When you start thinking about Jesus coming and how you're going to respond to him, it's within a couple minutes that you're going to start saying something like this.

What about my dad?

[41:02] What about my boss? What about my neighbor? what will happen to them when he comes? You see, the return of Jesus purifies our sense of mission.

It refocuses us. It's smelling salts for God's people. Here's how to think about our church. We are a mission outpost for the kingdom of God in this city.

Who else is going to tell this city that Jesus is coming back? Who else is going to tell this city that their present hopes are hopeless and that their only hope is the living hope who's promised to come?

When we engage in his mission to go make disciples of the nations, you know what? Some people are going to respond to that. They're going to respond in repentance and faith. We have people in our room right now that have responded in the last year to that.

But some won't. Some will hate you for it. And so when someone hates you for that, you know what zone you're in right now?

[42:17] You're in the suffer zone. And you need to endure. When we're in our life groups together or in informal conversations and then you start to hear somebody who's suffering the hardship of following Jesus, we tell them this, hey, you're right, life is hard.

You're being faithful. He's coming back. Don't give up. Don't give up. Press through. It's true. Don't believe lies.

A day is set. Live for what matters most. that will get them through. That will help. Expect, engage, endure hardship.

When you live on mission, you'll suffer for it. Finally, encourage one another. In 1 Thessalonians 4, at the end of this passage, Paul's been talking about the return of Jesus.

And after he explains to them what to expect, do you know what he tells this church? encourage one another with these words. Encourage one another that Jesus is coming back.

[43:34] When we live for him on mission, we'll have to endure. And we encourage one another by putting the truth of Christ's return into each other's hearts.

He's coming back. He's one day closer. It's going to happen. It's going to happen. Let me just close by saying this.

Life is hard. Jesus said as much. Jesus is coming back. He's one day closer. So we say, come Lord Jesus.

And as we live in light of his coming, we call other people to him. to find hope. Let's pray. God in heaven, we recognize that your word is all authoritative.

Jesus, your words are words we live by. And I pray for us, Christ the King Church, that you would help us to live in light of your coming. That we would long for it.

[44:49] And that we would suffer for it. and would we do that together in the full joy of knowing that you will be exalted. And on that day, it's a day of great rejoicing.

Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.