

The Coming Son of Man

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Preacher: Steve Brown

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 30th of March 2003. The preacher is Steve Brown.

His sermon is entitled The Coming Son of Man and is based on Luke chapter 21 verses 25 to 38. Well Mel and I stood outside our hotel room, car packed, petrol topped up, maps ready, munchies on the dashboard, ready for our trip back down south from Sydney.

You see we'd had a perfect holiday. We'd been there for a week and we'd seen the harbour on the Sydney ferries. We'd toured around Manly and the rocks and gone through all the shops and all the art galleries.

And now we were relaxed. We were secure and assured for a leisurely drive back down south. But as we began to get into our car, everything started to unravel.

[1 : 10] Our relaxed and secure and assured disposition vanished as Mel yelled out, close the door. As two guys ran out of the pub on the corner, before I realised what was going on, my door had been slung open and I was receiving punches to the head.

I can't remember very well what happened next. Because when you're in those situations, your brain just takes over.

You don't know what's going on. It's like your brain injects bucket loads of adrenaline into your relaxed and secure and assured body to wake it up.

And in an instant, I found myself outside the car and with my attacker on the ground. And I didn't hit him, I think he fell over.

But at that moment I had a big choice to make. You see, Mel was still in the car. Should I try to get Melissa out? Should I jump back into the car?

[2 : 13] Or should I kick this guy while he's down? I didn't try to be a hero, so I decided to try to help Melissa. And I remembered yelling to her, get out of the car.

But the only problem was that the other guy was standing at her door on the other side of the car. And Melissa bravely opened the door and she stepped out.

And by God's grace, this guy just stepped back and he let it go. And he didn't touch her. She was free. And I decided while my adversary was trying to get off the ground that I would run with her. So we ran down the road, followed by these two guys. And luckily, they were drunk and they couldn't chase us. And we ran and outran them.

You see, we'd escaped, but our confidence was shot. We were relaxed, secured, secure and assured before this attack.

[3 : 15] And we didn't expect it to happen. And ever since that incident in Sydney, Melissa and I sort of expect that it might happen again.

So whenever we drive our car in the city, we always lock the door to feel safe. Whenever I'm about to jump in the car in an area that I don't know, I always scan around to see whether anyone's lurking.

You see, I like to feel secure in this world. I like to feel assured that everything will be fine.

I like to feel safe in society. I don't expect things like that to happen to me. But sometimes they do. And we all want to feel secure, don't we? I mean, that's the reason why our government has gone to war. Whether you agree with the war or not, I think we can all agree that the core motivation is the need to feel secure.

[4 : 20] To feel safe and secure from terrorism. To feel safe and secure in the knowledge or the belief that terrorists can't get their hands on weapons of mass destruction as easily.

And as Christians, we often expect to be safe and assured and secure in this world. We expect Jesus to comfort us, don't we?

We don't expect much bad stuff to happen to us. We don't expect to be stuck in the middle of a war zone or attacked outside Sydney hotels. We expect Jesus to provide protection for us from all that sort of stuff.

So it's surprising when we hear this passage tonight. What do you expect? There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars and on the earth distress among the nations, confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.

People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. What do you expect?

[5 : 30] What do you expect in life? What do you expect will happen in your life? What do you expect will happen to your friends and family in this world? What do you expect will happen to the nations and all the people who live over this globe?

Because these words of Jesus are a description of life on this earth. These words of Jesus spell out what we should expect in this life.

Between his ascension into heaven and his return. Universal calamity and distress. Confusion amongst the nations of the earth.

People fainting from fear of what's to come. That's what we should expect. Now, some of you might be thinking that's a little bit pessimistic.

It's a little bit too downbeat. Because you might be saying, I feel secure and assured and safe. No one close to me is distressed or confused or fearful.

[6 : 38] Well, about a week ago, I think I would have agreed with you. Because last week I visited a family from this church. And this family have been in Australia for three years now.

Coming from, and they came from Iraq. Immigrated from Iraq. And the day that I visited just happened to be the day when the coalition forces fired their first weapons at them.

The war had started. And their entire family lives in Baghdad. Their extended family. And they were in distress.

Because of the signs of imminent war and the bombing of Baghdad. They were confused by the turbulent situation which was confronting their homeland. They were in fear of what might happen if the war doesn't go to plan.

For them, the powers of the heavens were shaking. You see, we want to feel secure in this world. But in an instant, it can be taken like that.

[7 : 47] We want to feel assured that everything will be fine. But in a split second, it can change. We want to feel safe in society. But danger is always ready, lurking, ready to strike.

And that's no different if you're a Christian. You might still think it's a bit negative and pessimistic. But that's what Jesus says we ought to expect in these last days.

Maybe Jesus was just having a bad day when he told his disciples this. Maybe Jesus was a little depressed because he knew he was going to the cross very soon.

Because it seems fairly downbeat and defeatist, doesn't it? You see, we have to keep reading on. Have a look at verse 27. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Now, when these things begin to take place, stand up. Raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near. You see, the reality of life on this planet is a bleak one at times.

[9 : 05] It's turbulent. It's fearful. And when we look around, we should not be surprised by war and murder and stealing and rape and racism and violence in the home.

The failure of the family. The breakup of families. Planes crashing into buildings. Unwarranted attacks outside Sydney hotels. Families suffering because their family is getting bombed.

Children being born while their father falls in battle. On the other side of the earth. This stuff should not be surprising to us. Jesus has said it.

That it would happen. But when these things begin to take place, when the world is in distress, Jesus says, we should stand up with confidence.

Strange, isn't it? Strange. When these things start to begin to take place, when the world is in confusion, it should cause us to raise our heads with assurance.

[10 : 12] Strange. When these things begin to take place. When these things begin to take place and the world is in fear, it should remind us that Jesus' return is near. When these things begin to take place, when the world is foreboding of what might come upon it, it should remind us that Jesus is about to redeem us tomorrow.

That is, come and take us back out of this world and into his heavenly kingdom. But often, we don't see these things, these signs, as a sure sign of Jesus' return, do we?

Often we don't see the strife in this world as a sure link to Jesus' imminent return. The link between the strife in this world and Jesus' return is often missed by Christians.

But it's obvious. It ought to be obvious. It's not obvious to us for a couple of reasons. Because we get bogged down.

And we get distressed at the signs in this world. And we stop standing with confidence. We get bogged down. And we often, yeah, we get bogged down and confused by the turbulence in this world.

[11 : 35] And we stop looking up with assurance. We get bogged down and fearful of the future. And we stop remembering that Jesus' return is near. We get bogged down and worried at what might be coming upon us and our friends and family in this world.

And we stop remembering that Jesus is about to redeem us at any moment. You see, the link just doesn't seem obvious to us when we're stuck in this world.

The link between the suffering of this world and Jesus' return doesn't seem obvious when we're bogged down in the stuff of this world. Jesus knows it's not obvious to us.

That we struggle to see it. So he goes on and tells them a parable. Then he told them a parable. Look at the fig tree and all the trees.

As soon as they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, know that the kingdom of God is near.

[12 : 42] Truly, I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Jesus reckons it's obvious. The link between the distress in this world and his imminent return is an obvious one. It's just like looking at a tree sprouting its leaves and fruit in spring.

And you know that summer is around the corner. It's that obvious. Jesus also reckons it's a dead set certainty. Just as the strife and the confusion in this world is a dead set certainty, a reality, so is his return.

It's a dead set certainty. And it's obvious the link between the strife in this world and his return. Yet we often don't see the link, do we? We often don't think of Jesus' return when we see the strife on our TVs.

So we become distressed at the signs in this world when we don't make that link. We become confused at the turmoil of the world.

[14 : 01] We become fearful of the strife in this world when we don't make that link. My favourite drive in Tasmania when Mel and I were on holidays recently was through the western wilderness.

And I've got some pictures of mine that I'd like to show you. I don't know if you can see it over there. Mel and I drove from Hobart in the south to Strawn in the west along the Lyle Highway.

Now, the Lyle Highway is 306 kilometres long. That's it there. And it's the only road that goes from Hobart to Strawn through the west, through the Gordon and Franklin River World Heritage Area.

And as you can see, it's mountainous, it's treacherous, it's windy, it's beautiful as it crosses many running rivers and cuts its way through magnificent World Heritage Forests.

That's not a good forest there, but... It was the most wonderful drive I've ever been on. It was great. But there's one problem. Tasmanians aren't big on signs.

[15 : 13] You see, the number one criticism that tourism Tasmania receive from Victorian tourists is the lack of signs along the Lyle Highway.

Now, you see, the mistake the Tasmanians make is that they assume that you don't need signs on the only road that goes from Hobart to Strawn.

They've got plenty of signs to get you on the road, but then you don't need any, they assume. You see, they think it's obvious. They think that it's a dead-set certainty, that you should arrive in Strawn. I tend to agree with that. But many Victorians get lost. You see, they start to get worried as they get on the road and they don't see any signs.

They start to get a little bit confused by the twists and turns and the windiness of the road. They lose a sense of direction. They start to doubt that they're actually on the right road and then they even stop the car, turn around and head back for directions.

[16 : 23] I'd love to be the Tasmanian who's in the survey when they stop to ask for directions. You see, even though it's obvious, even though it's a dead-set certainty, they turn back.

For them, there isn't enough signs. They lose confidence in the signs that they've already seen behind them. You see, sometimes we think that God's a little bit like a Tasmanian, that he provides little, if any, signage of Jesus' return for us on our way, on our journey.

But Jesus reckons that there's heaps of signage on the way. Jesus reckons that it's obvious. It's so obvious, it's like looking at a tree bearing fruit.

Jesus reckons it's a dead-set certainty that he's going to return. Jesus doesn't think that God is like a Tasmanian.

He thinks he provides an abundance of signs. Jesus reckons that we're like Victorian tourists.

Listen to this, verse 34.

[17 : 35] Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life. And that day does not catch you unexpectedly like a trap.

For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all the things that will take place and to stand before the Son of Man.

See, our problem is that we get distracted. Just like Victorian tourists. They get distracted, they start to doubt, and they turn around.

Just like these guys. Have a look. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Now you know why men die young.

[18 : 55] That's the actual name of the advertisements that they were. You see, they're not on their guard. They're not looking out. They're not observing the signs.

They're distracted. The passage says, and listen to this carefully, look at it. Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation.

That means laziness. Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with drunkenness.

That's code for living for the moment. Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with the worries of this world.

You see, the point is be on guard. Don't get trapped unexpectedly when Jesus returns tomorrow. If you're not looking out for Jesus' return, if you're not observing the signs of distress and confusion and fear in this world as a link to Jesus' return, then you'll be distracted.

You won't live as though Jesus' return is tomorrow. You'll be weighed down with laziness. You won't be keen about serving God at work or at school or at church or among friends and family.

[20 : 12] You see, you'll be like a Victorian tourist. You'll doubt the signs. You'll think that you haven't seen any signs. You'll stop the car.

You'll turn around and you'll go back in the direction you came. You see, the message is be on guard. Don't get trapped unexpectedly when he returns tomorrow. If you're not looking for Jesus' return and observing the signs of distress and confusion in this world as a link to Jesus' return, then you'll be distracted.

You'll live as though Jesus' return isn't imminent. You'll be weighed down with living for the moment. You'll just think life will go on forever the same way.

You'll be able to relax, kick back and enjoy. Live for yourself. You won't live for God. You'll be like a Victorian tourist. You'll doubt the signs.

You'll stop the car. You'll turn around. You'll go back and not get to your destination. Be on your guard. Don't get trapped unexpectedly when Jesus returns tomorrow.

[21 : 26] If you're not looking out for his return, if you're not observing the signs of distress and confusion in this world as a link to Jesus' return, then you'll be distracted and you won't live as though he's returning tomorrow.

And you'll be weighed down with the worries of this life. You'll just get busy and wrapped up in making ends meet, in paying the bills, in being a workaholic, in being a workaholic at school.

You'll just get in a rut in life. You'll be like a Victorian tourist. You'll doubt that there's signs. You'll turn the car around and you'll go back.

The message is simple tonight from Jesus' lips. It says, Be on your guard. Don't get trapped unexpectedly.

Look for the signs. Look at the distress in this world. Look at the confusion in this world. Look at the fear in this world. And know for certain that Jesus is going to return very soon.

[22 : 32] It's a dead set certainty. And it ought to be obvious to us. So don't be distressed.

And confused. And in fear like the rest of the world. Don't get weighed down with laziness. And living for the moment. And with the worries of this world.

Instead. Pray. Instead. Pray. Verse 36. Be alert at all times.

Praying. That you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place. And to stand before the Son of Man. You see people who pray are alert.

People who pray are on the ball. People who pray see the signs. People who pray are on their guard. People who pray are ready for Jesus' return tomorrow. People who pray are ready to stand before the Son of Man.

[23 : 38] I want to be blunt with you right now. I don't think this church prays enough. I don't think we're on our guard enough. I don't think we're alert enough in this church.

I don't think we're often ready for Jesus' return in this church. And I'm including myself in that. I don't pray enough. I'm not alert enough.

I'm not on my guard enough. I'm not paying attention to the signs enough. I'm not often ready for Jesus' return. I'm not ready. I'm not ready.

I'm not ready. Often. To stand before the Son of Man in all his glory and his power. How about you? Are you ready?

Are you on your guard? Are you alert? Are you praying so that you will escape what is coming upon this world?

[24 : 40] Are you praying so that you're ready to stand before the Son of Man in all his glory and power? Do you want to be assured and secure and safe in this world?

Then pray. Pray. Pray that you'll see the signs. Pray. That you'll see the signs and stand with confidence.

While the world is confused. Pray. So that you'll see the signs and you'll raise your head with assurance. While the world is in turmoil. Pray.

Pray. Pray. Pray. Pray so that you'll see the signs and be ready for Jesus to return tomorrow. When all this world can do is be fearful of what's about to happen tomorrow.

We need to repent. We need to pray. Let's be ready. Let's be on guard.

[25 : 46] Alert. Let's be ready to stand before him when he comes tomorrow. Right now. Let's pray. Right now. I'm going to give you one minute to pray to yourself right now.

Just there quietly in your pews. And I'd ask you to pray that you'd be alert. That you'd be ready. That you'd be looking for the signs.

Pray that you'd be on your guard. And then I'll finish with a prayer after that. I'll give you a minute. Let's pray. Dear Lord.

Help us to pray. So that we may be ready. Help us to pray. So that we would be on guard and alert. Help us to pray.

So we'll see the signs. Help us to pray. So we'll stand with confidence. And with raised heads of assurance. Help us to pray Lord God.

[27 : 07] So that we can stand before Jesus when he comes in his glory. And we say. Come Lord Jesus. Amen. Amen.

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

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