



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 24:36-51

KEY POINT: Christians are both ready and prepared for the return of Christ.

FOR LEADERS

- **Apprenticeship!** *As a Gospel-centered church, it's our hope that Emergence would be the leadership locus of our community, and as a Community Leader, you are very much on the front lines of that! Who are you personally investing in? Who in your group could lead in their own right if you gave them the proper guidance and encouragement? Pray about who God has placed around you and consider what a next step in their faith, their leadership and their ministry might be today*

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Communities Video:** Watch this week's community extras video!
- [2] Icebreaker:** Name something that absolutely grosses you out!
- [3] Opener:** What stood out to you from the sermon this week? Did you find anything particularly helpful or eye opening?

READINESS FOR THE SON OF MAN

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 24:36-44

In the sermon this week, Ryan explained how this passage in Matthew is not really meant to get us wondering about the timing or "signs" of His second coming, but rather to make sure that we're ready for Him when He does come.

- [1]** What do you think it means to be "ready" for Jesus (verse 44)?
- [2]** For many people (both Christian and not), the second coming of Christ is not something they often choose to think about...why do you think this is? Have you ever felt this way yourself?
- [3]** How would you personally respond to someone who thinks that "there is always tomorrow"?

THE FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT

The second big truth that came from the sermon this week is that we need to remember that God will call each of us to account for what we've done with our lives and what is entrusted to us to steward.

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew: 24:45-51

- [4]** In your own words, how would you describe what the life of a faithful and wise servant of God should look like?
- [5]** What are some things in your life that God has entrusted to you to steward? Where do you personally feel God is calling you to be more faithful?



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

[6] In the sermon, Ryan mentioned that there is a difference between being “actively” wicked and “passively” wicked...what do you think this means, and how would you explain it in your own words?

LONGING FOR JESUS’ COMING

Ask for a volunteer to read Philippians 1: 18b-26

- [7]** What is Paul’s attitude here toward the prospect of “departing” and “being with Christ?”
- [8]** Considering what Paul is saying in this passage, what do you think would be a healthy balance for a Christian regarding Jesus’ second coming?
- [9]** What does a person’s attitude about Jesus’ second coming communicate about his or her faith and relationship with Jesus?
- [10]** The Bible calls all Christians to look forward to and prepare for Jesus’ coming and yet, there are many people today who consider themselves a Christian but do not really hope for Jesus’ second coming. Why do you think this is?
- [11]** Be honest – if Jesus were to come back now, would you be overjoyed at His arrival, or would you find yourself wanting? What does that tell you about your relationship with Him?
- [12]** What is one thing that needs to change about your life to make you more ready for Jesus?

PRAYER

- [1]** Pray that Jesus would be more important to you than anything else in this life. Ask Him to show you areas of your life where you could be more faithful and reveal any idols holding you back.
- [2]** Pray that, as a church, we would be a people marked by joy, knowing that to “live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

LEADER'S COMMENTARY

Verse 36:

- In this verse, Jesus discloses that not even he knows when he will return. This has left many Christians scratching their heads, because it implies that there are things that Jesus does not know, and this seems to compromise the doctrine of his full deity. To put it another way, if omniscience is an attribute of God, in what sense can we say that Jesus is God if there are things he doesn't know?

One attempt to make sense of this has been to use Philippians 2:5-7, which speaks of Christ's "emptying" himself when he took on flesh, and to suggest that this consists in the temporary relinquishing of certain divine properties. This view falls short, however, because it implies that Jesus ceased to be fully God in his incarnation, and because it ignores what Philippians 2 actually says when Paul describes what he means by Christ's "emptying."

A better way to understand Jesus' statement here is as a testimony to his full humanity. An orthodox understanding of the Jesus says that he possesses two natures—full humanity and full divinity, and neither compromises the other. *As God*, Jesus knows how God knows, and *as man*, Jesus knows how we know—and is subject to the same kind of intellectual limitations that we are, such as we see in passages like Luke 2:52. While there are plenty of passages that show that Jesus' knowledge was supernatural (e.g., Matt 17:27; Mark 14:13; Luke 2:47; 5:4-6; John 1:47; 4:18; 11:14), he is fully subjected to the will of the Father, including what, as a human, he knows and does not know; he does nothing independent of the Father (John 5:19-20). It is helpful to think of Jesus' knowledge on analogy to his power. Just as Jesus' humanity meant that he did not constantly exercise his omnipotence, so it also means that he did not constantly exercise his omniscience.

If you need to brush up on your understanding of the biblical evidence for the deity of Christ, check out the second talk on what we believe about Jesus on the "Emergence Church" Soundcloud page. The talk is entitled, "Eleaders 05 Jesus pt. 2".

Verses 37-44:

- Both this week and last, Ryan noted the different language that Jesus uses in this passage to speak of his "coming," which is sometimes obscured in English Bible translations. The *coming* that the disciples initially ask him about in verse 3 is his *parousia*. This word literally means "presence" or "appearing," and it becomes a technical term in the New Testament to speak about Jesus' second coming. This refers to the full earthly manifestation of Jesus and his kingdom. While the "coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven" in verse 30 is an important component in this plan, this is not the language that is used there. Rather, as we noted last week, this reflects the vision of Daniel 7, which is set into motion at Christ's resurrection and awaits its full consummation at Jesus' return. Indeed, *parousia* was only used in last week's passage in verse 27, where Jesus is dispelling the notion that wars and messianic rumors should be taken as signs of his return. It is in this week's passage that we find the language of *parousia*, specifically in verses 37 and 39.
- One common element in many people's understanding of end times events is the rapture of the church. This is the idea that when Jesus returns he will remove his people out of the world in a sudden way, "to meet the Lord in the air," as Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Exactly what this

Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

means, how, and when this will happen is a matter of disagreement among Christians. Should you wish to explore this with your group, we encourage you to do so with grace and humility. However, it is widely agreed upon that this is *not* what Jesus is talking about in these verses when he says (twice), “One will be taken and one left” (vv. 40–41). This is because “being taken” seems to parallel those who were “swept away” in “the days of Noah,” and therefore it seems to refer to those who are *not* “ready,” not those who are. Jesus’ language of being “taken” and “left” should probably not be pressed as if he is teaching about what will literally happen to people at his return, any more than that they will be “cut in pieces” (v. 51) or literally shut outside a door (25:10). These all seem to be vivid ways that Jesus is saying that some will be caught unexpectedly unprepared when he returns.

- Jesus’ comparison of himself with a burglar apparently left such a strong impact with his followers that the metaphor is picked up in the writings of at least three other New Testament authors: Paul (1 Thess 5:2, 4), Peter (2 Pet 3:10), and John (Rev 3:3; 16:15).

Verses 45–47:

- There are several passages in the New Testament that tell us that we who are in Christ will, in some way, reign *with* him in his kingdom, just like Jesus implies here when he speaks of the master setting his faithful servant “over all his possessions” (v. 47). These include Daniel 7:18, Romans 8:17, 1 Corinthians 16:22, 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 5:10, 20:4 and 6, and 22:5. Note that some of these speak of this as a result of suffering with Christ or endurance.

Verses 48–51

- The reasoning of the wicked servant in verse 48 is that his master is “delayed,” and therefore he presumes that he has time to put off doing what he should be doing. We live roughly 2,000 years after Jesus uttered these words to his first hearers, and so this sentiment is likely much more common now than it was back then. To this, 2 Peter 3:8–10 speaks loud and clear:

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.