

## **“Discover The Christ Who Will Come Again”**

Luke 21:25-36

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Spending time with someone gives you the opportunity to discover things about them and get to know them better. This is true for our relationships with each other, and in our relationship with God. Not that God needs to learn anything more about us—but the more time we spend in God’s presence, the more God’s divine nature and grace are revealed to us.

During this Advent season, we are going to be focusing on the person of Jesus Christ—spending some time with him, if you will. We will move beyond the cutesy picture of the baby in the manger at Bethlehem with spotless diapers and not so much as a whimper. We will see Jesus from different angles, more than simply the crucified and risen Christ. Prayerfully our time with Jesus will deepen our faith and firm up our commitment to live as his disciples.

Today we remember that Jesus has made a promise to us—to return, and we will focus on the truth that the Christ of Christmas is a Christ who will come again.

### **CONFLICTING VIEWS**

Walking down the streets of Anoka or Ramsey or Andover or Coon Rapids or Champlin, we are likely to encounter two prevailing views regarding our world’s future. The first is a rather pessimistic view that the world is going to hell in a hand basket and there isn’t anything that we can do about it. The second proposes that we face significant challenges, but given enough time science and technology will save us.

Our saviors (small “s”), at least according to the world, for the last several decades have been science and technology. When our cities were choked by smog, technology helped clean the air. When we faced over population science came up with new fertilizers and seeds to create a green revolution. Now we look to science and technology to save us from global warming. I’ve even heard it said that if we can’t cool down the world, science and technology will provide us with the opportunity to colonize surrounding planets.

The view that Jesus shared with His disciples in our Gospel lesson today, at least at first glance, seems vaguely similar to the dooms day scenario, but it is decidedly different. Yes, there will be cataclysmic events in the heavens and on the earth, but in the end

Jesus will return as King of kings and Lord of lords in all of his power and glory.

In the same manner that Jesus enters our lives bringing with Him both power and peace, he will also return into the affairs of the world and establish His kingdom. Jesus does not bring doom, but rather hope.

## **PRECURSOR EVENTS**

Jesus said that when the fig tree begins to leaf, we know that summer is near. In a similar way, we know that Jesus' return is near when we see certain things happening. These do not tell us when he is coming, but rather they accentuate the promise that Jesus made. With all the end-of-the-world scenarios out there, this is important – these words assure of God's promise, nothing more.

It doesn't take long to look at current events and the current condition of the world, to come to the conclusion that either the world is an absolute mess and we can't do anything about it, or that this is yet another sign or signs indicating the end of this world and the coming of Christ. Tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, economies at the verge of bankruptcy, wars and rumors of wars, viruses, starvation, terrorism, ISIS, protests, shootings and riots. What's happening here? Is this the end?

Many have made the prediction of Jesus' coming into big business. Several have become millionaires peddling their wares to a public who wants to know what the future holds. I was tempted with millions of other Christians in attempting to read the signs of the times. I came to realize that it diverted my attention from Jesus' main commission of proclaiming His gospel and making disciples of all nations.

One of the problems connected with predicting Jesus' return is that every generation believes that it is the generation in which Jesus will fulfill His promise. The Christians of the first century thought Jesus would return then. Luther thought Jesus would return at his time. Many thought Jesus would return in the late 1800's, some around 1988, and we can all remember the clamor at the beginning of the millennium, and the Mayan prediction of a couple of years ago.

Predicting the time that Jesus will return is not what Jesus wants his people to be engaged in. He simply wants us to trust in His promise of coming again, take comfort in it and live in its reality. Jesus said, **“Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”**

## **BE PREPARED**

But Jesus also reminded us that the times ahead will be scary as they are now. He said that men will faint with fear at what is happening in the world. It will be tempting for us to worry, too. Jesus warns, **“But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.”** Obviously those are not proper or adequate responses to the promise of His return. The proper response is to live in peace knowing that God is in control and God holds us in the palm of his hand. The proper response is to look at the cross of Jesus. The pain and agony and condemnation that Jesus suffered for us because of our sin, not only brings us the forgiveness of sins and the promise of life eternal, but also assures us that no matter what takes place in our world, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Christ’s death and resurrection bring us the promise and assurance that the final victory is His, so we don’t have to be afraid about the future and can stand firm in His victory and await His return with joy.

Martin Luther said that if he knew that Jesus was going to return the next day he still would go out and plant a tree. This surprising response simply underlines the truth that Christians are to live their lives as if Jesus would come at any time. Each day we are to be about the business of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and serving God by serving people.

It's never too late to trust Jesus. Oops, I need to qualify that. There IS a time when it's too late to trust Jesus. If you die without putting your faith in Jesus, then it's too late. Someone observed about the thief on the cross that “there is one deathbed conversion in the Bible so nobody should despair, but there is only one, so nobody should presume.” Be ready, prepare your hearts, and stand firm in Jesus.

Jeff Stratton is a pastor in Evansville, Indiana. A few years ago he was called to visit a 93 year-old man who had terminal cancer. His name was Adolph Allen and he had been a hard-living, hard-drinking, union ironworker for most of his life. Two minutes into their first conversation, Adolph looked at Pastor Jeff and asked, "Is it fair for someone to live their whole life one way and then at the end of their life to ask God to take them to heaven?"

After thinking for a minute, Jeff said, "No, Adolph it's not fair. But luckily for you and me, God is not fair." Pastor Jeff then opened the Scripture and shared God’s plan of salvation with him and this 93-year-old man bowed his head and asked Jesus to come into his heart.

Four weeks later Jeff preached at Adolph's funeral and he talked about how some football games come down to a final play or final drive. The team that's behind might

have been outplayed the whole game, but on this last play of this last drive the quarterback fades back and heaves a hail-Mary pass into the end zone as time expires. The ball might be batted around but if an offensive receiver catches it, the game is over, and they win. Pastor Jeff said, "That's what happened with Adolph. The devil was in the lead for most of his life, but the final score was Jesus 1 and the devil 0!"

## **CONCLUSION**

As a church year begins and we begin our journey to the celebration of Christmas, our Gospel lesson reminded us that Advent also prepares us for His second coming. Signs will show us that His return is imminent. As it turns out, those signs are upon us now. So be prepared, for the Lord is coming soon! For us in Christ, His coming will be a great blessing. Therefore let us join together in the prayer: "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.