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First Sunday of Advent
Sermons``
November 28, 2010

MATTHEW 24:36-44 - "RETURN OF THE KING"

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! The King is coming; He shall return! The King is coming; He shall return! The King is coming; He shall return! Are you ready? The King is coming! Be ready! The King is coming!

When you ask? How much time is there to be ready? I don't know. My Lord the King has not told me nor any of His servants. The day and hour of the King's return is hidden from every human being and all the angels. It is best that everyone of you is ready for His return today, right now; there is no time to waste; for those who are not ready when the King comes shall be taken away and cast into the fiery abyss where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. But for those who are ready for the King's return, His royal coming will be a time of unparalleled joy and celebration. The King is coming; He shall return!

The King has come once already; in that coming He has achieved victory over all His enemies and our enemies. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus the King has defeated sin, death, and the devil! Jesus lives and reigns at the Father's right hand and is extending His reign in our midst where the Gospel is proclaimed. The King has promised that He shall return to raise you from the dead and take you into the feast that He has prepared for you, of which we get a foretaste now in His body and blood. The King has come and the King is coming!

Hear the Word of the King, listen to His instruction which He gave some two thousand years ago to His first disciples! The Lord Jesus our King said: ³⁶ But concerning that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, except the Father only. ³⁷ For just as in the days of Noah, in this way will the royal coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as they were in the those days before the cataclysm (the flood) eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, until which day Noah entered into the ark, ³⁹ and they did not know until the cataclysm came and all were taken away, in this way will the royal coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two will be in the field, one taken away and one left. ⁴¹ Two will be grinding at the mill, one taken away and one left. ⁴² Therefore keep watch, because you do not know what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this that if the master of the house had known what time the thief comes to keep watch, then he would be ready and not permit his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ On account of this also you, be ready, because you do not know the hour the Son of Man is coming.

No one knows when the King will return, no one knows when the last day will be; Jesus has made this explicit. So if you or any others are trying to predict or figure out when Christ will return, when the last day will be, then you are wasting your time and being unfaithful by disregarding the clear teaching of Jesus! Do not get caught up in such foolish speculation that many in the world engage in; the return of Christ the King is hidden from all.

Normal everyday life in this world will be going on when suddenly, Christ the King shall return, just like when the flood suddenly burst forth and swept all the wicked away in judgment during Noah's day. People were eating and drinking as they do today. People were marrying and being given in marriage just like today. Life will go on until it is too late and only those who are ready will be left behind, those unprepared will be taken away in judgment.

Only Noah and his family were ready for the flood; God told Noah that He was sending the flood in judgment against the sin and wickedness of the humanity. Noah believed God's Word and shared with His family; they believed it too and all together they worked on constructing a huge boat, which was God's means to save them and two of every kind of animal. The people in Noah's day were not ready for the coming flood because they ignored the only warning God gave; they saw the work Noah was doing, probably asked him about it, and thought he was crazy. Some may have thought they would have more time or more warning but they did not.

So it is with the royal coming of the Christ the King. Jesus told us His disciples that He is returning to judge the living and the dead; we confess this each week in the Creed. Jesus' return should not be a surprise to any of us! The world too has its warning that the King is returning and that today is the day to be ready. The world is warned of the King's return by the Church, by you and me and all who believe in Christ. The King has called us to declare His mighty works and judgments to the world, to give witness to His death and resurrection and to call all to repent for the judgment day is coming; He wants you to be ready to give the reason for the hope you have in Christ every day in your vocations (father, mother, child, student, business owner, teacher, police officer, etc). The King has even called and sent out missionaries and pastors to proclaim His Word, to baptize and to teach; the world and each and every one of you have warning, so be ready.

Now is the time, today is the time for the world, for you and for me to keep watch and be ready for the King's return, because those who are not ready will find a violent and painful end. For those not ready, the King's return will be like thief or robber in the night, sudden and violent in force! So be ready for you don't know when the King shall return!

So how are we to keep watch? How are we to be ready for Christ the King's return? Some imagine that we can make ourselves ready by withdrawing from the world into a pure Christian community; if we stay away from rock music, bad movies, drinking, smoking and focus upon doing the Ten Commandments, then we'll be ready. Others try an opposite approach and indulge in the sinful lusts and desires of the world, while thinking Christ died for me, so I can do what I want. Both approaches are doomed to fail because Christ the King and His gifts are no longer the center and focus. The first way leads to self-righteousness or doubt and depression. The second way leads back into slavery and blindness. The way to be ready is to hold fast in faith to the Words and Promises of Christ that He gave you in your Baptism, in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; to receive Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins; and to hear Christ's teaching proclaimed to you from the Holy Scriptures; through these means Christ our King is present today to prepare you and me for His return.

In the rest of the End Times Discourse in Matthew, Jesus teaches us and all His disciples that trusting in His Word we are to love and serve our fellow disciples in Christ; that each one of us must personally be prepared, I can not be ready for you nor you for me; that we are to participate in God's mission to world by giving witness to our King according to His gifting and calling; and that we are to show hospitality to those whom Christ has called and sent to proclaim the Gospel to us. This is what our King has given us to do until He returns. Therefore turn away from sin, put off the old man and put on the new man in Christ Jesus. Hold fast to the forgiveness that Christ won for you on the cross and which He proclaims to you now through His servant. Trust in Christ's Word and Promises always and you shall be ready for His sudden and unknown return. The King is coming; He shall return, Amen!