

The Unknown Hour

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[0 : 00] My name is Ed. I see some new faces, so I'm one of the pastors here at Trinity Cambridge. We're going to continue on in our Matthew series, so if you would open up your Bibles with me.

! We're in Matthew 24, starting in verse 36, and then we'll read all the way to Matthew 25, verse 13. If you don't have a Bible and would like to use one, feel free to raise your hand. We'd be happy to grant you or give you a Bible for you to use at this time. I'll be reading from the English Standard Version.

Again, starting from Matthew 24, verse 36. If you would bow your heads as we come before the Lord in prayer.

Heavenly Father, Heavenly Father, who are we but dust here one day and gone tomorrow and yet you care for us. You are mindful of us.

So much so that you give us your word. your word that exhorts us, addresses us, wakes us up from our slumber.

[1 : 28] And we pray that you would do that very thing by the power of your Holy Spirit. The indwelling Holy Spirit would open up our eyes, unlock our ears, so that we would hear how you are addressing us today in your word.

That we are to stay awake, to stay ready for you are coming. You're coming soon. So I pray that though my words are weak, your power would manifest in cutting us to the heart and helping us, empowering us to live transformed lives.

Lord, please do this for your glory. Help us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you are able, please rise to honor the reading of God's word.

Again, starting from Matthew 24, 36. But concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark.

[2 : 51] And they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away. So will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field.

One will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill. One will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake. For you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.

Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is the faithful and wise servant whom his master has set over his household to give them their food at the proper time?

Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

[3 : 58] But if that wicked servant says to himself, my master is delayed and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him.

And at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.

But at midnight there was a cry, here is the bridegroom, come out to meet him. Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.

[5 : 03] And the foolish said to the wise, give us some of your oil for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered saying, since there will be not enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.

And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went in with him into the marriage feast. And the door was shut.

Afterward, the other virgins came also saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered, truly I say to you, I do not know you.

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. Have you ever noticed that the substance of your nightmares don't really change, but only merely the circumstances?

It's pretty much the same nightmare, but they're distressed in different clothes. I don't have them often, but I've had this recurring nightmare ever since I was little. this recurring dream of being caught unprepared by unexpected circumstances.

[6 : 29] When I was in high school, I had the nightmare of walking into class only to find out that I have a huge major final that I wasn't prepared for, so I get a big fat F. When I was working my corporate job, it's going into a meeting only to find out that I'm supposed to give a huge presentation in front of the corporate bigwigs, right?

The directors and the VPs, so it ends up me getting fired. And I kid you not, my wife and I were in the throes of wedding planning.

I had the nightmare of getting married to her. Not that kind of nightmare, right? I wanted to get married to her, but it was a nightmare of going to the wedding, finding out that I don't have anything prepared.

Like, where are the flowers? Where's the dress? Where's my own suit? I woke up in a cold sweat that night. But can there be anything more terrifying than to be prepared, unprepared, for the end of the world?

It seems like that fear is in our cultural DNA, right? Endless movies and TV shows seem to be just harping on that one same fear.

[7 : 47] It's in the air. It's in our waters. As I was prepping for this sermon this week, I discovered a surprisingly large subculture of people who are getting ready for the apocalypse.

Right? Readiness, apocalypse readiness groups, or preppers, as they call themselves. Right? They have websites, they have Reddit threads, they have even local chapters that meet throughout the United States, which you can go and join today.

All for the purpose of helping one another to get ready for the end of the world. They think that maybe the sun will blow up, or there actually will be a zombie apocalypse.

But whatever they're preparing for, they're packing out bug-out bags, they're prepping their fallout bunkers, all to get ready for this cataclysmic event. It might sound ridiculous, and certainly in our culture, they're sometimes the butt of our jokes, but ironically, these preppers get something right. They get something right to get ready to the end of the world. Something that we all need to get ready for. The only problem is that they profoundly misunderstand how to get ready for it.

[9 : 09] What about you? Are you ready for the end of the world? Do you know how to get ready for it? In this passage this morning, Jesus tells us that the end of the world is in fact coming.

Why? Because he is coming. And he can return at any point, in 10 minutes, or in 10 millennia.

You do realize, I might not actually get to finish this sermon. He is coming, and when he does, he will judge each and every single person, yes, including you, for your readiness.

So we need to get ready. So that's the main point of my sermon today. Expect the unexpected return of Christ. And in turn, I'll talk about four points that this passage addresses.

First, the hour that is hidden from us, the return that is certain for us, the readiness that is required of us, and finally, the door that is closing on us.

[10 : 22] By way of reminder, we're in the middle of the Olivet Discourse that started from the disciples' question in chapter 24, verse 3, which reads, tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?

Last week, Sean preached about how Jesus answers this part one of the question where he addresses the beginning of the end, and this week, Jesus moves on to now part two, the end of the

end.

And it's signified by a clear transition, these two words right in the beginning of our passage, but concerning, but concerning. Right? Earlier in the book of Matthew, Jesus, and also later, the Apostle Paul, they use this exact same phrase, these exact same words to shift topics.

So we have a clear paragraph break here. Jesus is moving on now to address the topic of the end of the age, or to put it in more biblical terms, the day of the Lord.

About this day, Prophet Joel proclaims, let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is near, a day of darkness and gloom.

[11 : 42] The day of the Lord is great and very awesome. Who can endure it? So, if this day, the last day of the history of the world as we know it, is fast approaching, it's understandable that the disciples, they ask their respected rabbi, when will this fateful day be?

Because if they know the timing, then, of course, we can get ready for it appropriately. And during that time in particular, this topic is a hot button topic. People are talking about it, wrestling with it, giving their ideas, when it could be, with no one being able to give a compelling answer.

But surely Jesus, surely Jesus would know. But what Jesus says must have surely shocked his disciples.

Concerning the timing of the day and the hour, not a single soul knows. Nor will we ever know, though many have tried.

Take Edgar Weisant, who was a former NASA engineer, who wrote a book called 88 Reasons Why the Raptures Will Be in 1988. 1988. That book did not age well.

[13 : 02] Or Harold Camping, who predicted that the return of Christ will be in 2011. His followers were so convinced that this is the day that he's going to return.

So they sell all that they have to put up billboards and travel the world and tell everybody that he's returning. Not the wisest financial decision. Even the Jehovah's Witnesses, they've predicted the end of the world four times already.

Already in 1914, 1918, 1925, and 1975. Every generation has had people who think that they've cracked the code.

And every single person ends up getting it wrong. Not a single person will know the day. Not even the glorious angels know.

Most astonishingly, Jesus openly declares that he doesn't even know. The Son doesn't even know.

[14 : 03] But only the Father knows. This is the first and only time in all the Gospels where Jesus confesses Jesus confesses ignorance to a question.

Let reality sink in this miracle-performing, death-defying, bread-multiplying Messiah, who has answered every single thorny question from the scribes and the Pharisees with astonishing wisdom.

He is now confessing ignorance. That must have floored the disciples. Even more so, maybe for us today, who have a clear theological picture of who Jesus is.

He's not just the Son of Man, but he is the eternal Son of God. the second person of the Trinity who sustains all of creation by the mere power of his word.

How could he be ignorant if he really is the tri-omni-God, the omnipresent, omnipotent, and most relevant to our discussion, omniscient God?

[15 : 10] Now, this verse has ignited major debate throughout church history with some landing on the heretical belief that Jesus, the Son of God, is actually a lesser God than God the Father.

But we need not come to that conclusion. The answer, I think, simply lies in the fact that Jesus was both miraculously and mysteriously fully God and fully human.

Not 50% God, not 50% human, not 90-10, but 100% God and 100% human. Later, in Philippians 2, Paul helpfully describes the mystery of the incarnation like this.

Though Jesus was in the form of God, he did not account equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men.

consider again that Jesus is the tri-omni God. He really is. But while he is the omnipresent God, at the same time, human Jesus limits himself to one place at one time.

[16 : 24] While he is the omnipotent God, he really is. At the same time, in his incarnation, human Jesus gets tired, hungry. I think we maybe tend to understand those two a little bit more easily, but I think this verse adds another dimension just to the great condescension of Christ.

We mustn't forget that while he is the omniscient God, at the same time in his incarnation, Jesus is still human with human limitations. Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, as Luke writes in Luke 2.52, and in this particular instance, he doesn't know.

He doesn't know the timing of the consummation of the kingdom. Why did he put these things aside? It's because when the eternal word of God became flesh, dwelt among us, he walked among us not as a super-powered demigod, but as a genuine, weak, ignorant man.

All so that he can truly sympathize with our weaknesses. Jesus knows what it's like to be tempted, what it's like to be saddened by tragedy and loss, what it's like not knowing the future.

Ignorance is essential to the human experience. To be God is to know things. It's to know all things. To be human is to not know things.

[18 : 01] If Jesus didn't come as fully human, then what meaningful sense would Jesus be our genuine representative, be the new Adam?

If his feet never soiled the ground or if eyelids never grew tired or if he never had to say, I don't know. Theologian Donald McLeod, he put it this way, Jesus had learned to obey without knowing all the facts and to believe without being in possession of full information.

He had to forego the comfort which omniscience would sometimes have brought. While omniscience was a luxury always within the reach of Jesus, he chose not to grasp at it, to grasp at equality with God in that moment to be our true mediator between God and sinful man.

consider then the amazing humility of Jesus that he displays when he declares that he doesn't know something that he could know.

Consider then the amazing arrogance and pride of man who declares he knows something that he could never know. We are an information obsessed culture.

[19 : 21] A million Google hits mere seconds. Now the power of AI at our fingertips. We even gossip because we want to know information.

We crave information. All so that we can say we know things, right? We love the power and the security that information gives us.

And God certainly has given us the ability to learn and know many things. but there are some things that God will keep us forever in the dark and particularly the timing of his return.

Why? To keep us humble and to keep us faithfully waiting for his return. But here's what God has not kept from us.

Even while the hour of the return is hidden from us, we do know with certainty that he will in fact return. How do we know this?

[20 : 21] Jesus then points to Noah. In our passage this morning, have you noticed that all the examples that Jesus gives are merely figurative? All but one.

Noah is the one historic example that will prove this day will in fact come. If you're unfamiliar with the story of Noah in Genesis 6, just a few chapters after God creates the world and mankind, his heart breaks because he sees that every intention of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually.

Just and holy God decides to wipe out all of humanity as a judgment on the earth, but not before commanding righteous Noah to build an enormous ark of wood so that he, his family, and the chosen animals would be able to survive the deluge.

this ark that stretched one and a half football fields and was as tall as a four story building, it was this titanic jumbotron, right, displaying for all to see the warnings of the impending judgments of God.

But tragically, not a single soul heeded this warning. Instead, they continued to live their lives as they saw fit, eating, drinking, and marrying right until their watery graves.

[21 : 47] And just as the flood that wiped out humanity is a historical fact, it really did happen, Christ too will in fact return.

Yet for all of church history, this unbelieving world has jeered and mocked us, have they not, for our silly and fanatical beliefs.

Especially in recent years, right, don't believe me? Then just go to the street, just like the team did in London. Just go to the street and tell them that Jesus is going to return at any point, that the world is coming to an end.

You'll see it written right on their face, they're going to think that we're straight up wacko. Maybe you even feel a little bit embarrassed by those beliefs. They'll attack us and say, you guys have been

saying that Jesus is returning for 2,000 years.

Isn't it time, guys, to give it up? But these attacks are nothing new. Even the apostle Peter and his churches had to deal with it.

[22 : 53] We read in 2 Peter 3, they will say, where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.

And how does Peter respond? He draws on the same piece of evidence that Jesus does. He points to Noah. For they deliberately overlook this fact that the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

But by the same word, the heavens and the earth that now existed are stored up, fire being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. Both Jesus and Peter point to the past example of Noah for the future promise, for the assurance that he will in fact come and bring judgment.

And when he comes, we don't know when he will come, but we do know how he will come. It will be universal and it will be sudden. Just as the flood came and wiped them all away, when that day of judgment comes, rest assured that not a single soul will miss it.

when Jesus personally, bodily returns on the heavenly clouds, every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.

[24 : 17] From the greatest to the least. Even the seemingly inconsequential nameless two men in the field, or the nameless women at the mill in verses 40 to 41, they're just doing normal, ordinary, everyday chores.

They, too, will be judged. What happens to these two pairs is representative of what will happen to the whole of humanity. On that day, though the two might look exactly the same on the outside, right on paper, they're doing the same work, in the same time, in the same place, the inner reality is that they are worlds apart.

For one is a child of God, and one is a child of Satan. When Christ returns, he will reveal the invisible spiritual chasm that lies between them by taking the one and leaving the other.

And when Jesus returns, secondly, he will come suddenly. People will be caught in the middle of their work day, working in the field, grinding at the mill, still dressed in their sweaty clothes.

They won't have time, we don't have time to go home and get ready for Jesus. And to hammer home that suddenness in which he comes, Jesus goes as far as to compare it to a thief in the night.

[25 : 48] What is a thief's greatest asset? It's not his strength, maybe it's not even his speed, but it is simply the element of surprise.

Thieves come in at the moment you least expect them. And in America, it's more common for thieves to break in and steal during the day than at night because they know that we're all at work. So Jesus compares himself to a thief, obviously not to indict himself as a lawbreaker, but to stress the sudden, surprising manner in which he will come.

In fact, he even explicitly says that the thief will come at an hour you do not expect. Therefore, the main exhortation is to stay awake, stay ready at all times, for you never know when the thief will come.

During travel, on behalf of a Roman century back then, a soldier, he would keep a certain watch in the middle of the night for a couple of hours while all the other soldiers would sleep, catch up on rest, and he would have to stay awake looking out for bad actors.

[27 : 06] When his watch was over, then the next would come to take his place, and they would just rinse and repeat. Hear this quote from Charles Spurgeon, brethren, we have succeeded a long line of watchmen.

Since the days of our Lord, when he sent out the chosen twelve to stand upon the citadel and tell how the night waxed or waned, how have the watchers come and gone? Our God has changed the watchers, but he has kept the watch.

He still sets watchmen on the walls of Zion who must watch for the coming of their master. friends, it's our watch now.

It is our generation's turn to watch for the Lord, to stay awake and get ready. So heeding this clarion call, where must our eyes turn then?

Upward, heavenward. In no way can we properly watch for the Lord who will come on the heavenly clouds if our eyes are earthbound and downcast?

[28 : 17] This is a contradiction in terms. It's like looking left and right at the same time. But our eyes are cast earthbound because we so easily get distracted by competing loves and desires here on earth.

The lesser things of earth sparkle brighter in our eyes, do they not, than the golden streets of heaven? There's too much in this life that you want to buy, to see, to do, to taste.

Too much you want to experience. Hear Jesus' words in Luke's parallel passage, in Luke 17. On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down, to take them away.

And likewise, let the one who is in the field not turn back. friends, what use are the things that we amass down here, up there? Let your eyes leave the fleeting glories of this earth and turn upward. Or maybe your eyes are earthbound, they're not heavenward, because of our endless earthly worries and anxieties and distractions. distractions. I need to progress in my career, I need to save for a house, I need to get ready for retirement.

[29 : 40] And are my kids progressing in the way they should? We forget to consider that Jesus can return today because we are so worried about tomorrow. Or maybe our distractions are more subtle than that.

We wake up, go to work, come home, sleep, rinse and repeat for 40 years. Has that monotony lulled you to sleep?

Has the bright blue hue of your phone and the endless swiping lulled you to sleep? Brothers and sisters, wake up.

Take your place at the watch post. It is our time, our turn to watch for the Lord now. brothers and sisters, how often do you remember that Christ can literally return at any time?

I confess I don't reflect on it nearly enough. When was the last time that you started your day? Not by worrying about your to-do list and what you have to get done, but simply remembering that this day could actually be the day.

[30 : 56] It could be today. It's possibly one of the most important transformative habits that we cultivate to remember this regularly as we watch and we wait for the Lord to return.

But watching for the Lord is not a mere idleness. Jesus' next parable sheds light on what readiness actually looks like when he compares and contrasts two kinds of servants.

The first servant is a model example of readiness for the master return. Notice that he doesn't just sit idle, twiddling his thumbs, sitting around the window waiting for the master to return.

He doesn't waste his time trying to guess when the master will return, obsessing over biblical numerology, looking at the stars and trying to map out astrology. astrology, when he is bestowed with a task to provide for the household, he simply gets to work.

His waiting for the master is expressed in simple, ordinary obedience to the commands that he has received. He is reliable, consistent, trustworthy.

[32 : 15] So when the master of the house returns, he finds a thriving household put in order, made possible by the diligent work of the servant. As a result, the master then grants the servant a major promotion, sets him over all his possessions.

He who is faithful over little will be faithful over much. In direct contrast, Jesus paints the picture of a wicked servant who arrogantly assumes that the master is delayed.

You see exactly what kind of man he is, right? For the person you are when nobody is watching is actually the person you are. The man proves his wickedness by then taking this opportunity without supervision to indulge in sin, beating his fellow servants, people who are his peers, his equals, and eating and drinking with drunkards.

to this wicked man. The master will come on a day that he does not expect, inflict a terrible punishment.

Using graphic language that's meant to shock the sleepy awake, Jesus declares that this wicked servant will be cut in pieces. And as gruesome as that sounds, it's not even the worst part.

[33 : 39] For this punishment signifies so much more than just a physical death. After he's cut in pieces, he's thrown into the place with the hypocrites, probably the scribes and the Pharisees, as we read this in the context of Matthew, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

How can someone weep and gnash their teeth when they've been cut up in pieces? It only makes sense if Jesus is not merely speaking about a physical death, but a greater, more fearsome spiritual death.

And we've seen this kind of language in Matthew before that the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth signifies the eternal, unquenchable fire of hell.

So by both of the incentive of reward and the spur of punishment, Jesus teaches us how we are to get ready, how we're to get ready for the master's return.

And that readiness certainly has nothing to do with irreverent silly myths, neither is it frantic, fanatic acts like so many cults end up taking.

[34 : 52] On the one hand, it's positively, it's simple, consistent faithfulness to the tasks that God has called you to. going to the office day after day, honoring the Lord by putting your best work, raising your kids, exercising patience and love day after day.

And on the other hand, negatively put, it's fleeing from sin and keeping a close watch over your soul, knowing that the heart is desperately sick, and that we are so prone to forget that he is coming.

We are so prone to wander. We do well to commit ourselves to prayerful, careful, watchfulness.

Here's a helpful definition of watchfulness by Puritan Thomas Brooks.

Watchfulness is a continual, careful observing of our ways in all the passages and turnings of our life that we still keep close to the written word of God.

In other words, readiness for the end of the world, it looks like godliness and holiness. Peter says so in that same chapter that we've been reading from, from 2 Peter 3.

[36 : 13] Since all these are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening for the coming of the day of God.

So, watching, watching for the Lord's return and watching your own soul, they're not a contradiction. They're not competing efforts. In fact, we watch for Christ by, by watching our own souls.

Here is a simple question. What do you want to be caught doing when the Lord returns? What do you want to be caught doing when the Lord returns?

So, do only those things in the right manner that you'd hope to be caught doing, and simply avoid all the rest. So, the servant parable, it shows us what happens when the master arrives sooner than expected.

Now, in this last parable, Jesus shows us something equally sobering. Whatever, what happens is when he arrives later, later than expected. This parable focuses on a group of ten virgins during the wedding.

[37 : 30] It can be hard to place ourselves in this parable because first century Palestinian weddings, they're radically different from our weddings today. The limited info that we have, customarily after the legal nuptials in the bride's home, the bride group would then walk over to the great banquet at his home, accompanied by a group of young, unmarried women who are these virgins in this parable.

I think the closest equivalent might be like our weddings today if the wedding ceremony and the wedding reception were in two separate places and you have to travel in between them. But unlike our weddings, there was no set time that things would end.

Our time obsessed culture could never deal with this. And that culture back then to the question, how long will it take? The only right answer would be as long as it takes, as long as it needs to.

That meant the group of women needed to prepare well. They needed to prepare well for their one and only job to accompany the bridegroom and to light his path home.

But out of the ten, only five are wise enough to prepare oil with their lamps, just in case that the bridegroom is delayed. The five foolishly neglect to prepare any oil at all.

[38 : 56] And of course, lo and behold, the bridegroom is delayed in verse five. He's so delayed that in fact all ten of the virgins fall asleep.

It's not just the foolish that sleep, but remarkably the wise too. It's a remarkable contrast given the exhortations earlier in our passage. And the wise sleep too, which goes to show that watching for the Lord, it doesn't mean that we burn ourselves out, running at a complete sprint at all times.

We need sleep and rest too. But these are two very different kinds of sleep. for the wise sleep in readiness, in preparation for what's to come, like soldiers sleeping in their battle guard.

But in contrast, the sleep of the foolish, it exposes not only their unpreparedness, but their laziness too. Shouldn't these five girls have sacrificed some sleep to get ready to honor the bridegroom?

I wonder if procrastination and laziness might be some of the sins that we tolerate most easily.

[40 : 14] Does laziness sound as bad as unbridled anger or untamed lust? But make no mistake, spiritual procrastination and laziness can lead us to hell just the same.

It is my greatest fear that there are some who go to church week after week, maybe even this own church, and you hear the life changing gospel only to delay putting your faith in Jesus Christ, saying, oh, I'll always have later.

I need to finish school first. I need to get married first. there's always later. Maybe these five thought the same exact way until later became too late.

My friend, if you have not put your faith in Jesus yet, what is your delay? We don't know when Christ will return. I'm sure there are many priorities in your life.

There are a lot of important things, but your eternal life, heaven or hell, how could that not reach the top of your list? So take the steps necessary to get ready.

[41 : 39] Christian, we too are guilty of procrastination, are we not? I am guilty of procrastination. If Christ can return at any point, why have we delayed in sharing the gospel with that co-worker, with that friend, with that family member?

Is there someone that's named, that image is coming immediately to mind, that the Holy Spirit is putting on you right now? Delay not your obedience, but take steps to share honestly.

Don't be arrogant, don't be rude, don't offend unnecessarily, but be bold and share what's on your heart. And when you do, remember what's actually happening here.

I'm so encouraged by, again, the London team. for some reason, lately, we've been getting a good number of sales people coming by our door, right, selling insurance, solar panels, high-speed internet.

If I can, I try to talk to them every single time. But, you know, every time they come, they always have this look, I've noticed. It's like this embarrassed, sheepish look, like, hey, I need something from you, but I'm embarrassed, I'm sorry to ask.

[42 : 56] But how often do we treat sharing the gospel in the same way? Like, we're bothering them, we're nuisancing them, we're taking up their time.

When we evangelize, let us not forget, we're not doing them a disservice, we're sharing with them the good news of Jesus Christ, the best news of his love for us.

We're getting them ready, we're getting them ready, they need to get ready, so we're getting them ready for the return of the bridegroom. And here he comes, at midnight, later than anyone expected, a voice announces the arrival of the bridegroom.

The girls are shocked awake and immediately scrambled to get ready for their one job. They trim the charred ends of their lamps so that the flame can burn clean and bright again.

only for the five to realize, oh shoot, their stomachs drop. I'm not ready. I have no oil.

[44 : 02] And so they run to the other five, the wives, hey, give me some of your oil. I need some oil. And the wives realize, we don't have enough to share.

we don't have enough to share. And oil, a lamp without oil, it's like flashlights without batteries. This battery needs two double A's.

I only have two. I can't share one. Lest there be no light at all. Lest there be no light for the bridegroom at all, they send the other five to then go buy some more.

The five go to buy. And during that time, that exact time, the bridegroom returns. He comes and he enters in the marriage feast with all those who are ready for him.

Once the foolish five return, they find out the scariest reality in all of Scripture, that the door has been shut on them, never to be opened again.

[45 : 07] There is a finality to this conclusion. once the door is shut, it is never to be opened again. Then Jesus echoes what he said on the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 7, declaring the same judgment, I never knew you.

Depart from me. So this is the million dollar question. Are you ready?

ready? Are you ready? Jesus makes the point in this parable that the readiness isn't transferable.

No one can get ready for you.

No one can transfer the oil of their lamps onto you. Not the faith of your parents, not your friends, not your pastor, not your husband or wife. Will you hear, well done, good and faithful servant, or will you hear, I never knew you.

When I was younger, I honestly was terrified at the thought of Jesus returning. I always thought I needed more time.

[46 : 27] I needed more time to get ready, to fix myself. I wondered if I was good enough. I thought that if Jesus came back when I was in the middle of a sinful act, then the door would be shut on me.

Maybe if I got lucky, if Christ came back when I was in the middle of doing something holy, like worshipping or praying, then I could be entered in. I thought it was like Russian roulette.

Maybe I had a shot. Maybe, just maybe, if I got lucky. That's the only thing I could depend on was luck. Do you realize how terrifying it is to live like that?

Do you live like that? Because who can truly declare that you're so confident that your lives are so pure and holy and perfect that when Christ returns, he would not catch you in sin?

Sins of the mind, sins of the body, sins known and sins unknown, sins of omission and sins of commission, sins great, sins small.

[47 : 43] Even when we're not sinning, maybe in that particular moment that he returns, friends, who can possibly declare themselves fully ready for the return of Christ?

But praise be to God that because of his first coming, all those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ are now ready for the second coming.

We just sang of it that praise be to God that our sin, not in part, but the whole, is laid, nailed onto the cross so that we can truly declare from the depths of our heart that it is well.

We are ready. We are eager for our master to return. Jesus alone is the solid rock on which we stand. Confidence, we don't have confidence in ourselves.

We don't say that we are ready because of ourselves, but because of the finished and perfect work of Christ. Jesus gave himself, as we read in the assurance of pardon, to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession at the cross of Calvary.

[48 : 54] So now we are those who eagerly await, joyfully await, hopefully await for his arrival. No longer do we cower in fear of the day of judgment.

Why? Because there is no fear in love. There's no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. So all who confess that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, without fallout bunkers, without MREs, without preparing, like these apocalyptic ready groups, we are the ones that are ready for the end of the world.

We're ready to stand before the almighty judge on that faithful day. We're ready. We're ready to receive the crown of righteousness that is bestowed for all those who loved his arrival.

What good news. Life is so hard, and staying ready at all time is so hard.

We fight this battle on many fronts, our sinful flesh, the temptations of this world, and our wily enemy. How prone we are to wander away.

[50 : 10] But whoever openly declares, if you openly declare today, that you just simply say, Lord, I need your help. I can't do it on my own. That no matter who you are, what you have done, no matter how much time you have wasted, he will never reject you.

Never, ever reject you. But you can openly declare this beautiful verse, this ending to Jude, now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.

To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, be glory and dominion and power and authority for all time, now and forever.

So until that day, that glorious day, we labor on in expectancy and in hope, that one day when our faith shall become sight, so we make it, we make it our greatest longing, the prayer of our hearts, simply just to say, Lord, come, Lord Jesus.

pray with me. Father, we praise you that again, though we are not ready in and of ourselves, though we have proven ourselves undeserving for the crown of righteousness, we praise you, oh God, that because of your faithfulness, your call, your help, the power of your Holy Spirit that is training us to live lives of holiness and godliness, we look to you and we are eager for your coming, though we are battered and discouraged, though we are weak and tired, empower us today, encourage us today, make us eager and hopeful for your arrival.

[52 : 12] We long for that one great day, and in Jesus' name we pray, amen. Amen.