



“Return of the King”

Matthew 24:26-51; 25:1-13

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Sermon audio and text available at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

Keep watch!

“No one knows about the day or hour...” (24:36)

III – I remember a day in year 10 at school. Economics class after lunch. On the way in, all of us had taken handfuls of these flower heads off a camellia and taken them to class. While we waited for the teacher to arrive, we unloaded our ammunition on each other. Camellia heads were flying everywhere. The last one I threw was at Scott. But he ducked, just as the teacher came into the doorway. It hit the teacher in the chest, and I froze, not knowing what to do. He looked straight at me, pointed out the door and said “My office”. I don’t remember what happened next. I’ve possibly tried to block that out of my memory!

You never know when the teacher is going to walk around the corner and come through that door. You never know when he’s going to arrive. And the way we live while we wait is important. Because we have to be ready for him.

No one knows the day or hour when Jesus will return. And we must be ready.

So how do we prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus? How do we prepare ourselves for the return of the King? How do we get ready, and remain ready, for Jesus?

1. Keep watch: Live a life of righteousness

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant...”?

The image Jesus gives us in chapter 24 is of a house. Jesus is the master of this house and we are his servants. And when he goes away, he leaves a servant in charge of the other servants. And what he expects of a good and faithful servant, when he returns, is to find that this servant has looked after the other servants. What Jesus doesn’t want to find is that this servant has been evil. That this servant beats up the other servants. That this servant gets drunk and hangs out with drunkards.

The faithful servant, the servant who is ready for Jesus' return, is the one who cares for the other servants in God's house. The one who takes the responsibilities God has given them seriously. Servants who feed one another. Care for one another. Honour one another. Jesus wants us to be ready **as a church**. He's talking about the way we treat each other.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote these words:

"It is the fellowship of the cross to experience the burden of one another. If one does not experience it, the fellowship he belongs to is not Christian. If any member refuses to bear that burden, he denies the law of Christ. (Life Together)"

This is what we are called to do, as servants of Jesus. To bear burdens. To feed each other. To care for each other. **THIS** is the foremost place we exercise a life of righteousness – among each other. If we cannot do it here, what hope do we have of living a righteous life in the world? Are we ready for the return of Jesus? Look at our life here. In this place. Look at how we care for each other right here.

1. Keep watch. Live a life of righteousness. Look after each other the way Jesus expects us to.

2. Keep watch: Be Prepared

III – I remember preparing for one of my first year exams at Moore College. Doctrine 1. We were given a list of 26 questions. For preparation, we were told 8 of those questions would be on the exam paper, and we would have to answer 6. What that meant is that if you wanted to be prepared, you would need to prepare answers for at least 24 of the 26 questions!

Jesus calls us to prepare 26 out of 26. To prepare every part of our lives for his return.

He tells the story in chapter 25 of 10 virgins. They're waiting for the arrival of the bridegroom for the wedding. Their lamps are lit. Full of oil. But it's a long wait. And 5 of them run out of oil. Their lamps are going out. They ask the other 5, "Can we borrow some oil from you?" And the answer is, verse 9:

" 'No' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' "

So they go to buy more oil. But while they're gone, the bridegroom arrives and they miss him. They're too late. It seems cruel that the other 5 wouldn't share their oil, doesn't it?

But the point is this: You can't share this oil! The oil is **our readiness** for Jesus. **Our preparation.**

You can't borrow someone else's readiness! You can depend on someone else's preparation!

You can't borrow righteousness. You can't borrow perseverance. You can't borrow a life of faith.

III – Did you ever had one of those friends that never did any work at school, or at work, and they'd just borrow your work all the time, or copy homework, or cheat off your exams? I had one of those friends. But the day came when he couldn't cheat. He couldn't depend on someone else's study and preparation. He stood a test on his own for once. And he failed. Because he wasn't prepared. That is the day of Jesus' return. We cannot borrow the oil from others.

You stand before Jesus. **I** stand before Jesus. **Every single person** stands before Jesus.

The oil in our lamp, what keeps our lamp burning, is endurance. What does that look like? What does it look like to have a life that endures, oil that is full?

It's a life of meditating on God's word. It's a life of prayer. It's a life of being strengthened in the fellowship of God's people. These things are the daily bread that sustain us, and grow us in our faith, and strengthen us. These are the things that keep oil in our lamps. These are the things that that give us endurance.

You know, you can skip a meal a day and not starve to death. Maybe even 2 meals. Maybe more. But you keep missing meals, you're going to be in trouble. You keep eating unhealthy food, watch out. You miss talking to God for a few days, forget about his Word for a week or two, don't worry about the fellowship you have here for a week or a month. Let other things take over those parts of your life. A day, a week, a month... but if we keep neglecting those things, we lose strength. We lose perseverance. We lose endurance.

III – (I shared with you last week about our house preparation!) When visitors come over, we clean up our house. We clean every room we think people might go into. But we also shove things into cupboards that we just want to hide. We clean up what we can and we cover up what we can't.

The return of Jesus is the day when every room of your life will be open for inspection by God himself. Jesus will walk right into every room of your life

and expect to see transformation. He will expect to see our lamps burning brightly, persevering in every area. Struggling? – YES! But persevering! Making mistakes? Yes! Falling into sin? Yes! But persevering.

Jesus will walk into your family life. He'll see how you treat your father, your mother, your wife, husband, children.

He'll walk into your work life – what life of righteousness are you living there?

He'll walk into your sexual life – has that been pure and godly?

He'll walk into your bank account and inspect it for godliness.

He'll open up the drive on your computer and look at your righteousness there.

He'll open every door and see every room. Every room of our life needs transformation – and that happens by Him, Jesus, walking into every room.. starting right now. Every day we need to be repenting of our sin and seeking forgiveness, seeking righteousness, seeking godliness. Being prepared starts today. Jesus needs to start working in every room of our lives today, if we are to be ready for his return.

Keep watch...

Paul writes in Colossians 1:28-29:

"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me."

Paul's struggle, his labour, is not only for himself, but for others. Paul wants to see lives transformed by Jesus. HIS life, AND the loves of the people around him. How? By the **power** of Jesus. By the **strength** of Jesus. **His** strength to work in **us**, in **every** part of our lives, in **every** room of our lives.

I think sometimes we don't really appreciate the immediacy of the return of Jesus. And we often struggle to grasp the urgency of this reminder. And that must change. Our thinking must change. Our hearts must change. The way we treat other must change. The way we live must change – all in the light of the fact that Jesus is coming. And he is coming soon. Pursue righteousness, because he is coming. Prepare to endure, because he is coming. Keep watch, because he is coming.

Let's pray.