

Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am Sermon on 18/04/2021

Mini Series – “Making Disciples” Part 19

Matthew 24 v 36-51 “Discipleship in the light of Jesus’ return.”

Pt 2 “What does being ready look like”

All scripture references are taken from the ESV

Matthew 24: 36-51 ³⁶ “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son,^[b] but the Father only. ³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ 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, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ 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. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. ⁴⁵ “Who then is the faithful and wise servant,^[c] whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants^[d] and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

With coming of spring, there is beauty and new life everywhere, and that new life brings not only joy, but a sense of optimism. We see this and know that summer is coming. God set it up like this because he is a generous God who delights to give good gifts. He fills the world with things of beauty to bring gladness to our souls, so that we might turn that joy back into praise to him.

Jesus tells us (**Matt 24:32-33** see p4) that there is also a lesson we are to learn from tree branches becoming tender and putting out leaves. Just as those things are a sign

that summer is coming so the preaching of the gospel to all nations, followed by the Great Tribulation is a sign that Jesus' return is very near.

But how near is very near? Is it possible to pinpoint a time and date?

Jesus answers that (v36) by saying that no one knows the time of his return except the Father. Even he, in his humanity, doesn't make use of his omniscience as God to know the time of his return. This is a mystery to praise God for and to think about. Jesus goes on to give us an example of what life on earth will be like before the Lord Jesus comes back (vv36-39 above). In Noah's day, people were getting on with their everyday activities, just as people are today. **They were living with no thought for God.** They gave no thought to the ark that Noah was building or to his preaching, as he warned them of God's judgement through the coming flood unless they repented. They only took the flood seriously when the waters began to rise above their heads and the door of the ark, the only place of refuge, was shut to them.

It will be the same when Jesus returns.

People will be getting on with life, but **living with no thought for God**, ignoring the preaching that a final day of judgement is coming, refusing to repent and come to Jesus for mercy and forgiveness. The first time they get serious about the return of Jesus will be when it is too late. The first time they give proper thought to Jesus will be:

- When the trumpet sounds and Jesus gives his shout of command to wake the dead
- When he appears in glory to judge the earth
- **When it will be too late to find refuge in him**

The day of Jesus' return will be so sudden and people will be so conditioned to life on earth

that they will be caught out.

Jesus gives us signs that point forward to his return but at the same time we can see two possible outcomes:

- his return is very near and we are to expect him to come at any time

- no one knows the time of his return, and, judging by how many nations still need to be reached by the gospel, it may be a long time

How are we meant to respond to this teaching? One commentator (Michael Wilkins) expresses it like this:

Live as if Jesus is coming back today, but plan as if he's not coming back for a hundred years.

In **v42ff**, Jesus goes on to show us the kind of people we need to be and the kind of lives we need to be living.

1. We need to be watchful people (vv43 - 44)

With no police to keep an eye on things, homeowners needed to be alert and stay awake if there was any likelihood that a thief might break in. Jesus applies this to his coming too. We need to be awake to the truth that Jesus is coming back, and, because he hasn't told us the exact time, we need to be:

- Living with the expectation that he could come at any moment
- Living every day as if he might come today.

It does appear that there is still much that needs to take place before Jesus returns, but **we might be wrong in our understanding of the timing and what needs to happen.**

Even if Jesus' return is not for another 100 years, none of us have any guarantee that Jesus won't call us home to him through death. We are all only one breath and one heartbeat away from eternity.

We ought to be a people who are watchful, alert and awake to the truth that even today we might be in the presence of Jesus.

2. We need to live faithful lives (v45 - 51)

As disciples we are to be servants (slave, doulos) to Christ and his people. Jesus shows us two head servants – one faithful and one wicked. The wicked servant did not love his master, and only did what was expected of him when his master was watching. When his master was away, and his return was delayed, **the wicked servant lived as if his master wasn't coming back.** He lived as if there would be no

accountability for his actions. He abused the people he was supposed to care for, and joined in with the earthly pleasures of the world around him.

How many of us live life just like the world - as if Jesus isn't coming back and as if there will be no accountability?

Living faithfully as disciples of Jesus while we wait for his return means remaining true to the calling of God on our lives, and serving our fellow servants.

- The wicked servant only lived right when his master was watching
- The faithful servant lived right even when his master was absent, because he loved his master and was alert to the truth that he could come back at any time

We need to live each day so that we will neither be afraid of tomorrow or ashamed of yesterday.

3. We need to live ready lives. (Matt 25:1-13 see p4)

The ten young women had gone out to meet the groom and accompany him and his new wife to the wedding banquet. They all had their oil lamps ready but five of them were unprepared for the delay of the groom. All of them fell asleep as they waited, but when they woke up, the five foolish virgins realised they weren't ready, because their

lamps were going out and they had no more oil. If they had stayed awake, they could have gone to get more, but

it was too late to get ready when the bridegroom arrived. What does it mean to be ready? We see in **Matt 25:12**.

To be ready to meet Jesus and enter into the marriage banquet means to know Jesus

- **To know him as Saviour** – the one who, out of love for you, sacrificed himself on the cross in order to put right the wrong you had done so that God could forgive you
- **To know him as Lord** – the one who rules over your life with perfect wisdom, and to whom you submit your life, obeying all of his commands.

If you don't know Jesus like that, then no matter how much you enjoy singing the songs in church, or how many good deeds you do, or how respectable your life looks

to other people, **you are not ready for his coming, and it will be too late to get ready when he comes.**

If you continue to sleep in your sin, and never wake up to your desperate need of Jesus, then the next sound you hear will be that of the trumpet announcing his coming, and **it will be too late.**

If you don't know Jesus, then he doesn't know you and the door of heaven will be shut to you. However, the day of the Lord hasn't come yet and **there is still time to get ready.** Cry out to him for mercy even today.

The apparent delay of the Lord's return (or your death) is to give you time to repent of your sin

and trust in Jesus Christ to save you. (2 Peter 3:9-10 see p4).

4. We need to live productive lives (Matt 25:14-30 see p4)

The servants are given money according to their ability to handle it. Two of them are productive and double the money, but the third just digs a hole and buries his one talent. On his return, the master calls them all to account. The first two are praised and rewarded (**25:21**). The third tries to make excuses for his failure to live a productive life. His master sees through all this to the man's heart. This wicked servant didn't know the grace of his master but only perceived him as a hard man. The master pronounces judgement (**25:30**).

God has given us all gifts. We may have been given the ability to care or counsel, to lead or teach or perhaps money and homes with which to serve the kingdom of God. How we use them shows whether we are truly disciples.

True disciples live productive lives

- Knowing Jesus is coming back, and that this life isn't all there is, true disciples use whatever gifts they have been given to serve Christ and his people.
- Not knowing Jesus, those who aren't saved imagine that life on earth will never end and use what they have to serve themselves by making their own lives comfortable. Ultimately, that leads to eternal loss.

Jesus is coming back – this is the most certain fact ever.

The world won't go on as it is. Jesus will come back in power and glory to bring people to account and reward those who have been made righteous through trusting in him. These disciples will have been living watchful, faithful, ready and productive lives through faith in Christ.

Those who reject Christ (and therefore aren't ready for his return) will go into a place of eternal punishment.

Are you ready?

- Do you know Jesus as Saviour and Lord or are you still a stranger to him?

Are you ready?

- Are you living with an anticipation of his return, in faithful obedience to him, in readiness to meet him and seeking to use the gifts he has given you to serve the kingdom?

Are you ready?

Matthew 24:32-33 From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

Matt 25:1-13 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps^[a] and went to meet the bridegroom.^[b] ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶ But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' ¹⁰ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹² But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

2 Peter 3:9-10 ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, ^[a] not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰ 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 ^[b] will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. ^[c]

Matthew 25: 14 – 30 For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants ^[c] and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, ^[d] to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' ²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. ^[e] You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' ²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.' ²³ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' ²⁶ But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be

taken away. ³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'