**The Teacher: Jesus 2.0**

Luke 17:20-33

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I was 21 years old, engaged to be married, and I’d just lived through the 90’s. This meant was that there was a burning fear in my heart that Jesus might come back before my wedding.

And I was so torn. I wanted Jesus to come back, but I didn’t want to miss out on marriage. So I’d pray passionately every night: “Jesus, please don’t come back until after August 4th.”

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Today we’ve got a passage and a topic that I know people are going to be interested in – end times. And I’ve heard if you want to grow your church, talk about the end times – or sex. And if you can somehow talk about sex in the end times that will surly be a winner. Thankfully, for all you parents with kids in the room, today we’re just talking about end times.

So if you’ve got a Bible open up to Luke 17. We are going to pick it up in verse 20. Would you stand with me as we come before God’s word? Hear now the word of the Lord.

[Read Luke 17:20-33]

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

If you’ve been with us you know that we’ve been looking at the good news in Luke, and we’ve seen that Jesus has abundant life for us that starts now and lasts forever.

Well today we get into the second half of that as Jesus tackles the question of when the Kingdom of God is going to come. Now spoiler alert – at the end of this sermon you won’t know the date – but you will know how to be ready. So here’s the outline if you’re taking notes: Jesus shows us what the Kingdom of God isn’t, what it is, and how to live ready.[[1]](#footnote-1)

First, Jesus shows us what the kingdom of God isn’t. So notice how our text starts with Jesus talking to some Pharisees. And they ask Him in verse 20 “when will the Kingdom of God come?”

Now we’ve seen a lot of the Pharisees recently. Jesus told them the story of the Prodigal Son – where the younger son was in the party, and the older son (representing them) was outside. And Jesus, like the father, goes after them – longing for them to encounter the Kingdom, even though they’re about to kill Him.

And then Jesus told the story of the Rich man and Lazarus to a bunch of Pharisees who, Luke tells us, loved money. And again Jesus doesn’t shame them. He loves them and wants them saved.

But as Jesus gets closer to Jerusalem He knows the climax is coming and so He speaks directly to them. That’s our context. He’s still talking to the Pharisees.

And as they see Jesus heading towards Jerusalem they wonder if this where He is going to make His Messiah move – take out Rome and usher in the new age. This is what everyone was hoping for, and that’s because in the Old Testament there is no clear distinction between Jesus’ first and second coming. For example 500 years before His first coming Zechariah the prophet says:

Look, your king is coming to you…. and your king will bring peace to the nations. His realm will stretch from sea to sea (Zechariah 9:9-10 NLT)

So there was this huge expectation of the coming Messiah, but the Jews were all thinking that this would be an end of days kind of coming. The Messiah would set up a new kingdom that would last forever. But look how Jesus responds. In verse 20 He says:

“The Kingdom of God can’t be detected by visible signs.You won’t be able to say, ‘Here it is!’ or ‘It’s over there!’ For the Kingdom of God is already among you.” (Luke 17:20-21 NLT)

So the Pharisees were expecting Jesus to say something like “Well, when I take out Pilot, then you’ll know I’m king.” But instead Jesus says, “You’ve missed it. The Kingdom is already among you.”

In other words “I’m the fullness of the Kingdom of God, and I’m right here. But you’ve missed it because you think the Kingdom is going to be some big, physical or political reality that can be marked geographically.” But Jesus says God’s Kingdom isn’t about signs or location – it’s about being connected to the King. If you want into the Kingdom, you need to get to know the King.

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Last week Gerry told us about losing his finger and Jesus putting him in an ambulance with a paramedic who needed an encounter with God. And while bleeding out, he got to share Jesus with her. Even in weakness, God was working. And this is the Kingdom. When you’re connected to the King you get to see His Kingdom advancing everywhere.

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So are you obsessing over how you will know when Jesus is coming back? Or are you watching Him work today? This is what the Kingdom isn’t.

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But then Jesus turns around and starts talking to His disciples and says something totally different. Look at verse 22:

“The time is coming when you will long to see the day when the Son of Man returns, but you won’t see it. People will tell you, ‘Look, there is the Son of Man,’ or ‘Here he is,’ but don’t go out and follow them. For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so it will be on the day when the Son of Man comes.  (Luke 17:22-24 NLT)

Now this is weird, Jesus has just finished telling the Pharisees “The Kingdom is already here, you’ve missed it.” And now He tells His disciples “There’s a future day coming, but don’t worry, you can’t miss it, it will be like lightning.” So which one is it? Is it already here or is it still coming in the future? And the answer is Yes. It’s not one or the other, it’s both.

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In the 90’s it felt to me like Christianity was all about believing the right things so I could go to heaven when I died. It was all pie in the sky by and by. Life is going to be miserable now, but if I can somehow endure being holy then I’ll get to go to heaven. But Jesus says “That’s not it. There is something awesome to come, but there’s also cake on a plate while you wait.” Life with Jesus is abundant right now, and it lasts forever. And theologians call this the “Already and not yet” of the Kingdom.

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Now when you see this you realize that Jesus was constantly demonstrating this both/and reality of the Kingdom with everything He did. So when He fed the hungry or healed the lame or raised the dead all this pointed to the “not yet” Kingdom. One day in the future there is going to be no pain or hunger or death. That’s His promise. But His promise isn’t just for the future, it’s also for today.

But the point is not that everyone gets healed now if they name it and claim it. When Jesus showed up at the pool of Bethesda there were piles of sick people and He only healed one.[[2]](#footnote-2) And so not everyone gets healed now. The other side of this is that everyone Jesus did heal or raise from the dead ended up getting sick and dying again. And that’s because we are living with a not yet aspect of the kingdom. Brokenness remains.

But in this “Not Yet” time we still get abundant life. So Jesus feeds the 5000 – and this means one day hunger will be no more, but also right now those who feast on Jesus have an endless supply of the bread of life in their souls. See abundant life isn’t a full stomach – lots of people are full of food with no abundance at all. But abundant life is life with Jesus. And we can have that right now full or hungry.

Or like we see in Luke 8 where Jesus and the disciples are in the middle of a storm so terrible that the disciples, many of whom were fishermen, thought they were going to die. And so they wake Jesus up saying, “Don’t you care that we are going to perish?”

Now this has to be one of the most common dumb questions we ask Jesus. “Don’t You care what I’m going through?” Of course He cares. He was born in a manger and died on a cross to show us He cares.

But in that moment Jesus stood up and rebuked the storm and this is awesome. See the word “rebuke” here describes something you say to someone you have control over. It’s a parenting word.

Now of course pastors don’t do this because we have perfect kids, but when your kids poke holes in the ceiling with their fingernails or pull the drapes down in the kitchen then you say “cut it out. Stop breaking my house.” And you say this because you have a semblance of control over your children.

Well Jesus has this kind of relationship with the wind and the waves. Except they obey Him. The text says, “Immediately the storm stopped.” In other words the storm didn’t die down, it died.

He rebuked it like you and I turn off a car alarm. If your alarm goes off you say “oops, that’s mine.” And then you click the button and Beep and it’s off! Well Jesus did that with the storm. “Oh that’s My storm. Beep. And it’s off.

That’s what He does. Now what’s the point? Well on one hand there is the promise that one day nature will no longer terrorise us. There will be no tornadoes or floods or fires. But at the same time, because Jesus had infinite power then, this also means we can trust Him. And when we trust Him He calms the storms in our souls. “He does care about me. He is in control, and He’s here right now.”

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So there is an already and a not yet sense in the miracles of Jesus. And this is where we live when we know Jesus. When we meet Jesus we enter His Kingdom right now and get to watch Him work. But we also know there is a not yet to the Kingdom such that we trust Him even when things aren’t going the way we wish. He’s still got this. He’s still in control. And even though He’s not doing what I want I know His is working all things out for His glory and the good of those who love Him.

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But this raises a crucial question: what are we supposed to do as we live between the “already and the not-yet” of God’s kingdom? How are we supposed to prepare for Jesus’s return? Well if you’re asking that, you’re asking the question Jesus wants to answer. And He begins answering it in verse 26 saying:

“When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. In those days, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came and destroyed them all…. Yes, it will be ‘business as usual’ right up to the day when the Son of Man is revealed.” (Luke 17:26-30)

I want to draw out two convictions Jesus wants us to center our lives around as we wait for His return. He wants us to live believing that His return is imminent and that it’s going to be awesome. And both are essential if we are going to live faithfully in the “already” of the kingdom while we wait for the “not yet.”

So first the imminent. Jesus says it will be like in the days of Noah. People will be living their normal lives—eating, drinking, celebrating weddings—right up until the moment Jesus returns. And many won’t be ready because they didn’t know it was going to happen just then. But Jesus says it’s not the knowing when that matters.

Or in another place He says, *“No one knows the day or the hour—not the angels, not even the Son when He was on earth.”[[3]](#footnote-3)* So Jesus thinks the knowing when is actually impossible. That’s why I always chuckle at people who make predictions.

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When I was a kid, a book came out called “88 Reasons Why Jesus Will Return in 1988.” It sold a lot of copies, but when ‘88 didn’t pan out the author released a sequel: “89 Reasons Why Jesus Will Return in 1989.” And maybe his mom bought a copy but that’s it. Like trying to calculate Jesus’ return is a guaranteed way to look like an idiot. But more importantly—it misses the point entirely.

See Jesus doesn’t tell us when He’s coming back because He wants us to live ready all the time. He wants us to live with a sense of imminence.

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So 100% of people who are alive today are going to find themselves standing in front of the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will either happen when we die, or it will happen on the day He returns. But it’s going to happen. And yet, because we don’t know when – and because it can feel distant – we push it to the back of our minds and fill our attention with what seems urgent.

And this is what happened in Noah’s day. Life carried on: eating, drinking, getting married. And all these are good things! But Jesus is warning: most people don’t miss the Kingdom because they reject it – they miss it because they neglect it. We get so absorbed in everyday life that we lose sight of eternity.

Or imagine you had an app on your phone that told you exactly when a life-changing opportunity was coming—a dream job interview, the moment your child opens up to you, or the one chance you get to share your faith with a friend – but you didn’t know exactly what. But instead of training for it, we mute the alerts and scroll TikTok, as if it’ll somehow still work out. Then the moment comes and we weren’t ready.

That’s what Jesus says people were doing in Noah’s day. But Jesus says: “Don’t live like that. Don’t ignore what’s coming. Instead, live with urgency.

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So living ready for Jesus’ return isn’t about figuring out when it’s going to happen, it’s about living with the expectation that it’s going to happen soon – Jesus is coming back. But living ready also means living with the expectation that when He does it’s going to be awesome. Look at verse 33. Jesus says:

If you cling to your life, you will lose it, and if you let your life go, you will save it. (Luke 17:33 NLT)

So Jesus is saying it’s dangerously easy to live for the good things of this life – family, career, fun, pleasure – and lose sight of eternity. But what we need to do is focus on the glory of eternity and let that inspire the way we live now. And Paul was constantly saying the same thing.

In fact every one of Paul’s letters emphasizes that Jesus is coming back and it’s going to be so good that we should think differently about how we live now. So for example in 1 Corinthains 7 he says:

What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; those who mourn, as if they did not… those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep…. For this world in its present form is passing away. (1 Corinthians 7:29-31)

Now at first this sounds strange – like is Paul handing out a hall pass for marriage? No. That’s not it. Paul is saying everything in this life is temporary, so don’t cling to it like it’s ultimate. Instead cling to what is actually real.

But we can forget this. We think this is the life I get. I get one shot to get married; one shot to see the world; one shot to chase my dreams. And so we build our bucket lists and say, “I just want to make sure I don’t miss out.”

But the problem with this thinking is it assumes the life to come is less real and less awesome than the life we have now. It imagines some floaty place in the clouds with harps and haloes. But that’s not what Scripture teaches. The Bibles doesn’t say we’re going there, it says heaven is coming here, and it’s going to be real and it’s going to be awesome.

So unlike what the book series says, we want to be left behind. I mean Jesus clearly says it’s going to be like it was with Noah. Some will be swept away and the others left. So think about it, you don’t want to be swept away. It’s those who are left who inherit a purified, perfected world – a new heaven and new earth, restored to what it was meant to be.

And really this is the point of Jesus’ physical resurrection as well. When Jesus rose His disciples could touch Him. He talked. He ate fish and loved it. But He could also walk through walls. It was Jesus 2.0. And the promise is that we get a 2.0 version too.

But Jesus says there is a danger, and it’s clinging to earth 1.0 fearing that if we don’t squeeze everything we can out of this life, we’ll miss out. But that just results in chasing experiences and hoarding treasure that’s going to rust.

See the stuff of this world always disappoints. There’s always one more thing you need; you’re never satisfied. But when you live for the King, you get to taste abundant life now – even in the pain and suffering. And when He returns, you get it all for real in full.

So listen: if you don’t get to see the Alps before you die—you haven’t missed out. The Alps are coming back 2.0. And if you don’t get married in this life, you haven’t missed out. Because even the best marriage, as great as that could be, is only a foreshadow of something greater. It’s like if you didn’t get to taste the soup before the cook added the last spices you haven’t missed out on lunch. The best is yet to come.

And this is what it means to live ready for Jesus’ return. It means both living with the expectation that He could come at any moment, as well as the confidence that when He does, it’s going be awesome.

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Throughout the New Testament the dominant picture Jesus uses to describe His second coming is a wedding feast. Now we don’t have all the details, but He tells us it’s going to be a real feast with real wine, real joy, and the real embrace of the Father. The God of the universe is going to be there.

Now think about this: The God who created everything existed with Himself for eternity before He made anything else. And He wasn’t bored. So something infinitely awesome was going on there. And He invites us to be married into that. It’s going to be good.

And this is what it means to live ready for Jesus’ return. It means to live expecting the imminent return of Jesus and so investing yourself today in your connection to the King.

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And this leaves only one last thing to say: In His first coming, Jesus let go of everything this world had to offer. He was born in a manger and died on a cross. He was rejected and despised. And He embraced it all. Why? So He could offer you everything this world promises but can never deliver.

So can you see how much He cares for you? Do you see how much He loves you? If you can then set your eyes on the King and His kingdom. Invest your time, your energy, your money—your whole self—into knowing Him now – this is how you live ready. Because if you get Jesus now, you get life abundant. Life that starts now and lasts forever.

1. Outline adapted from JD Greear <https://summitchurch.com/message/the-imminence-of-the-kingdom-luke-1720-35> (Accessed July 10, 2025) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. John 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Matthew 24:36 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)