

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.*

Our gospel reading today perhaps seems a bit disjointed. It's first about money and selling your possessions, then there are two short parables about being ready, first for the master to return from the wedding banquet, then for the Son of Man to arrive at an unexpected time. While these two small parables do not specifically mention Christ's return, that is their focus. To understand this reading, we need to dig deeper into some questions about Christ's return;

- The early church expected Jesus' return in their lifetimes - what do we make of this over 2000 years later?
- Why did Jesus need to return after his ascension - couldn't the kingdom come in completely while he was here?
- What will happen if we're not ready when Jesus comes again, – and how are we to be 'ready?'

As we can see, this reading is all about the Second Coming of Jesus – also known as the 'Parousia' in Greek. In ancient Greek literature, 'Parousia' described the visit of a ruler or dignitary, highlighting the magnificence of their presence. Every week we acknowledge the Second Coming when we say the Apostle's Creed:

“On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.”

The early church expected Jesus to return in their lifetimes and looked forward to it with great anticipation. But by the time this Gospel was written, it was becoming clear that Christ's Second Coming was delayed, by who knew how long. Today we may find it difficult to expect that Christ will come again in our lifetimes. Some Christians, however, believe they know when Christ will come again. We see them sometimes of street corners with placards saying, 'Repent, the end of the world is near.' Others see fit to knock on doors warning people to turn back to Christ before it's too late. Often these folks embarrass us with their treatment of the subject. So, very often mainstream churches ignore the subject, and some people may even doubt that Christ will come again. Some doubted even in Christ's lifetime. Perhaps it's just a false promise to make us behave better. But for those who do believe, it's important to recognise the Second Coming, because we need to know that the world is not moving aimlessly through time, but that God has a plan, and that plan ends with judgement and redemption. Those who are ready will be rewarded with the Kingdom, despite their fears, and those who are not will be judged.

Why is Jesus coming back? Jesus said in John 5:26-29, that God “has given (the Son) authority to execute judgement.....<sup>28</sup> Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and will come out; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

In Matthew 16:28 Jesus says, “<sup>28</sup> Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom,” i.e. he will come back very soon. Which is why the early Christians had that expectation.

The Second coming is not explicitly mentioned in the gospels but is only implied.

However, that hasn't stopped us from making valid arguments for Christ coming back, likely in a timescale different from ours.

The first reason for him to come back echoes Christ's own words –

- To judge everyone in the world, the living and the dead. He is coming back to set the world right and to restore Creation to its original intent. God is giving us a chance to repent, to turn from our sins and to trust him, thus escaping judgement.

The second reason is to fully bring in the Kingdom –

- Christ will bring new heavens and new earth. It was not possible to do this when Christ was here on earth before, because the world was too sinful. This is what we are all waiting for – a new world. Every day we hear more bad news, war, famine, unrest, corruption. It's time for a new world.

Next, how are we to live in readiness for Christ's return?

First by having faith. We heard in the epistle reading from the Letter to the Hebrews what faith is. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Jesus made the point that faithfulness demands diligence. It's not a one-off thing reserved for Sundays.

Secondly by how we act. The Rev. Sincerbox<sup>1</sup> makes the following observations in his sermon from 2017: ‘Being prepared for Jesus’ Second Coming means that everything in our lives should be done in light of this pending event.’ He continues -

Point 1: Being prepared means that we must be aware that we have our feet in two different time zones. Our home in heaven should determine how we live on earth. Our internal GPS should be directing us to the fact that Christ will come again, and we should remain steadfastly on this highway.

Point 2: Being prepared means that we should be actively seeking the future blessing of our Lord. When we celebrate Christmas and Easter we focus on past events from Jesus' life. But our eyes should also be turned to the present. Jesus is active in our world now and will be in our future.

Point 3: Being prepared means that we should be learning to see the world in the full color of Jesus' reign, not in black and white as if he is not at work. This means we are to open our eyes and lovingly see others. Let us see and define our lives, our politics, our worship, our relationships, our everyday activities through and under the eyes of our Saviour, Jesus the Christ.

Point 4: Being prepared means that we should be developing habits of love and service. Love and service come naturally for some. But for others, developing these habits may go against our natures. But we can learn and practise. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny.”

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://stbrendanschurch.org/sermons/are-we-prepared-for-the-second-coming/>

A reminder that these four points are about actions – doing good works and developing good character. But we are not saved by good works, but by grace through faith. In the same passage in which Paul tells us this, Ephesians 2:1-10, Paul also tells us that we have been created for good works, which God has prepared for us before the beginning of the universe.

So, we are not to be afraid, for it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom. We must do our part in bringing in that Kingdom when all will be made right with the world. We cannot predict when the Son of Man will come again. He will come at an unexpected hour, like a thief in the night. We can prepare for Christ's Second Coming, by being always faithful.

AMEN