

## While We Are Waiting On Jesus

1. Warm-up Question: Sunday marked the beginning of Advent and the launch of the Christmas season. Christmas season is full of good things, but also has its downside. What's something you don't like about the Christmas season?
  
2. On Sunday, Pastor Robert reminded us that during Advent we look back and we look forward. Looking back, we seek to place ourselves in the historical shoes of Israel as they waited for centuries for the arrival of the Messiah. Looking forward, we anticipate Christ's Second Coming. In the New Testament, the Second Coming is referred to as the *Parousia*, a Greek word that means "arrival." *Parousia* is the Greek word that gets translated to *Adventus* in Latin. So, it's the original word for Advent. In other words, Advent is not just about waiting for Jesus' first coming, but also his Second Coming. Sunday's Scripture challenged us to be ready for the Second Coming. Read Matthew 24:36-44, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. When you read this passage, what kinds of feelings arise within you?
  
  - b. Robert reminded us that some people have strange ideas about how to prepare for the Second Coming. Often it involves bunkers, canned goods, lima beans and, of course, cans of Spam stacked in pyramids. Some of these underground bunkers are booby trapped – apparently because you don't want anyone stealing all your Spam! ☺ Robert said, "Say what you will about these people, but at least they are living as though what they believe is true." Do you feel you're living as though the Second Coming is something that will actually happen? Why or why not?
  
3. In our passage, Jesus tells us that when he returns, people will be living as they were in the days of Noah, "Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." He goes on to say that when he returns men will be working in the fields and women will be grinding meal. The point is not that there's anything wrong with eating, drinking, marrying, and working. The point is that people were so busy with everyday life, they lost sight of the impermanence of our present reality and failed to prepare for the coming reality. Jesus tells us to "keep watch" and "be ready" for when he returns. Robert suggested three things we can do to be ready. **First, be faithful.**
  - a. Romans 13:11-12 offers some insight into what it means to live faithfully. There Paul says, "And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light." What are some "deeds of darkness" that tempt you that you want to put aside?
  
  - b. What do you think it means to "put on the armor of light?" What are some positive things you want to embrace that will wrap you in light?

4. **Second, being ready for Jesus' return also means living actively.** All through the book of Matthew and the other gospels we find Jesus announcing a call to action. Jesus does not expect to come back to find us all sitting around pondering and calculating his return. We are called to live actively. Robert cited several examples of things Jesus told us to do.
  - a. "Jesus said to his disciples, 'Come, follow me . . . and I will make you fishers of men.'" Matthew 4:19. What do you think that means? Do you see yourself as a "fisher of men"? Why or why not?
  - b. After his resurrection and before his ascension, Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19. For many of us, the idea of evangelizing others feels uncomfortable, especially given the excesses of some. Is there a responsible, respectful way for us to share our faith? What does that look like?
  - c. Think about someone you know that you would say actively lives (or lived) their faith. What does it look like for them to actively live their faith?
  
5. **Third, being ready for Jesus' return also means living for others.** This is the opposite of living as if life is all about me. It means living to love and to serve.
  - a. In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: **Love your neighbor as yourself.**" What is a practical way you are trying to go the extra mile right now to love someone else?
  - b. In Matthew 20:26-28, Jesus said, "**Whoever would be great among you must be your servant . . .** even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." What is a practical way you are trying to go the extra mile right now to be a servant to others?
  
6. In our passage, Jesus tells us that no one knows when the Second Coming will happen. In fact, he says, "You . . . must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Matthew 24:44.
  - a. Why do you think God decided to keep the timing of both the first and second coming a secret? Why not just tell us?
  - b. Try to imagine yourself as Jewish person living in the first century. Down through the ages, your ancestors had believed the Messiah would eventually come, yet millennia had passed and nothing happened. If you were a Jewish person living in the first century, do you think you would have genuinely believed the Messiah might come during your life? Why or why not? How should that inform our thinking now as we wait for the Second Coming?

- c. Our lives are terribly busy, just like ancient people in the time of Noah and the time of Jesus. What are some practical ideas for how we can stay watchful?

**Matthew 24:36-44**

<sup>36</sup> “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>37</sup> As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; <sup>39</sup> and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>40</sup> Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.”

<sup>42</sup> “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. <sup>43</sup> But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup> So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”