

Title: Get ready!  
Text: Luke 17.20-37  
Theme: The public revealing of the Son of Man  
Series: Luke  
Aim: I aim to convince my audience of the fact that the revelation of Jesus Christ is real and that life as we know it will not go on indefinitely, so be ready.

In the fall of 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait and took it over. For the next several months, America built a coalition of 42 nations for a military response that became known as Desert Storm that was launched early 1991. The build-up to that war occupied the news for months. People feared the worse and war in the Middle East always feels biblical, so prophecy became a hot topic. When Desert Storm was launched, people flooded churches thinking that this was related to Armageddon. That lasted for about 2 Sundays. Then things settled down. If I listed all of the conflicts between then and now I suspect you would have forgotten a few of them. Just over 24 hours ago, we, along with Israel, launched a major bombing campaign on Iran. The nation is not glued to the news. We're used to it.

Once things settle down, we move on. The sun comes up, then goes down. Seasons come and go. Time just keeps rolling into the future. Even when there are cataclysmic events like 911, Pearl Harbor, World Wars, the great depression, we talk about them, make movies, write books, build monuments and memorials, but the next generation doesn't feel it as deeply and over time, it gets buried into the footnotes of life. I don't abuse this pulpit with hype. Neither do I read the Bible through the lens of current events and pretend to know how this fits into the book of Revelation. But life, as we know it will not go on indefinitely. In our text Jesus talks specifically about the "days of the Son of Man" as a time in the future when he returns. This will be a massive event that takes the world by surprise not only in its suddenness but in its massive impact. The revealing (revelation) of Jesus Christ is real. Jesus promised it. We must be ready.

Read Text:

Following his healing of the lepers, Jesus is asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come. This is like one of your kids asking you when dinner will be ready just after eating dinner. Hold the phone! What just happened? Jesus just healed lepers! Jesus just healed 10 lepers and the Pharisees want to know when the kingdom of God would come? Jesus answers their question but he is not playing their game. Because...

1. **The Kingdom of God is right in front of them but they refuse to see it.** (20-21)

If the Pharisees were honestly trying to learn from Jesus and were humble about it, then the response of Jesus would have been quite different. The question the Pharisees asked is, all by itself, a good question. But they are not asking it from a posture of interest, but of argument. And it really is tragic to see how some people can know so much truth, and be that close to Jesus and completely miss the gospel.

John the Baptist preached about the kingdom of God to prepare the way for Jesus and announced that Jesus was the fulfillment of that. When Jesus began his public ministry his sermons (teachings) centered on the topic of the Kingdom of God, also known as the Kingdom of heaven and the Kingdom of Christ. The Kingdom of God is actually the story of the Bible because it is the story of God who lives with and rules over his people on the earth. This is how the Bible begins (Genesis 1-2) and how it ends (Revelation 21-22). Everything in between is related in some way to this theme. The kingdom of God is the story of this world. Everything in the Bible relates to this because everything in life, including your life relates to this. The OT talked about the king and kingdom who would come and Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of that and proved it by his miracles.

Therefore, there was nothing really more to tell the Pharisees. You can't look for the kingdom and reject the king. The Pharisees do not believe what he has already said, nor do they believe what he has already done. So, while the Pharisees wanted to know when the kingdom would come, Jesus told them very little. He answered them truthfully, but with a warning implied. The kingdom is in the midst of you. The kingdom is right here. He is referring to himself. His point is, they have already been given all of the signs they need (including healing 10 lepers), but Jesus is not the king they want, therefore, they really don't want anything to do with the kingdom of God. If that could happen to them, that could certainly happen to us. What do we need to do to make certain that we do not repeat the same fatal mistake?

*Who is infinitely more important than when.* I need to give the attention of my heart and life to the Who of the Kingdom (the King – Jesus Christ) way more than when and how all of this is going down. Jesus does talk about the when and the how. Paul adds to it and so does John. But even the book of Revelation gets its name from the opening line of the book which is “The revelation of Jesus Christ...” When we give our hearts to secondary issues over primary ones, then secondary and tertiary matters take over. The Pharisees are classic and tragic examples of this. They missed Jesus because they were not looking for him. They did not prioritize the king of the kingdom. Beloved as you look at your world and try to anticipate what is going to happen, and what affects certain movements are having, and how certain ideas are you forgetting Jesus? Are you more concerned about knowing what is going on this world, or actually knowing Jesus? Do the political voices you listen to work in harmony with the Spirit's fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? The Pharisees were way more concerned about appearing to be right than they were about being humble and holy.

I remind you that the Pharisees did not start out to damn the Jews with their hypocrisy. They originated to give careful attention to the Law of God and protect Israel from losing her identity as the people of God. But over time, they became obsessed about being right, being respected, and being influential that they missed the very God of the Law they claimed to be defending. How does someone become so concerned with the truth that they crucify the embodiment of truth? You cannot love Jesus without loving truth, but you can certainly love being right instead of loving and knowing Jesus.

Jesus then addresses his disciples, because their view of the Kingdom was not complete and Jesus wanted them to be prepared for what they were about to face. His response is different.

2. **The King is with you, but the full Kingdom is still to come.** (22-37)

To the disciples their King was unlike any king they had ever known and therefore his kingdom is not like the kingdoms of man. To the disciples, Jesus talks about what to expect in the shortly term and what to expect in the long run.

a. **The King will be gone and will not return in your lifetime.** (22-23)

The disciples, like many of the followers of Christ assumed that Jesus was going to take the throne of Herod, raise up an army, overthrow the Romans and restore Israel to her former glory. For them, this journey to Jerusalem was to make this happen. But that was not the plan of Jesus. The disciples thought of the kingdom as being political, military, and Jewish. It is true that the kingdom of God involved a King, so it certainly had a political element to it. The kingdom of God also involved a people who were governed and a place where those who were governed lived. But the kingdom of God that Jesus spoke about also involved a spiritual component. In fact, there is a sense in which the kingdom of God starts with the reign of Christ in the hearts of people. It is more than a spiritual rule in our hearts, but it is certainly not less than that. Jesus starts with the heart. Once again, Jesus redefines his kingdom for them and tells them that rather than lead a coup that takes over the throne in Jerusalem, that he is actually going to be leaving them. They will want to see him. They will really want him to return, but he says, "you will not see it." And if anyone says that the Son of Man is over here, or over there, don't fall for it. It is not true. I think that what Jesus is saying in v.22 is that the disciples will not see the return of Christ in their lifetime. "*you will not see it.*" Therefore, the events that Jesus describes in the rest of this text should not be seen as being fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. That happened during the lifetime of some of the disciples. Besides, Jesus goes on to describe his return in worldwide, cataclysmic terms that go beyond Jerusalem.

Wow, this changes things, doesn't it? Still, I don't think they fully absorbed what Jesus was telling them. But he was resetting expectations. This was not going to go, like they thought. The truth is, they had no idea. And that is usually what it is like following Jesus. You have an idea of how you think your life is going to go. You have dreams, and often they are good, but God's plans for you are even better. He does not tell us everything upfront because for most of us, we can't handle it yet. As new believers, our faith, like these disciples has not been tested in the fire yet. So like the children of Israel coming out of Egypt, God takes us on the long road because there are many lessons, we need to learn so our faith grows deep. Shallow roots are exposed in strong winds. So is a shallow faith.

We are all prone to create expectations of what our lives are going to be like, and we ask God to bless them and we find it easy to think as if, this is what God has promised for us. The promises of God are rich and deep, but he never promises to keep us from the valleys, from the hardship, from the loss. He promises to keep us through it all and deliver us safely to the other side. Even

though he slays me, Job says, yet will I trust him. Jesus is worth your trust, no matter what the cost is. I love it that Jesus identifies the fact that the disciples will long for Jesus to return. His absence is not because he has abandoned them or does not care about them. No, there is more going on than they realize. And that is true for you and me. The adversity we face will not have the final word. The difficulties we are called to endure will not be forever. Faithfulness in adversity is hard. We look like fools to trust Christ, when our trust does not result in immediate healing, prosperity or comfort. Why would you follow a God who does not give you what you want. The question you and I confront daily is this, is Jesus worth my trust because I am really at a loss to see the dawn. What will vindicate your faith? What will prove, once and for all that you were not a fool to believe? The return of Christ. Darkness, loss, adversity and grief will not have the final word because...

**b. The King will return and it will be massive! (24)**

*...so will the Son of Man be **in his day**. (24b)*

The Son of Man will have his day and it will not be a secret. Christianity has always suffered from various forms of a heresy known as Gnosticism. This word comes from the Greek word that means knowledge and it refers to people who think they have secret insights, secret clues, secret formulas, secret knowledge, secret prophecies, secret revelation, secret dreams, secret prayers, secret rituals, secret spiritual hacks (you could say) that set them apart from others. You see this, when the clergy act as if they have power or insight that the poor common followers are not privy to. Sadly, good people are gullible and are taken by the claims of this. Jesus is blowing it up ahead of time. My return is not going to be hidden and revealed only to a few in secret. No, as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, that is what my return will be like. It will be massive! It will be visible to all. So, the return of Christ is going to happen but it is not going to play out in the lives of the disciples like they thought. In fact, there is something else they need to know that is going to happen before that. In fact, it is going to happen shortly.

**c. Get ready for suffering. (25)**

The disciples, at this point, were getting ready for glory now. Jesus tells them to get ready for suffering. Suffering now, glory later. First, Jesus is going to suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. The glorious day of the Son of Man is in the future (end of v.24). But right now, is a time for suffering and rejection.

Suffering and rejection is what the Son of Man will experience and it is what his followers can expect. We should not be surprised by suffering and if anyone is trying to tell you that suffering or adversity is from a lack of faith, they are deceived and are misrepresenting the plain teaching of Jesus. He is telling us the opposite. But this generation, will not have the final word. The suffering and the rejection are for a season, but they will not win. And now, in vs.26-32 Jesus really presses into this.

d. **Get ready for his return!** (26-37)

This is sobering. Look at verse 26 and then v.28. Jesus makes a direct comparison to what happened in the days of Noah and what happened in the days of Lot to the day of the Son of Man (v.26b), (v.30) "*so it will be*" 2x. So, what happened in the days of Noah and Lot? God's judgment came suddenly and shockingly and there was no escape for those unconcerned and therefore, unprepared.

By the way, Jesus is affirming the historical accuracy of the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. These events were not old fables conjured up to teach moral lessons. The flood actually happened and so did the sudden destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Jesus is saying that when he returns it will be like those two events, meaning, that his return is going to be devastating for those unconcerned about God, and therefore unprepared. They were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage. They were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting and building, meaning they were carrying on in life as if life was always going to be this way and that there would be no accountability for their lives. You only go around once, so live for the moment. Live for your pleasure, etc. They had no clue how close they were to judgment and when the flood gates opened or when the fire and sulfur came raining down, it was too late. The return of Christ is going to be like that. For those unconcerned and unprepared the judgment will be swift and devastating.

It will be so swift, that for anyone who happens to be on the roof of his house and sees what is happening (after all, Jesus said it would be obvious to all), he needs to run for his life, but running down the stairs (on the outside wall) for safety. He does not have time to go inside and grab anything. For the one who is in the field and sees what is happening, he doesn't have time to run back to the house. It is that sudden! Remember Lot's wife. When Lot and his wife and daughters were leaving Sodom on the morning of its destruction, the 2 angels sent by God to rescue them, had to implore them and force them to hurry up and get out. Even so, as they left, Lot's wife was reluctant to leave. Genesis 19.26 says that Lot's wife was behind him. She was dragging her feet and in fact, looked back in direct disobedience of what God had commanded and she died, instantly. Jesus is giving a warning. The day of his return is that sudden. Therefore, if you try to "preserve your life" meaning, live for your pleasure, presuming that life will just go on indefinitely, you will lose it. You will not be ready. If, however, you lose your life, meaning, you live in such a way that you are against the grain of this world, against the party culture, against the materialism, the worldliness, and you identify with Noah who was mocked, and yet prepared, and with Lot, who was also mocked and yet got out, albeit reluctantly, you will save your life. Jesus is describing that following him will not be easy, but it will be worth it.

Then Jesus describes two common scenes, people sleeping and people working. 2 people are sleeping and the return of Christ is so sudden that without warning, one is gone and the other left. The same thing is repeated about two women working together at a mill. One is taken, the other left. Are those taken, taken in judgment or are they taken as in a rescue? I'm not exactly sure. The flood swept away the people to death. The fire destroyed Sodom and wiped out the people. The ark took Noah and his family away to safety and the angels did the same for Lot and

his daughters. The imagery of the vultures and the corpses, leaves me to think that this taking away is for judgment not rescue. But the main point is clear. The return of Christ creates a massive division between those who are concerned and prepared for his return (that is living for his kingdom) and those who live for themselves and are therefore the ones who face the irreversible judgment of his return. What side are you on?

Let's summarize:

- 1) The Kingdom of God is the storyline of the Bible and God's game-plan for the world.

The Kingdom is a King – Jesus, a people who happily live under his reign (followers) and a place.

- 2) The Kingdom is already but not yet.

There is a sense in which it has already come. We see that in the preaching of Christ, his instructions to the disciples in Luke 22.29 and in the preaching of Paul (Acts 28.31). We also know that the Kingdom has not yet come in its fullness. Jesus commanded us to pray for his kingdom to come and he talks about the future day of the Son of Man when he returns in glory, triumph and power.

- 3) The worldwide nature of this event described in this text is bigger than the fall of Jerusalem.

The return of Christ will be sudden and cataclysmic. You must be ready now. If you wait, thinking that you can make a last minute decision for Christ, it will be too late. If you wait to hit the brakes when your airbags are going off, it's too late. You need to be serious and intentional about your commitment to and relationship to Christ. This is what life is about.

- 4) Life as a follower of Christ is usually, suffering now, glory later. Do not be surprised by the struggle but embrace it because Jesus is worth it.
- 5) Jesus is worth it! The return of Christ will vindicate every follower of Christ and will underscore the point that Jesus is worth a costly faith.