

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

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The Gospel of Matthew

You Will Know When You See Me

March 15, 2020

Sermon Text: Matthew 24:1-14

Scripture Reading: 2 Thes 2:1-12

Before we continue this morning with the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25) I wanted to make a few comments about those closing verses of chapter 23:

Matthew 23:37-39 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (38) See, your house is left to you desolate. (39) For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

First, you have this statement about Jesus’ desire to gather Jerusalem’s children together, but they were not willing. The imagery Jesus uses is that of a mother hen protecting her brood of chicks under her wings. This is a very common Old Testament reference:

Ruth 2:12 The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!”

Psalms 17:7-9 Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. (8) Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings, (9) from the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me.

It is a picture of faith and obedience to the Lord, looking to Him for His protection and blessing, which He is anxious to give. But Israel refused. They consistently went their own way,

pursuing false gods, polluting the Lord's temple, and now that Temple will be desolate. The Lord is not present in it and it will be destroyed.

Now this phrase "and you were not willing" is often pointed to as a support for Arminian theology. Here you see the Lord willing, but man opposes that will. As reformed Christians we hold to the "I" in TULIP – irresistible grace. We believe that the Bible teaches us that when God elects someone to salvation, that person IS going to be saved and not even their own sinful heart can stop it. They will come to repentance and faith. Here however does it not say that the Jews did resist God's will to save them?

As always we need to remember the context. Jesus is speaking to Old Covenant Israel. The Jews, under the Old Covenant, were still unconverted in heart and consistently refused to obey that Covenant. The Law had no power to save because of man's hard, unbelieving heart. *But you will never find the Lord speaking to His New Covenant people in this manner.* Rather, it is this:

John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

John 10:27-28 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (28) I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

Understand? It is a great error to apply Jesus words here to the New Covenant era. And then we need also note that the Bible does make it plain that any person who rejects Christ, even in this era, can never say "well, it was the Lord's fault. He didn't elect me." (See Romans 9-11 on this). The sinner is responsible for his sin. No one will be in hell because God did not elect them to salvation. They will be there because they would not have Christ.

And then you have this in verse 39 –

(39) For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

How is it that these Jews, who reject Him, will say when He comes again, "Blessed is He..."? In fact, they had already done so –

Matthew 21:9-10 And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the

highest!” (10) And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?”

So Jesus had already entered the city in a triumphant manner – though there was some odd element about it: riding on a humble colt and so on. His words here imply then that *He is going to come again in triumph. That there will be another triumphal entry into Jerusalem – only the people in that day will be quite different in heart and the city will be the true Jerusalem. Here it is in a passage that the Jews would have known well:*

Zechariah 12:1-14 The oracle of the word of the LORD concerning Israel: Thus declares the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him: (2) “Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah.

(3) **On that day** I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it.

(4) **On that day**, declares the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic, and

its rider with madness. But for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. (5) Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the LORD of hosts, their God.’

(6) **“On that day** I will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot in the midst of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves. And they shall devour to the right and to the left all the surrounding peoples, while Jerusalem shall again be inhabited in its place, in Jerusalem. (7) “And the LORD will give salvation to the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not surpass that of Judah.

(8) **On that day** the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them. (9) **And on that day** I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

(10) “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they

shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

(11) **On that day** the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. (12) The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; (13) the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; (14) and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves.

So there it is. This is the Day that Jesus is referring to in that last verse of chapter 23. He will come and the Jews who are true Jews, who are part of His church, who are regenerate in heart, will receive Him and declare Him blessed.

Now, let's turn to chapter 24 once more. Here is a bit of a refresher on the introduction we made to it last time:

Matthew 24:1-4 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings

of the temple. (2) But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

(3) As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "**Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?**" (4) And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray.

The Olivet Discourse as it is known, was spoken by Jesus on the Mount of Olives. He is addressing it privately to His disciples who had asked Him a two-fold question in response to His statement that the Temple would be destroyed -

1. When will these things be?
2. What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?

And we said that primary lesson for us all is this:

Keep watching and be ready, for you do not know neither the day nor the hour when He is coming. Be faithful and obedient, diligently serving Him, so that when He comes you will hear Him say, "well done."

Now, it is interesting that Jesus opens with these words:

(4) And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray.

What should this tell us right at the beginning? This means that regarding Christ’s return, we can expect many deceivers and false teachers some of whom, as we will see in a moment, even claim to be Christ themselves! Think of it. How many people down through the history of the church have been led astray by some cultist, some pseudo-Christ? And in this respect, do not fail to realize that probably the most deceptive and wickedly successful false Christ of all is the Roman Pope.

Matthew 24:5 For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.

In fact then, you can know with certainty that anyone who shows up on the scene and makes the claim that they are the Messiah, or even if they claim to be some kind of embodiment of the Messiah, speaking for Him, you can

know that they are lying. In spite of this, many people will fall for them. Listen to the Apostle Paul elaborate on this:

(2 Thessalonians 2:11) Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, (12) in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The best way to protect yourself from being deceived by false religion and a false gospel is to believe God’s truth now. To take pleasure in righteousness. The most certain inoculation against Satan’s lies is faith in Christ and His Word.

J.C. Ryle introduces the next few verses in this manner:

“The second great lesson before us, is a warning against over-sanguine and extravagant expectations as to things which are to happen before the end comes... We are not to expect a reign of universal peace, happiness, and prosperity, before the end comes. If we do, we shall be greatly deceived.”
[Expository Thoughts on the Gospels].

Jesus continues:

Matthew 24:6-8 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. (7) For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. (8) All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

Is it not true that most every time there is some serious natural cataclysm, or some virus outbreak such as we are experiencing now, that someone comes on the scene and claims that it is the apocalypse – the end of the days? But Jesus warns us against falling for this. These things are simply characteristic of this fallen creation.

And there is great comfort in this. We know with confidence that this present world is not going to self-destruct, or humanity be eradicated by a nuclear war, or a pandemic, or any other such event. We *know*. It is interesting how many movies, for instance, are made with these kind of apocalyptic themes:

- Zombie apocalypse movies
- Pandemic movies: Andromeda Strain, Outbreak, Mad Max,

Armageddon, The Road, The Book of Eli

- And don't forget that many, many brainwashed people today live in constant fear of our destruction by supposed global warming

Jesus has made the truth very clear. We are not to believe such things. We need not live in fear of some apocalyptic end of the world and destruction of humanity – except for ONE apocalypse! The true one. And we need not fear it IF we know Christ:

2 Peter 3:1-13 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, (2) that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, (3) knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. (4) They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

(5) For they deliberately overlook this

fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, (6) and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. (7) But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

(8) But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (9) The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, 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 will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

(11) Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, (12) waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! (13) But according to his

promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

The Christian looks forward to the end of the days! We pray that Christ would come soon. And therefore we do not fear these things that happen in the meanwhile.

Matthew 24:6-14 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. (7) For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. (8) All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. (9) "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. (10) And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. (11) And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. (12) And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. (13) But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (14) And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

We will plan to look at these verses in more detail next time. But let's get a firm hold on this certain point:

We must always be watching and be ready for Christ's return. We will know Him when He comes. We are not to be fearful or alarmed by the calamities that characterize this present world, nor try to read any of them as signs of Christ's return. We will know when He comes.

This past week I have talked to people who profess to be Christians, and yet they are living in rather intense fear of the corona virus outbreak. Not just concerned and in ways anxious – of course no one wants to get sick, and no one enjoys the many secondary effects of this thing. But to actually live in fear of it, to worry that this might be “it” and that maybe the world is going to look like that apocalyptic Mad Max scenario as a result – is to fail to believe Christ's words to us here.

The one who endures to the end will be saved. And what the Lord means by that is, *the one who endures in this present*

world in faith, in faithfulness to Christ, will be saved. If anyone who professes to be a Christian is ignorant of Christ's words and promises here, now is the time to lose that ignorance. And if anyone who professes to be a Christian is living in a real panic, dominated by fear that this virus might be “the end,” then I challenge such people to examine themselves to see if they really belong to Christ or not.

Remember – *you must be born again. You cannot hear Christ nor can you believe His Word unless you are born again.* The fact is that there IS a deadly virus that is the deadliest of all. This is where our attention is to be. It is called *sin*, and get this:

- It is congenital. Every human being who has ever lived since Adam is born infected with it.
- It is ALWAYS terminal if left untreated. Always. No exceptions.
- The good news is that there IS a remedy.
- That remedy is ALWAYS successful! It is called the blood

of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from all sin.

One of the devil's common tactics is to divert your attention away from the real deadly virus and get your thoughts and fears on one that is far less serious.

How many people right at this moment are stockpiling all kinds of supplies, going to all kinds of effort to protect themselves from the corona virus, and all the while completely ignoring the fact that they are dead in their sins, headed for judgment on the Day when Christ comes?

Luke 12:19-21 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." (20) But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' (21) So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."