

It's God and God alone who *"will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful"* (1 Corinthians 1:8-9). God is faithful. That's our hope! God is faithful. Here's my prayer: "God keep me strong. Don't let me fall." The struggle is real. You know that! What's the difference between me or you and Matt Lauer? Nothing. But by the grace of God, there go I. I find myself praying, "Jesus, in your grace, may I believe in you when you come back. May my children believe in you. May my wife and brothers and sister and parents believe in you. You are the potter. We are your clay. Don't ever let us grow lazy. Don't ever let us fall away. In your grace, by your grace alone, let us believe in you until you come again!" What in the whole world is more important than that? The more we see our sin, the more we see so many temptations, the better it is to know that Jesus is coming back! Come, Lord Jesus, come!

So when is he going to come? That's the big question, right? When is our salvation going to be complete? When is sin going to be done with for good? When is he coming back? There's only one person who knows. Remember who? Our Father knows. Three years ago Emily, Isaiah, and I drove to visit my brother in North Carolina. We had planned to make it a two-day drive. But right when we got past Mankato, Isaiah began asking, "Are we there yet?" So we decided to drive through the night, while Isaiah slept. At about two in the morning we stopped for gas somewhere in West Virginia. When we stopped, Isaiah woke up, looked at me, and asked, "Dad, do you know where you're going?" I said, "Yes." And he said, "Okay," and went right back to sleep. His father knew, so there was no need to worry. Just like your Father knows.

God promised Eve that her offspring would crust Satan. Did he keep his promise? Yes! He sent Jesus to save us. How long did Eve's descendants have to wait? Thousands of years! Now Jesus promises that he's coming back to take us to heaven. How long will we have to wait? Your Father knows. "Dad, do you know what you're going?" "Yes." "Okay." That's all we need to know. He's coming back! Remember the word for "coming?" Advent. For a thousand years, Christians have gathered together before Christmas and said, "Come, Lord Jesus, come." Our Father knows exactly the best time for our Savior to return. Don't let him find you sleeping. Keep Christ in Christmas, because he's coming back!

**Mark 13:32-37**  
**Pastor Nathan Nass**

**First Sunday of Advent**  
**December 3, 2017**

**<sup>32</sup>"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup>Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. <sup>34</sup>It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. <sup>35</sup>"Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. <sup>36</sup>If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. <sup>37</sup>What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' "**

**"He's Coming Back!"**

Today is the first day of Advent. Do you know what Advent means? I think we ask this at the beginning of every Advent season! Do you remember? "Coming." Advent means "coming." It makes sense: Christmas is coming! We've got to get ready! God sure gave us a beautiful week to get some things ready, didn't he? How many of you put up Christmas lights outside this week? How many of you put up your Christmas tree? How many of you did absolutely nothing at all? I'm glad you're honest! Advent means "coming"—it's a perfect name for this season. Christmas is coming and we want to be ready.

It's just there's a problem. A really big problem. I've noticed it this year more than ever before. You can get ready for Christmas without thinking about Jesus at all. Have you noticed that? Our culture has created a whole Christmas festival without Jesus in it. Just think: Lights and Santas and elves and candy canes and snowmen and reindeer. Everywhere you go, you see Christmas. But do you see Jesus? Not very often. We need to watch out for this! The devil has slowly and carefully managed to separate Christmas from Christ himself. Until we hardly even notice Jesus isn't there. That's why here at our church we've chosen a theme for our Christmastime: Keep Christ in Christmas!

But you can keep Christ in Christmas and still miss the full meaning of Advent. Remember what Advent means? "Coming." What coming? It sounds simple. Jesus' coming at Christmas! That's true. Advent is a time to repent and prepare our hearts for our Savior's birth. But there's more. There's another coming. Do you know what it is? He's coming back! Jesus is going to come back to judge the living and the dead—you and me. Are you ready for that? For Jesus' second coming? In Advent, God wants our eyes as Christians not just to be looking back on Christmas memories, but to be looking forward. Jesus is coming back!

So when's that going to be? That's the big question, right? When is Jesus coming back? Here's what Jesus said, *"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."* When? Only God the Father knows. Not even the angels know. Isn't that interesting to hear? Angels don't know everything. So the devil doesn't know either, because he's an angel who rebelled against God. The devil doesn't

know when Jesus is coming back. That's why he's working so hard all the time! Even believers in heaven don't know. In heaven, they shout out, "*How long?*" (Revelation 6:11). Jesus is coming back, but when? Only God the Father knows.

Here's the surprise: Not even the Son knows. Jesus said he didn't know either. Can you explain that? Why doesn't Jesus know? He's God, right? Of course he is! When Jesus became a human being on that first Christmas night, he didn't stop being God. But when Jesus humbled himself and became a Man, he stopped making full use of his powers as God. Think about this: Did Jesus get hungry? Yes! Did he get thirsty and tired? Yes! Does God get hungry and thirsty and tired? No! But that's how far Jesus went to be our Savior. We constantly dream of super powers. We claim to be bigger or better than we really are. Jesus humbled himself and became like one of us. He must really love us! As God, he knows everything. But as the Son of Man, he doesn't know when the end will be either.

So now let's think this through: If the angels don't know when Jesus is coming back. If Jesus himself during his time on earth didn't know when he was coming back. Do you think you and I know? No way! "*Be on guard!*" Jesus says. "*Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.*" One of the most inexplicable things in the world is when Christians try to predict the end of the world. It happens way too often! If someone predicts Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> coming, you don't have to be worried. In fact, you can know they're wrong! When someone tries to predict Judgment Day, that's a clear sign they are a false teacher. There are a lot of false teachers! Just Google May 21, 2011. "*No one knows about that day or hour...*"

Why do you think God wants it that way? Why not just tell us? Right now is a stressful time for college students—papers and exams are due. The truth is, they've known about the papers and exams for months! So why are they so stressed out now? When you know something isn't due until a certain date, what do you do? You put it off until the last minute! If the world were going to end on July 4<sup>th</sup>—I'm not predicting it!—what would we be tempted to do? Sin. We would procrastinate and put God off. We would say, "I can sin now and repent later!" But "sin now and repent later" is not a Christian attitude. Jesus wants us to be ready *today*. He's coming back!

Jesus drives that point home with a parable. "*It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore, keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back.... If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.*" A doorkeeper only has one job: Be ready when people come! Don't let your master find you sleeping! What's Jesus telling us? Here is what life is about: Will I be ready when Jesus comes? Life really isn't about our goals or accomplishments. When Jesus comes, will I believe in him? Do not let him find you sleeping!

That's not easy. Staying awake is harder than it sounds. When I was a kid, my church had an 11:00 p.m. service on Christmas Eve. I always wanted to go—to stay up until midnight on Christmas Eve. Finally, when I was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, my mom brought me to the

service. Do you know how the service went? Me neither! I was sleeping before it even started. I don't even remember waking up to go home. I missed out on the very thing I wanted to stay awake for! Why is it that when somebody tells you, "Don't fall asleep," you immediately become tired?

That's not good, because what does Jesus tell us? "*Do not let him find you sleeping.*" That's a stern warning! There's a false assumption in our world today: "Everybody's going to heaven. No matter how you live, no matter what you believe, in the end you'll be in heaven." Jesus once told a parable about ten young women on a wedding day waiting for a bridegroom to come. Five were foolish and weren't ready when the bridegroom came. When they finally got to the wedding, the door was shut. They called out, "*Sir, open the door for us!*" Do you know what the bridegroom—Jesus—said? "*I tell you the truth, I don't know you*" (Matthew 25:12). Isn't that terrifying to hear? Not everyone's going to heaven! May we never hear those words! "*I don't know you!*" Some people are going to be very disappointed when Jesus comes again. "*Do not let him find you sleeping!*"

So what does sleeping look like? Obviously, Jesus isn't talking about physical sleep. It's okay to sleep. In fact, God "*grants sleep to those he loves*" (Psalm 127:2). So what's Jesus talking about? It's so easy to get lazy in our faith and take our eyes off of Jesus. We're busy, right? How often do we say that? "I'm busy. We're so busy." If someone isn't busy, it's almost like, "What? What's wrong with you? Why aren't you ridiculously busy?" Here's a warning: The devil fills our lives so full of good things, that we can completely miss out on the greatest thing. Sleeping might look like having a life so full that you don't have room for Jesus. And suddenly he's going to come. "*Do not let him find you sleeping!*"

Here's another example: We can fall asleep in our sins. We can get so comfortable with our sins that we don't even notice them. This is scary. To hear of all these men harassing women in terrible, sinful ways, and yet to them it all seemed perfectly normal. They're surprised it was wrong. That's sleeping. What is that for you? What's the sin that you have grown so comfortable with that it doesn't even bother you anymore? "*Do not let him find you sleeping.*" That should send a shiver down your back. Can you imagine Jesus staring you in the face and saying, "*I don't even know you!*"? There's an urgency in Christianity—at least there better be. We need to be ready! He's coming back!

So are you ready? Maybe we should ask, "How can we possibly be ready? How can I possibly not fall like seemingly every man in America?" Jesus. Only in Jesus. Because there was a night when Jesus didn't sleep. Remember the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane—the night before he died? He told his disciples to stay awake. What happened? They fell asleep. Three times! But who didn't fall asleep? Jesus! Jesus stayed up. He stayed up all night. Past when the rooster crowed three times. Past when the sun came up—and when the sky got dark as he died on the cross. Jesus stayed up. Why? For us. He stayed up to die for every sin—even those secret ones. You are forgiven! You are ready for Jesus to come back, because you are forgiven!