

The Day of the Son of Man

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- [0 : 00] How about I pray? Heavenly Father, please soften our hearts so that we may hear the truth of your word and accept it.
- Amen. Well, what are you expecting? What are you expecting? To work tomorrow?
- Perhaps to work from home? Are you expecting COVID to clear up by June? One of my friends is expecting their family to grow this week.
- They have a very good reason to expect that. Within a few days, they'll have a new baby and their family will grow. They expect this because there's been nine months of pregnancy.
- They've had appointments made by the doctor for this week. I guess they've got a plan for a few weeks off. And so they're expecting life to change.
- [1 : 04] What are you expecting today? What are you expecting about this week? How does your expectation change what you're doing today? What you're going to do this week?
- How does it change your life? Last week, we saw Jesus teach his disciples important lessons about the appropriate attitude of a disciple.
- We saw an example of that attitude in the response of the leper Jesus healed. Do you remember the one who turned back and fell at his feet in thanks and praise? What we've been seeing in the recent chapters in Luke is Jesus teaching and rebuking the Pharisees about their attitude to this life and not being worried about the judgment to come.
- In this passage, Luke continues with Jesus teaching both the Pharisees and his disciples about the judgment to come and how to live today expecting that day.
- The passage begins with Jesus responding to a question from the Pharisees about the kingdom of God, which is point one. They want Jesus to tell them when it will come.
- [2 : 18] And Jesus answer shows that while they may claim to be expecting the kingdom of God, they're looking in the wrong place. Have a look with me from verse 20.
- On being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, The kingdom of God is not something that can be observed.
- Nor will people say, here it is or there it is, because the kingdom of God is in your midst. When the Pharisees, sorry, the Pharisees ask, when will the kingdom of God come?
- And Jesus' response introduces the key theme of this passage. And that is, the coming of the kingdom of God isn't something that can be seen.
- Sort of in the way that you might see a storm brewing, maybe the one this afternoon. He also says, people won't say, here it is or there it is. As though it's an object which is suddenly going to become visible, maybe like a package arriving in the mail.
- [3 : 23] The kingdom of God isn't like that. Jesus said to them, it is in your midst. What does he mean? Well, he doesn't mean it's been inside you all along.
- It's not a Disney movie. Nor does he mean that Israel are the kingdom. He's talking about himself. His coming and his ministry has brought the kingdom of God in their midst.

The kingdom of God is where Jesus is. About 15 years ago, when our use of music was a little bit different to what it is today, the band Radiohead released a new album online and decided to let their fans pay what they wanted.

I wonder if you remember when this happened. The world was in an era of transition from buying CDs to paying for subscriptions.

So when this was released, there was no CD. There was no vinyl. There was no album art or lyric sheet. Those under 18 are wondering what I'm talking about. The coming of the kingdom of God is a bit like me buying this album online.

[4 : 37] After I make my 50 cent purchase, I invite a friend around to listen to it. And he says he wants to sing along and see the lyrics or the album art and says, can I see the cover?

My friend is clearly a bit old school and doesn't realize the times have changed. And so what do I say? I say, I can't take you to my music collection and say, here it is or there it is.

The music is on the Internet. It's all around us. The Pharisees ask when. They're expecting an answer about a future time when the kingdom will be visible.

But they're looking in the wrong place. If they would only open their eyes and see the evidence of the kingdom right in front of them. They don't realize that the kingdom isn't coming with signs and portents.

The kingdom is in their midst in the ministry and the teaching of Jesus. And Jesus is the answer for us, too. We also are in the day of the Lord.

[5 : 45] Jesus reigns now. People are looking. But people are looking in the wrong place. People look for him, don't they, in grand signs.

They look for him in catastrophic events and in global pandemic. But these are not the signs of the kingdom. The kingdom is near in the Lord Jesus.

Forgiveness and membership in it are available now. The very first words of Jesus that Mark records in his gospel are, the time has come.

The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news. Repent. The Pharisees ask when. And Jesus tells them now.

But they can't see it. Well, having answered the Pharisees' question, Jesus takes the opportunity to teach his disciples.

[6 : 43] Point two. The Pharisees asked a question about the coming of the kingdom. The disciples already know that the kingdom of God comes with Jesus. So here he teaches them how to wait for the day he returns.

Take a look at verse 22. Jesus says to the disciples, Jesus tells his disciples, Jesus tells his disciples about a time that he will be gone.

And it seems to me that it will be a difficult time for them. It will be a time when they will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man. Jesus says you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you won't see it.

What this doesn't mean is that that day won't come. God will be faithful to his promise. What he means is, don't be led astray by false reports about me.

Because in your desire and in your longing for me to return, when people say to you, oh, look, here he is. Oh, look, there he is. Beware. Don't go running after them.

[8 : 15] Those people are waiting for the wrong thing. Their reports are false. And if you listen to them, you will be disappointed. It sort of reminds me of a drink or refill station in a long bike race.

On the really long races, they have refill stations where the cyclists can stock up with food so they can push on. Usually the station is pretty crowded with fans and team workers.

Now, just imagine you're in a race. Who knows how long you've been going? A hundred kilometers, a long way. You're having a tough time. You're ready for the end. And you hear someone say something like, the end is in sight.

But really, it's just a drink station. And it could ruin you. You begin to think, not long now. The end is close. I hear a crowd cheering. And you put all your effort into the next hill, thinking that rest is nearly there.

And then you get over that hill and you realize it's not the end. It's just a refill station. In fact, there's another hundred kilometers to go. This mistake could ruin you, couldn't it?

[9 : 26] You've misread the signs and listened to the wrong people. And now your energy is spent. And you've got nothing left in the tank to finish the race.

Excuse me. Jesus' disciples who are having a hard time will be longing to see the day of the Son of Man.

And life before that day will be hard. Just as he was suffered and rejected by that generation that he says in 25, they too will face opposition. They will desperately long for that day, for his comfort, for his final vindication, for the climax of God's plan for salvation.

You may also be longing for that day. In fact, longing for it is not the issue. Longing is actually really healthy among God's disciples, Jesus' disciples. But it's what we expect that Jesus warns of.

Jesus won't show up one day for a few more miracles. He won't show up to give a sermon. He is as much now with us in spirit, in his spirit, as he will be until his final return.

[10 : 48] How do we know? How can I say he won't appear for some extra help? What does Jesus say in the passage? People will tell you, there he is, here he is, do not go running after them.

Verse 24, for the son of man in his day will be like lightning that flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. We will know because his coming will be like lightning flashing across the sky.

Some person might say, oh, I saw Jesus. Oh, I had a vision of the divine. Now, on one hand, who am I to say they didn't? But what Jesus is saying here is, don't go running after them.

Either the person who had the vision or the vision itself. It will not be him. There will be no looking or searching for Jesus on that day.

There will be no wondering. We will know. In light of this, I wonder if it's worth reflecting on how we think about events like COVID-19 or other such globally impacting events.

[11 : 57] the signs we see in the world at the moment are not a sign of the end. It may be a sign that the world is in bondage to sin, that creation is waiting in eager longing for that day.

But beware comments or so-called signs when people may say, this shows that the end is near or here. Watch out.

Don't be led away by people who think the end of the world has begun because of some great calamity. That is not in step with God's word.

It is not what Jesus teaches his disciples. So what do we do in hardship? Because that's where this point began.

What do we do when the world seems to be falling apart? Well, we live expecting that day. In the last part of the passage, Jesus teaches his disciples about how that day will come with some imagery and examples from the Old Testament.

[13 : 09] Excuse me. He uses these examples not to teach them when this day will happen, and nor is he saying that day will be the same as these Old Testament events, the flood or raining fire.

He uses the events of the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah to say the day of the Son of Man will be sudden, inescapable and terrible. Have a look at verse 26.

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the day of the Son of Man. People were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark.

Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying, selling, planting, building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

Now, while it's hard to know exactly what this day that Jesus is talking about will look like, what is clear to me is that it will come suddenly and it will bring terrible judgment.

[14 : 23] Jesus uses a whole heap of imagery. Doesn't he describe this day? Sudden destruction, going or looking back, life and death, judgment and separation.

Such intense images to describe this day of destruction. When I see these images and think about this day, it makes me wonder, what kind of terrible people are going to be subjected to this day?

Who will lose their life? Who's going to be suddenly taken and who will be judged? Is it the super evil? The murderers, the thieves, the nasty? Look again at verse 27 and 28.

What are the people doing who were destroyed? Killing? Hurting? Destroying? No. No. It says they were eating and drinking and marrying, buying, selling, planting.

They were doing the stuff that everyone is doing now, with a few restrictions, of course. They're people who are just carrying on with their lives. They're going to work.

[15 : 33] They're hanging out with friends. They're playing games. They're watching Netflix. They're buying toilet paper. They're doing exercise on YouTube. Business as usual. So why is it these people who are being destroyed?

Well, because by carrying on with their lives, they are oblivious to the God who made them. They are ignoring the God who demands their life.

The day of the Son of Man is coming, and when Jesus returns, he brings sudden, inescapable judgment on all who, like the Pharisees, have looked for life and God in the wrong place.

The suddenness of this day will come on people who don't expect it to happen. When we look out at the world, the people we see and who think these things, they aren't necessarily murderers, are they?

They aren't necessarily considered the evil, nasty people. But it's those who are carrying on with life. They may very well be kind and considerate people.

[16 : 44] They may very well be helping their neighbours and friends and giving to charity. Many of them may be in your life. But if they aren't expecting the day of the Son of Man, which will come on them suddenly, they will lose their life.

When I ride my bike, which I do regularly, I expect that I will eventually come off. It's not a scientific fact, but the odds are the more I ride, the higher the chances.

So I ride expecting to come off. How can you tell? I expect it. Well, I wear a helmet. I put lights on and some reflective material. You know, I hold the handlebars. Seems like a no-brainer.

Years ago, I was less cautious. I hadn't ridden or crashed nearly as much. I was riding to an exam once, holding the handlebars like a normal person.

It was a short, safe ride off main roads. And on the long flat before I arrived, a cruise, no problems, I sat up.

[17 : 52] Hands off the handlebars, relaxed for a bit. I had pretty good balance. I could ride without my hands. I'd done it before. I wouldn't say I was being cocky, but I also wasn't expecting to come off.

As I was going along, I went past a side street and a gust of wind hit my side. And in half a second, the front wheel turned. I lost my balance and went splat.

Bleeding out of the rest of my body. But okay. I sat the exam. Expecting to fall off doesn't mean it won't happen, but it can help avoid something bad, can't it?

The kingdom of God has already come near. Its doors are open. But there will be a day when those doors close.

And when that happens, those who have ignored God will be caught out. Sudden, inescapable judgment. So what should we be doing in light of this?

[19 : 08] Well, I hope it's obvious. We shouldn't be looking for signs of the kingdom because it's already revealed in Jesus. We shouldn't be waiting for a new message or a new unveiling.

We shouldn't be carrying on as though Jesus will never return. We should be living expecting the day that Jesus has promised.

What does expecting that day look like? It means losing your life. Something particularly striking about the suddenness of this day is what Jesus says in verse 31.

On that day, no one who is on the housetop with possessions in the house should go back down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anyone, anything. How, if this day is so final, can anyone hope to go back and get something?

Jesus is explaining what the life of expecting this day looks like. Expecting the day means living today as though it's going to happen today.

[20 : 22] It's not hearing the warning and saying, oh, okay, it's going to happen in the future. I'll put it in the back of my mind and get on with it. Jesus says, the one who keeps their life now the one who doesn't worry about that day, the one who even knows it's going to happen but doesn't worry about it, loses their life.

This is why Jesus says, remember Lot's wife. On the day Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, she was dragged out of town. She knew about the destruction but she looked back.

The lesson in Lot's wife is expecting the reality of that day of judgment. Not saying, I'm going to live in the world until it happens because it will be too late.

Lot's wife turned back and she suffered for it. She may have left the city with Lot but her heart was still there so she was destroyed too.

Living expecting that day is living as though it is about to happen. Think again of my friends who are expecting a baby. It would be odd for them to go on holidays this week, wouldn't it?

[21 : 38] It would be odd if they didn't have a new cot or some extra baby clothes or some nappies, maybe a few frozen meals, other things that expecting parents would have.

If they did that, they would be living as though the baby doesn't exist. Living as though it's just not going to happen. That would be ridiculous, wouldn't it? If you're living expecting that day, the day of the Son of Man to happen, what would it be odd for you to do?

To live as though it's not. To live as though God doesn't exist or that it doesn't matter how we live now. The passage would suggest would suggest that if we're living expecting that day, it would be odd for us to carry on with life, carry on as though nothing would change.

I wonder if we have a great chance in these challenging times at the moment to model the life of expecting that day. Especially tonight, for instance, when much less church stuff seems to be expected of us.

It would be odd for a person who's expecting Jesus to return to take this opportunity to ditch fellowship, to ditch church, even though it's online, to ditch gathering because, well, no one really knows if you're here, if you're listening.

[23 : 17] It would be odd for a person who's expecting Jesus to return to not think about how to serve and care for your heavenly family, for those who are struggling, for those who you're not seeing at the moment, because, again, who would know?

What is Jesus' warning? Remember Lot's wife. Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it. Whoever loses their life will preserve it.

Let me ask for God's help to do this. I'm going to pray. Heavenly Father, help us hear the words of Jesus and join your kingdom.

Help us to live today not looking back to the life that we've lost, but living, expecting the day Jesus returns, so that we may live then with you.

Amen. Amen.