



“Waiting”

– Matthew 24:29-51

by Pastor Tim Dodson

at JF Believers Church

in Menomonie, Wisconsin

on July 8, 2018

“Waiting..”

Matthew 24:29-51

Matthew 24:29-51 *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars*

will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 “And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. 32 “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 “So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! 34 “Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. 35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. 36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. 37 “But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 “For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 “and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 “Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 “Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. 42 “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 “But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. 45 “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 “Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. 47 “Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. 48 “But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ 49 “and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, 50 “the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 “and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God’s will. Then you will receive all that he has promised. For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. And my righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away.”

Hebrews 10:36-38

It was almost immediately after the fall of humanity in the garden...way back in chapter 3 of Genesis, that God promised the intervention of a “redeemer.” Someone who would fix the mess that mankind had made. Man did not languish for a millennia with no place to turn and no escape from the bondage that he was now under. No, God moved immediately to step in to save the creation that had just been made, and had just apparently thrown it all away. God’s love was evident from the beginning, even despite our sin and rebellion. Jesus spoke concerning the eventual sacrifice of the cross saying “*And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.*”

What patience our God possesses! He has waited now for hundreds...*thousands*, of years for mankind to come back to Him. And at what cost and what sacrifice! Yet one at a time, individuals have turned around and walked against the tide of humanity to embrace a different road. They bucked the “herd-mentality” and broke free to seize their created and divine destiny. But the problem with God’s exercise of patience...*if we can even put it that way*, is that so many people tend to think they have unlimited time, and that God will exercise endless restraint and will not reach out his hand in wrath. Such assumptions however are in error.

2Peter 3:4 says *“They will say, ‘What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.’”*

His answer to that? Romans 2:8-9 says *“But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness. There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile.”*

In chapter 24 of Matthew, as well as elsewhere in scripture, we are given a glimpse...*and that’s all really...just a glimpse*, of what is to come in those “last days” when God says “no more.” For many, such a glimpse excites their imaginations and stirs their curiosity, but does little if anything to change their living. I suspect it is because they do not truly believe it, but see it more as a fictional Hollywood movie. A titillating story that ends in spectacular cinematography and rolling credits, and then we’ll all go back home again to our “real” lives.

The other possibility is that we are gamblers. We *do* believe there is something to all of this, but we daily “roll the dice” that we will survive it to have another chance tomorrow. That we will still have time yet to come to Christ. That we will avoid the auto accident that tomorrow will take only *others* from this world. We will miss the heart attack, the stroke, the aneurism. Each day we survive the more emboldened we become.

Of course this heart speaks volumes. We don’t love Jesus, we have no respect or honor for our Creator, and we think that God wants to take away all of the fun and joy in life and sequester us to an amish-type existence in a closed compound somewhere. Of *course* we would flinch to commit to such a life! So we wait...intending to one day make things right with Jesus...we’ll ‘make our peace’ with God before we die. The problem with all of that is it is so far from the truth, that any attempt to debate such would be considered hyperbole and the ramblings of a zealot.

The account that Jesus gives us here in chapter 24 of Matthew is however, by any measure, extreme in its picture. *“... the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”*

Just what is happening to cause such upheaval we do not know. Speculations have been plentiful of course! One of the more credible and resilient of them is that something out there in space will approach the earth close enough to cause cataclysmic effects. Scientists and believers alike have speculated that the world at one time was not tilted on its axis. Certainly the natural world prior to the flood would contribute to such thinking as far as we understand it to have been. If the flood caused such a tilt or the tilt caused the flood, the thinking concerning scriptures’ talk on the “new earth,” *post second coming*, will be that the earth *pre-tilt* will be restored, thus bringing back the earth to a natural stability in weather and season.

Immanuel Velikovsky’s book “Worlds in Collision” gives us an idea of what our world will be like in his description of what would happen if a heavenly body came close to the earth and caused it to tilt on its axis;

At that moment an earthquake would make the earth shudder. Air and water would continue to move through inertia; hurricanes would sweep the earth and the seas would rush over continents, carrying gravel and sand and marine animals, and casting them on the land. Heat would be developed, rocks would melt, volcanoes would erupt, lava would flow from fissures in the ruptured ground and cover vast areas. Mountains would spring up from the plains and would travel and climb on the shoulders of other mountains, causing faults and rifts. Lakes would be tilted and emptied, rivers would change their beds; large land areas with all their inhabitants would slip under the sea. Forests would burn and the hurricane and wild seas would wrest them from the ground on which they grew and pile them, branch and root, in huge heaps. Seas would turn into deserts, their waters flowing away.

Verse 32 -33 gives warning. *“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is*

near—at the doors!” It’s hard to miss the reality that while the future accounts lack detail and often lack the specifics that we crave, what comes forth *loud and clear* in these accounts before us is the warning about how we live in the waiting. How we sojourn here on this planet; *how we spend our time as we remain*.

Certainly it appears from scripture that despite man’s best efforts, *not to mention their arrogance*, we will apparently not overtly see the end coming. “*When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.*” (vs 37-39) Those who will truly be ready **live lives** every day that are ready! They won’t be utilizing some sort of count-down clock, but rather they will have lived everyday as if Christ was coming back that day or, on any account, they lived as if it was **their** last day!

The ‘rich’ in spirit amongst us...the joyous, the fulfilled; they love **today**, live **today**, serve Jesus **today**, make peace **today**. Not that they have no dreams and aspirations for tomorrow, it is just that they are not putting off until tomorrow what they can live today! Because one of these days, tomorrow is not going to come. John 9:4 (NLT) says “*We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work.*”

Once again, Verse 32 – 33 of our text says “*Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!”* Many an unbeliever has “naysaid” the watchful hearts of Christians from the day Jesus physically left this earth. We stand today amidst the current world-wide events...the political, cultural, and social upheavals. We who are truly His live in light of the reality that He *is indeed* returning. Seeing the prophetic events unfold around us, we would have to be fools not to clearly recognize that “summer is near.”

Verse 42-44 says “*So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.*”

What is our “waiting” to look like? Is waiting mean “veg’ing?” Are we living lazy or living selfishly? Are we “some-day” people?

Our text, in verse 45, tells us that “*A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them.*” Well? **Can He?** He wants to find us being *faithful and wise servants*. Most of all, He wants to find us *doing*. Not sitting and waiting. Not lost in the material pleasures of this world or self-absorbed in our own feelings, emotions and desires; but *faithful* to the calling, *faithful* to the blessings He has given us. Yet sadly, many of us are still struggling after years of church life still unaware of what our calling...*our personal mission*, even is! Perhaps that is just because we don’t really *want* to know what it is for then I would somehow be required to step up. We want “plausible deniability.” And further, we are not truly thankful for the lives He has given us! We complain and whine about what we don’t have instead of being thankful for life and life in America. We can be such spoiled little people.

In our lives, the way we wait for Him, reflects who we truly are.

Can you say...as the psalmist did in chapter 130, verse 6, “*My soul waits for the Lord... More than those who watch for the morning—Yes, more than those who watch for the morning.*”

If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. But there is also another truth that we need to acknowledge. Jesus died to save you *from* sin’s guilt, power, and penalty. But He also saved you *for* a mission...*your mission!* No excuses. No whining. No justifying your failure to engage. It’s time to man up...*woman up*. The time is running out for each one of us. This show is coming to close. And further, it definitely is for you. Every day passing faster than the one before it.

There are certain elements in my personal life that have formed the path before me. Things that have profoundly affected my trajectory...that have defined my life and living. One of those elements is I have always clearly understood my mortality. I have always been cognizant of *time*. Precious time. So I have chosen to serve today...live today...love today...dance today. Because tomorrow never comes.

Verse 47- 51 “ *I tell you the truth, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. But what if the servant is evil and thinks, ‘My master won’t be back for a while,’ and he begins beating the other servants, partying, and getting drunk? The master will return unannounced and unexpected, and he will cut the servant to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*”

Notice that the story seems to paint a picture of a person who knew He had a master, and He knew that that master was coming back. He wasn’t ignorant of the existence of God. He clearly understood that the master was indeed the master over him. But he was buying his time. He thought he had time to live as he pleased and could get things straight another day... but he didn’t, and he was lost. He may have been with the other servants, but he was in fact a hypocrite. He was not what he pretended to be. And the Master came back when he didn’t expect Him. No more chances. No more time.

1Thessalonians 4:17-5:2 ... “*Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. So encourage each other with these words. Now concerning how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters, we don’t really need to write you. For you know quite well that the day of the Lord’s return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.*”

But then he said, “*But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief.*” 1Th. 5:4

People often have trouble reconciling this concept with their doctrine. But remember what Jesus said back in chapter seven of Matthew: “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.*” (Matt. 7:21) It is the faithful and expectant servant who has no need to fear his master's return.

Philippians 4:5 says bluntly that “THE LORD IS AT HAND.”

Therefore— **What should our “waiting” look like?**

1. Be diligent, (2Peter 3:14)
2. Be prayerful, (Mark 13:33; Luke 21:36)
3. Be patient, (James 5:8)
4. Be pure, (1John 3:3)
5. Be watchful, (Mark 13:36, 37)
6. Be hopeful, (Luke 21:28; Ro 8:19-23)
7. Be ready, (Matt. 24:44)
8. Be comforted (1Th 4:18)

--James Smith - Handfuls on Purpose

“Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God’s will. Then you will receive all that he has promised. For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. And my righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away.”
Hebrews 10:36-38