

Sunday, June 30, 2024 | The Road to Redemption

Week 30 | Luke 17:20-37 | "It's Too Late to Wait"

Last week, Jesus healed ten lepers. Surprisingly, the miracle wasn't the main point of the passage. Instead, the Lord used the miracle to illustrate a crucial principle: **Gratitude to Christ is the telltale sign of saving faith.** One can be healed and not be made whole. Only those who come to Jesus and return to him in gratitude are saved.

Time travel is a common trope in science fiction. Whether it's *Back to the Future*, *Groundhog Day*, or my favorite, *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*, we are obsessed with stories that manipulate time. For instance, a hero might change something in the past, hoping to improve their timeline. Conversely, some explorers might travel forward to see how history will pan out to be better prepared. Whether they're going to the past or the future, it's almost always to improve the present.

Similarly, when the Scriptures give us a peak into the future, the Lord wants us to stay focused on what will happen so that we can change our *present condition*. Much of what's going to happen is *unknowable* at this point. But this does not mean we can learn nothing from the future. In fact, the little that God has revealed should, at the very least, convince us that we should not *squander* the time we've been given.

We do not (*and cannot*) know when the end is coming, but rest assured, it is coming. Will you be ready when Christ returns? If not, what's your plan? As we'll see in today's passage, those who *delay* coming to Jesus may find their time has run out. What will you do when, at the end of time, you realize you've been left behind?

It's too late to wait. Come to Jesus while you can.

I want you to notice **four** things:

i. **Jesus' advent was not obvious.**

READ: Luke 17:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ Being asked by the Pharisees **when** the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is **not** coming in ways that can be **observed**,²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the **midst** of you."

The Pharisees sought signs to know “when the kingdom of God would come.” During the first century, extra-biblical Jewish writings such as 1 Enoch and 2 Baruch speculated what would occur when the end times finally came.¹ And though the signs varied, it was generally believed that these apocalyptic signs would be so obvious and of such cosmic scale that everyone could discern when the end would come. These signs, often referred to as 'end-time signs', include wars, famines, earthquakes, and other natural disasters, as well as the rise of false prophets and the spread of lawlessness. So, at face value, asking about end-time signs seems like an innocent request. We, too, may wonder the very same thing. But unlike us, the Pharisees' question demonstrates their willful ignorance.

Considering Jesus' many miracles, the Pharisees already had enough signs. In other words, it wasn't necessarily wrong that the Jews were looking for end-time signs. The problem was that they had consistently ignored the miracles of Jesus, which were, themselves, signs of the end times. The healing of the ten lepers was evidence that God's kingdom was already here. This is why, when the Lord commissioned and sent out the seventy-two disciples, he gave them this message: “Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Lu. 10:9). The Pharisees had all the evidence before them. They could (if they wanted to) see that the kingdom of God had come. But they didn't want to see the signs.

The Pharisees made a critical mistake, and it is one that we can make as well if we're not careful. In focusing too much on **future signs**, the religious leaders missed the **present signs**. The Pharisees asked when the end times 'would come,' and Jesus' reply was, 'The kingdom of God is in the midst of you,' or, in other words, 'The end times are already here.' The present signs, which we often overlook, include the teachings of Jesus, the miracles He performed, and the love and compassion He showed to all. The Pharisees should've put aside their assumptions that the coming of God's kingdom would be a spectacle. God was present with them in this unassuming carpenter's son from Galilee. **Jesus was the sign, but they refused to see it.**

Likewise, it is good for us to look for end-time signs. However, unlike the Pharisees, we mustn't be so focused on the future that we miss the signs that have already been given.

ii. Jesus' return will not be hidden.

READ: Luke 17:22-25 (ESV)

²² And he said to the disciples, “The days are coming when you will **desire** to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will **not** see it.²³ And they will say to you, ‘Look,

¹ Bock, Darrell L., *Luke 9:51-24:53*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Academic, 1996), p. 1414.

there!' or 'Look, here!' Do not go out or follow them. ²⁴ For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. ²⁵ But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

True disciples will long for Jesus' return, but most will be disappointed. The majority of believers will not get to see Jesus come back. The Lord wants us to be aware of this so that we know what to expect. Otherwise, if we are not prepared to wait and even be disappointed, we may be led astray by bogus reports that Christ has returned. Impatience can make one susceptible to misinformation.

Jesus outright commands us not to "go out or follow" anyone who says, "Look, there!" or "Look, here!" There will be people who will claim that Jesus has returned. They say he's come secretly. But the Lord's return will be as evident to us as "lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other."

Jesus' return will be public, not private, and anyone who tells you otherwise is trying to lead you astray.

iii. Jesus' return will not be pleasant.

READ: Luke 17:26-30 (ESV)

²⁶ Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. ²⁷ They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

²⁸ Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, ²⁹ but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire, and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all— ³⁰ so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

When the Lord returns, will he find the world gazing up at the sky, readying itself for his return? No. Like those who died during the days of Noah and Lot, unbelievers will be "eating," "drinking," "marrying," "buying," "selling," "planting," and "building" when Jesus comes back. In other words, "the days of the Son of Man" will come as a surprise while mankind is busying itself with mundane tasks rather than preparing themselves.

Humanity will be caught with its pants down, and it will not be pleasant. The destruction will be on par with the great flood in Noah's day and the fire and sulfur in Lot's day.

iv. Jesus' return will not be delayed.

READ: Luke 17:31-37 (ESV)

³¹ On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, **not** come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field **not** turn back.³² **Remember Lot's wife.** ³³ Whoever seeks to **preserve** his life will **lose** it, but whoever **loses** his life will **keep** it.

³⁴ I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. ³⁵ There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left.”
³⁷ And they said to him, “**Where**, Lord?” He said to them, “Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.”

If you love this life too much, you'll want to **prolong** it. This is not to say we should hate our lives or wish for them to end. We mustn't become reckless when thinking about the end time (we'll talk more about this in a moment), but neither should we be overly attached to this life. **Such an attitude will tether one to this life, which can only lead to heartache.** After all, as the Lord said, “Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.” Eternal life is secured when our temporal life is lost for the sake of Christ. But if we love our temporal life so much that we're unwilling to give it up for Christ, we'll forfeit eternal life.

Lot's wife is the poster child of those who, because they love this life far too much, end up losing it. Though she was explicitly commanded not to, Lot's wife looked back as Sodom/Gomorrah was destroyed. And though she was well outside the city limits, she still met her end that day, just as her neighbors did. Why? Given Jesus' comments here, we can assume she wanted to gaze longingly at her beloved city again. She wanted one last look before it was destroyed. Though the town was wretched, sinful, and deserving of God's judgment, she had a fondness for the city, and it grieved her that she had to leave. She wanted to "preserve" her home and life. But in doing so, she lost both.

Every day, we must live as if this world is going to be destroyed. We must be ready to leave it behind; we must be prepared because, when Jesus returns, there will be no time to pack up the "goods in the house." If we're at work "in the field" when the Lord comes again, we must be ready to leave without returning home.

SIDENOTE: While we must be ready at any time for Christ's return, **we must be proper stewards until he returns.** Don't max out your credit cards. Don't drain your bank accounts. Pay your taxes. Give to the poor. **Work for the glory of God until he comes back or calls you home.** Yes, the Lord's return will be without delay. But do not twist this truth into an excuse for laziness. The end times are closer than they were 2,000

years ago, **but this does not give us a *license* to waste what little time we've been given.** For all we know, the Lord could tarry another 2,000 years! But, at the same time, he could come back tomorrow. So, sooner or later, Jesus is returning. But whether it is sooner or later, **may he find us *active* and not *apathetic*.**

Coincidentally, if there will be no time to get one's stuff at the house or return home from work when the Lord returns, **there will not be time to repent.** Jesus tells us that there will be "two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left." **When the Lord comes back, an unbeliever will awake to find that their loved one is gone and they've been left behind.** Jesus also says, "There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left." **When the Lord comes back, unbelievers will discover that their coworkers have suddenly disappeared and they've been left behind. God will not delay** so people can say goodbye; he will take his own and leave the others behind. The time to repent is ***now***. Delay, and it may be too late.

At this point, the disciples only muster one question: "**Where, Lord?**" In other words, "What's the local of the Son of Man's return?" But Jesus does not give them a specific location. Instead, he says, "**Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.**" What does it matter where the judgment will occur? You don't need GPS coordinates if you're looking for something dead. All you need to do is to look for the "**vultures.**" **Just as you cannot prohibit vultures from feasting on a corpse, you cannot delay Jesus' return.**

When it comes to eschatology, we're only told ***what*** will happen, not ***when*** or ***where***. Why? If we know "the what" of the end times and are prepared for whatever may come, we do not need to know "the when" and "the where" of the end times. Eventually, those details will be filled in. It is far more important that we focus on what will happen so that we're ready whenever and wherever it happens.

So, what's the takeaway?

There are no second chances at the Second Coming.

It's too late to wait.

Video Description:

The Road to Redemption | Week 30 | "It's Too Late to Wait" (Luke 17:20-37)

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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