

Be Ready for His Coming (subtitle: Live W.E.L.L. in the end times)

Matthew 24:42-44 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁴² “Therefore **be on the alert**, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ For this reason you also **must be ready**; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

Introduction

Once a year, I preach on Christ’s Second Coming with two things in mind. First, to remind everyone that the Lord is coming. Second, to equip them with biblical ways to live out their daily life while they await His coming.

Today is that day for us. We are going to ponder the meaning of His Second Coming and how we prepare for it.

When it comes down to Christ’s Second Coming, please keep in mind the following things: **Why** He comes again (not to save people from their sins but to *judge the ungodly and bring justice and peace to all*), **How** He comes again (*in the clouds with a trumpet sound that no one will miss it*), and **When** it is going to be (*no one knows but God*).

While we wait for His coming, two things we ought not to do: Panic and slumber. First, panic. Once John Wesley preached on the topic of end times. Afterward, he wrote in his journal as follows: “*Preaching in the evening at Spitalfields on ‘Prepare to meet thy God,’ I largely showed the utter absurdity of the supposition that the world was to end that night. But notwithstanding all I could say, many were afraid to go to bed, and some wandered about in the fields, being persuaded that, if the world did not end, at least London would be swallowed up by an earthquake. I went to bed at my usual time and was fast asleep by ten o’clock.*”
–John Wesley

Don’t panic. Instead, look forward to His coming. We are the Church, the bride for Jesus Christ the Groom. The Day of His Coming will be our wedding/reunion day with Christ. No bride who is truly in love with the groom panics or dreads the day of wedding. Neither does The Church. Any believer who is dreadful of Christ’s coming is not a true bride of Christ. Let us rejoice and look forward to our union with Christ. Amen.

Next, let us not slumber (spiritually). Let us be ready for His coming. Christ commands us to be ready, because we do not know when He is coming (Matthew 24:44). I will talk more about this later.

So, this morning, I am going to present to you four biblical ways to live W.E.L.L. in the end times. W.E.L.L. stands for **Watch, Encourage, Lay Aside, and Love**. When we faithfully follow these four principles, we will do well in the end times without panic or slumber.

Content

A. **Watch:** first and foremost, Christ commands us to ‘be on the alert’ (v. 42) and ‘be on guard.’ Simply put, **be watchful and pray**. Listen. It is God’s will for us to pray without ceasing in the ordinary times (1 Thessalonians 5:17). How much more, then, does He want us, and do we need to watch and pray in difficult times? Therefore, I urge everyone to increase your time of prayer. You need it. I need it. More than ever before.

Someone says, *A day hemmed in prayer never unravels*. Unless we are watchful in prayer, we are in for a rude awakening at His coming, because Christ will come like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2) to those who are spiritually asleep. When you don’t pray, you are spiritually asleep. When you are asleep, you don’t know what’s going on out there. Unless you pray, you may even miss the Coming of the Lord, because He will come like a thief in the night. It’s time that we awoke from our slumber. Watch and pray.

B. **Encourage** one another to **gather** in Christ’s name (Hebrews 10:24-25).

The second principle to live by in the end times is to be diligent in gathering in Christ’s name. As we see the Day draw near, God commands us not to forsake **assembling together**. The key word is ‘to assemble.’ Listen to the Word of God in Hebrews 10:24-25: ²⁴ *and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,* ²⁵ *not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.***

Reality check: COVID-19 made our gathering worse. But, even long before that, in America, many Christians have been drifting away from weekly worship. One Gallup poll says: 92 % of Americans believe in God (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/147887/Americans-Continue-Believe-God.aspx>). Another statistic says: Only 37% of Christians attend worship services weekly and 29 % of Christians seldom or never attend church (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/09/13/what-surveys-say-about-worship-attendance-and-why-some-stay-home/>).

The average worship attendance of Methodists is once a month and it is getting worse. I am grateful to our members and friends at MUMC because you are faithful worshipers. Last Sunday, one lady told me that she drove 1 hour and 15 minutes to worship with us. Praise God. I thank God each day for you. Please keep up the good work. Do not lose this godly habit of gathering with fellow believers.

I want you to know why the weekly assembly is essential. **So that we may stimulate one another to love and good deeds** (Hebrews 10:24). The weekly gathering is a must for our wellbeing in every aspect: spiritual, emotional, physical, and communal. Even Jesus would go to the synagogue for worship and teaching once a week. How much more do we need the same?

Together we are strong. E.g. Church is like a fireplace. Each one of us is like firewood. Our faith is like flame. When the logs stay together, the fire goes strong. So does our faith when we are together. When the logs are pulled apart from each other, the flame dies out. So does our faith and practice when we are not together.

In our technology-driven society, we become more isolated and lonelier than before. To ease the problem of loneliness, some spend hours on social media. It is true that virtual community somewhat helps us in our loneliness, but it will never replace the physical closeness: face-to-face presence and physical interaction with each other. E.g. imagine the difference between eating dinner with your family in person vs. through Zoom/Facetime. God has created us to be together (Genesis 2:18). Physically not just virtually. We need each other. As the Day draws near, let us encourage more and more our physical gathering together in the name of our Lord.

C. **Lay aside** the deeds of darkness (Romans 13:11-14)

The next key to living well in the end times is to lay aside the deeds of darkness and conduct a holy life. Listen again to the Word of God in Romans 13:11-14. ¹¹*Do this, **knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.*** ¹²*The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore **let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.*** ¹³*Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.* ¹⁴*But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.***

How can we lay aside the deeds of darkness? By putting on the armor of light and truth. By putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Scripture, the Day of the Lord is the wedding day for the Church in Heaven: Christ the groom and the Church (that is, body of Christ) His bride. The groom comes down to welcome the bride into Heaven. In an earthly wedding, both the groom and the bride make sure that they are ready—pure and clean—for the wedding. They take a shower/bath and put on the best clothes. The same goes with our Heavenly wedding: you and I, the bride of Christ, must prepare ourselves with the cloth that is pure and clean; acceptable to God and to Christ our groom.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Put on the armor of light (Romans 13:14, 12). What happens when we put on Christ and the armor of light? We become holy and acceptable to

the Lord, and we do not give any provision for the flesh; we do not succumb to the sin and lusts that defile our souls such as carousing, drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, sensuality, strife or jealousy (Romans 13:13).

Lay aside the deeds of darkness by putting on the armor of light and truth.

D. **Love fervently** (1 Peter 4:8)

Lastly, we can live well in the end times by fervently loving each other. Listen to the Word of God one more time in 1 Peter 4:7-8: ⁷ **The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.** ⁸ **Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.**

Please note the **context** of fervent love: **the end times**. Verse 7 reads, **“The end of all things is near therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.”** Then, verse 8 reads, **“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”**

Let’s think about the love impact for a moment. We all agree that ‘love,’---not ‘eros,’ but ‘agape’ love--- is good, but seldom think of its impact on sins of the perpetrator. It covers sins. It nullifies the sin effect. For instance, if you love your enemy, your action of love will cover the sins of your enemy. Few of us have such experiences. However, Christ did. By laying down His life for sinners, Christ covered a multitude of our sins and set us free from sin and death.

Conclusion

As for closing, I would repeat what Peter the apostle said: ¹⁴ **Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless** (2 Peter 3:14). How do we do it? By living W.E.L.L.: **watch** and pray, **encourage** one another to get together, **lay aside** the deeds of darkness, and **love** fervently.

Action points: pray daily 15 minutes. Worship weekly. Repent sins. Love your enemies.

Amen.