

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ **For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;** ³⁹ **and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.** ⁴⁰ **Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.** ⁴¹ **Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.** ⁴² **“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.** ⁴³ **But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.** ⁴⁴ **So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.** (NIV84)

Theme: Prepare for Christ’s Coming

I know it’s still November, but it is after Thanksgiving, so hopefully its okay to mention Christmas—well, Christmas movies specifically. Maybe it’s because I grew up in the 90’s but to me one of the best Christmas movies of all time is *Home Alone*. And I know that I’ve talked this movie before, but the analogy works so well, I simply can’t pass it up. In the movie an 8-year old boy, Kevin McCalister is left alone at home by accident while the rest of his family traveled to Paris over Christmas on vacation. As it turns out there were two thieves, known as the “wet bandits” who were breaking into houses in the area. Kevin heard their plans to break into his house. And so he prepares for their coming. He creates a set of elaborate booby traps in an effort to cause pain and thwart the efforts of the thieves. He lit their hair on fire; dropped bricks, paint cans, and irons on their heads. He burns their hands, makes them step on nails, and shoots them with a BB gun. After he led them through this house of horrors, he had hopes of getting them caught—it was hairy there for a while, but in the end, Kevin was successful.

The point is, Kevin knew when the thieves were going to try and break into his house and steal all his families possessions. And so he was ready for them.

That is simply what someone would do. If you knew when someone was going to break into your house and steal things from your house, you would be prepared for when they came so that they wouldn’t be able to take anything from you. As Jesus said, **If the master of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house to be broken into.**

But *Home Alone* is only a movie, in reality it is only a rare occasion when someone knows when a thief is going to come and break into his house. For the most part, no one knows when a thief is going to come. So you have to be ready at all times—because the one time that you aren’t ready, that is when something always happens! That is why we keep guns by our beds, lock our doors, put up motions lights, install cameras, or put in a security system. You do what you can, within reason, to guard yourself against a thief breaking into your house—you want to be prepared at all times.

So it is with Christ’s coming—he will come like a thief in the night. We know that he will come eventually, but we don’t know when he will come. He could come tomorrow, 10 years from now, or 1000 years from now—and anytime in between. We don’t know the time—no one knows the time and we will never know until the Day itself comes, not even Jesus in his state of humiliation knew. And anyone who says they know or that they figured out some secret code found in the Bible is a liar.

We know that Christ is coming, we just don’t know when—he could come at any time. He is going to come at a time when we least expect him—when no one expects him. And we don’t want to be caught unprepared for his coming And so, like we do potential thieves, we must be ready for Christ’s coming at all times.

And how one ready for Christ’s coming? Simply believing. Those who believe in Christ alone will be properly prepared for when he comes again. For those who believe will be taken with Christ to live with him forever, while those who do not believe will be condemned. So the only way we are prepared for his coming is if we believe in him.

It seems so simple doesn't it? But the truth is many will be caught unprepared at Christ's second coming. And the sad thing is that many who were prepared through faith at one point are no longer. And many of those never intended to reject Christ, it just happened over time. They were sincere believers, but things got in the way of God and his Word. They became busy, other things became more important. They rarely read their Bibles at home or had devotions; Bible study was never on their radar. They made it to Church in order to worship whenever they could, but then that too started to drop off. Eventually they came only on major holidays and then, not at all. They stopped feeding their faith, they rarely heard the gospel; their faith became weaker and weaker, as they replaced worship and God's Word with something else. They started to have a lot of questions about God's Word; they soon doubted what they used to know as truth and what society says made more and more sense. Eventually their faith died completely and they won't be ready for Christ's coming. Jesus compares his second coming to the time of Noah. God gave Noah 120 years to build the ark. Peter calls Noah a, **preacher of righteousness**. During those 120 years, I'm sure there were countless individuals who asked Noah why he was building such an enormous boat—especially since he didn't live near any body of water! Noah would have shared God's warning numerous times and would have encouraged them to repent and join him and his family in the ark. But no one listened, they all rejected his message. Eventually and suddenly the flood came—the fountains of the deep came from below and the floodgates of the heavens opened. The world was destroyed and everyone not in the ark perished. So it will be at Christ's second coming. He has been warning us for almost 2000 years—giving us ample time to spread the gospel and lead others to repentance. And when he comes many people will be caught off guard. They will be going about their every-day lives when suddenly Christ will return. But by then it will be too late for the unbelievers—they will perish and not just physically, but they will die eternally. During the next month, we are going to have plenty to do—between our normal-everyday jobs, family obligations, and so on, we can tack on, shopping for Christmas presents, attending Christmas recitals or concerts, attending Christmas parties at work or at a friend's house, going on vacation or preparing for company. We'll have a lot on our plate. And the temptation, then, is simply to push Christ aside for the

time being—you've got too much going on to worry about Jesus or worship him. It's all too easy, especially this time of year, to become distracted from the Lord. That is why this call to be prepared for Christ's coming through faith is all the more important this time of year—it puts into perspective what truly matters.

Advent is a season of repentance. Advent is a time to reflect on why Christ had to come down to this earth in the first place. It was because of our sins and our utter helplessness that led Christ, out of love, to come down to earth to serve as our substitute on the cross. We also know that sins separates from God and any sin, especially one that festers, is a danger to our faith and puts our soul in jeopardy. So as we wait for Christ's second coming we repent of all our sins, cast them aside, and strive to live according to God's Word, clothing ourselves in Christ, which is what Paul encourages in our second lesson for today.

The flood came unexpectedly for those who did not believe. But for Noah and his family, the flood couldn't have come soon enough. They waited and waited for 120 years, almost counting down the days. Although I'm sure they were nervous, they also looked forward to it finally coming.

In the same way, the Last Day will be a day of judgment and wrath upon unbelievers. But it will also be a day of judgment for believers. The difference is, of course, that because of Christ, we'll receive a favorable verdict. Through faith, we receive all that Christ has done for us. Our sins have been removed and paid for, his perfect life is credited to us, so the Lord will declare us not guilty. It is a source of comfort to know that the judge of all the world is the same one who gave up his life to save the whole world. So for us, judgment day isn't a day to fear, but it is a day we look forward to. Because of Christ, we know that we'll be in heaven. On the Last Day we'll be taken to eternal glory where we will dwell with the Lord forever. So we wait, with eager anticipation, we long for the day to come. So that we can finally be home with our Savior, forever.

Eternal life in heaven with Jesus—that is something we don't want to miss. That is something we don't want anyone to miss. Let the Lord find us ready and prepared when he returns. And since only those who believe are properly prepared, the only way to be properly prepared is

by being in the Word, by remaining in the gospel. We could do this by reading his Word, studying it, worshiping, listening to sermons, and receiving the Lord's Supper—or best yet—all of these things! Yes, we are busy; but there are many ways and opportunities to remain in the word and be prepared for Christ's coming.

And if we also want all people to be prepared for Christ's second coming and thus join us in heaven, then we better spread the gospel. We should tell others about Christ and all the wonderful things he has done for us. For no one can believe in him unless the gospel is shared with them—we do this by baptizing and by teaching them God's Word.

And an amazing thing happens through the gospel—whether it is when we share it with others or when we are reading or listening to it ourselves: the Holy Spirit is working through it. He works through the gospel to bring sinners to faith and to keep them in the one true faith. It is because of him that we are prepared for his coming, for he prepares our hearts and minds through faith. So we don't really prepare ourselves for his coming—the Holy Spirit does it for us through the gospel.

When Christ comes again, it will be like a thief in the night—no one will expect it. And that is actually a good thing. If Christ had told us the exact time he would return, we'd prepare for that day like Kevin MaCalister in *Home Alone*. We'd be ready for his coming, but what would happen if we would die before then? Many would be woefully unprepared, and the spread of the gospel would suffer as well. So instead, we must remain ready at all times by remaining in the gospel and sharing that gospel with others. So then, on the Last Day when Christ returns he will find us and many others ready and waiting to be taken home. Amen.