

“The Second Coming”

Isaiah 2:1 – 5; Matthew 24:36 – 44; Romans 13:11- 14

Isaiah 2:1 – 5:

This is that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

In the last days

the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established

as the highest of the mountains;

it will be exalted above the hills,

and all nations will stream to it.

Many peoples will come and say,

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,

to the temple of the God of Jacob.

He will teach us his ways,

so that we may walk in his paths.”

The law will go out from Zion,

the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He will judge between the nations

and will settle disputes for many peoples.

They will beat their swords into plowshares

and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,

nor will they train for war anymore.

Come, descendants of Jacob,

let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Matthew 24:36 – 44:

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 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; 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. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 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. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

Romans 13:11 – 14:

“And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.

So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

-----//-----

Here we are... the last day of November...

How are we all doing?

Who here has put up their Christmas tree?

Who here has bought all their presents?

Who here has sorted out the menu for Christmas Day?

Who has done none of the above?

And this morning marks what?

The first Sunday in Advent.

Advent means “coming” or “arrival”.

Christmas is the arrival of Jesus, coming into the world as child in Bethlehem.

Advent looks back to the first Christmas Day.

It reflects on Jesus coming to us in the present.

But Advent also looks forward.

Jesus, the child of Bethlehem, became the man who is the saviour of the world. And as the Saviour of our world Jesus said that one day he would return to this planet – he will come again in glory.

In other words, one day, Jesus is going to physically return to this planet. He is going to physically return to this earth.

And in case we want to dismiss it, it is not secondary doctrine. Nearly every book in the New Testament speaks of Christ's second in some way.

Jesus speaks of his own return as we heard in Matthew which is also found in Mark and Luke.

The final words of the Scripture found in the final book of the Bible state:

“He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.”

Revelation 22:20 – 21

Paul writes, “The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.”

“The day” is shorthand for “day of the Lord”, the day of Jesus' second advent.

So what will that look like? What's it all about?

Well with his return there will be **redemption**.

Paul also says in reference to the end that “our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed”.

Now what some people point out is this, “Hang on a moment, what does Paul mean when he says our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed – haven't I already been saved?”

“Do you and I have to wait for Jesus to return to be sure (of our salvation)?”

How would you respond to that?

Again, tell the person next to you.

Salvation is talked about in three ways in Scripture, three tenses.

We have *been* redeemed from the penalty of sin; we are *being* redeemed from the power of sin; we *shall be* redeemed from the presence of sin.

You *have been* redeemed from the penalty of sin.

Salvation is being saved from sin and death and condemnation are being reconciled to God.

You see sin is about living a self-referencing life; a *self*-ruled and *self*-directed life, that chooses against God and creates a barrier, a wall between you and God.

So this salvation happens when you come under the rule of King Jesus who's coronation was a death on Roman Cross.

On that cross, even though he was King and innocent, he died our place, to take away your sins and my sins.

But death did not have the final say.

He rose from the dead, in the power of the Spirit, vindicated by his Father.

And he now offers this salvation to all people.

Have you accepted the gift of salvation?

Have you said sorry for your sins, received God's pardon that comes through the cross and come under his rule?

When that happens a shift occurs.

You have a change of address.

You go from a kingdom marked by darkness, by lostness and sin and you are brought into a kingdom of light, and purpose and meaning and freedom.

This is not an endpoint; it's only the beginning.

You are *being* redeemed.

Paul writes to those who being saved.¹

In other words, you and I are a work in progress.

You and I are undergoing a makeover...

In 2020 \$44 billion was spent on cosmetic surgery globally.

Breast augmentation, Nose reshaping (Rhinoplasty), eyelid surgery, liposuction and Tummy tuck (Abdominoplasty).

However two-thirds of people are honest enough to express cosmetic surgery remorse.

As we talked about a few weeks ago, in Scripture we're told that God has begun a *good* work *in* you.

Scripture talks of growing in holiness, of bearing fruit, resisting temptation – of being transformed by God.

You and I are being saved from the power of sin.

That means, even now you can be different.

You can be a different kind of person.

You're not stuck with yourself.

You can make progress.

You don't have to be stuck.

Sometimes the changes come through wrestling.

Sometimes in moments of insight.

God keeps his promises. He is at work to bring about the best 'you'.

If that doesn't give you hope, I don't know what will.

You *shall be* redeemed from the presence of sin.

At Jesus second advent our salvation will be complete.

That includes our bodies.

Our bodies – every one of us – bear marks on world dominated by sin.

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Cor 2:15

I mean, in the current state of things we still age and die.
We are still at the mercy of illness and injury.
I have a back at times that gives me... issues.

What will happen though, and this about in our places, is that you and I will receive a new mind and new body.
Sins presence and effect will be no more.
So that's what happens to us, what about the rest of creation.
The effect of sin, its power over us and penalty will be completed diminished when Jesus returns.

So at his return there will be redemption.

Well there will be a ***reckoning***; there will be a ***judgement***.

Jesus speaks of it in Matthew.

As it was in the days of Noah so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.
I mean, the flood was God's judgement on a humanity completed opposed to him.

I mean, did you know an estimated 20 million people are trafficked into some form of modern slavery today. That's more than any other time in history. Most are women and children.
Many are forced into a life of prostitution, sexual assault and physical abuse.

Last week Richard Drury spoke of his work with Barnabas Aid which helps suffering Christians.
Why? Today 365 million Christians are persecuted world-wide for the simple act of following Jesus. That's more than any other time in history.

Alongside that there will certain fallen angelic beings who have influenced the world towards evil and they will be judged.

And there will also be those people who consciously and defiantly wanted to have nothing to do with God and the things of God.

Those who have spurned His love, who deep, deep down, have rejected every advance and welcoming initiative and He will judge them.

Those who have said in their heart of hearts, I want nothing to do with you.

He will say something like this: “While you were living you wanted nothing to do with me.

Before your death you wanted to have nothing to do with me.

Now, after your death, I will not force my presence on you.

I will honour your decision even though it saddens me.

You will go to the place of the dead and be there forever.”

So there be redemption and a reckoning and there will be a ***restoration***.

The planet itself will be changed because there will be judgement.

Isaiah looks forward to the time when Jesus will usher in an age of peace.

As we heard in our readings:

God will judge between the nations

and will settle disputes for many peoples.

They will beat their swords into plowshares

and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,

nor will they train for war anymore.

“When I contemplate that verse, there is hope and relief that, for example, history is in the Lord's domain and in the end, institutions like the United Nations are not eternal. International peace will be a miracle of God, not the feeble attempts of human counsel.”

No more war.

No more climate alarmism.

No more lock downs.

No more mandates.

No more ram-raids.

No more mental health crisis.

No more gun violence.

No more hating.

No more racism.

So there will be a fully redeemed you on a fully redeemed planet Earth.

Many Christians talk about the end of the age as being terrible and terrifying, even for Christians.

But this is our hope that we reflect on at Advent – that your world and the world will be changed, renewed, different, better, liberated and free.

Now our Lord said to keep watch because no one knows the day or hour, and Paul said the night is almost over; the day is almost here.

In the book of Revelation in the second to last verse Jesus says, “Yes, I am coming... soon”.

That was around 2000 years ago.

Yet here we are... waiting still.

So if someone said,

“If the day is almost here then why the long wait for Jesus’ Second Advent?”

How would you respond?

Well did you know it was an issue in the time of the disciples?

People were actually mocking the believers for their beliefs and their belief Jesus would return.

And Peter’s response – you can find this in 2 Peter – is what?

“With the Lord, a thousand years is like one day”.²

In other words, for God it’s only been a couple of days.

And Peter also says that God is patient and doesn’t want anyone to perish but all to come to repentance.

The hope of Advent is God’s future is invading the present.

Jesus says, “But no one knows the day nor the hour... therefore... keep watch”.

² 2 Peter 3:

Many people think it's about being sign-watchers.
Blood moons, and 7 year peace treaties in the Middle East and microchips in the hand...

But Jesus says that life will be fairly normal when he returns;
dinner parties, weddings, commerce and labour will still feature.

Paul also says, "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here."
But he doesn't then say, "Watch for the signs".

He says, "Put aside the deeds of darkness...", walk in the light, clothe yourself with Christ.

In other words, there is call to watch... to watch over your life.
Paul would later write to Timothy, "Watch and your life and doctrine closely."³

It's a call to holiness which every generation of Christians have been called to have.

To be marked out as a people living for the coming King.

The Advent season – that anticipates the Second Advent – is an opportunity to get your life right with God.

The thing is, there is something lingering in our lives, it actually squelches hope.
The longer it lingers, the greater the despair.

But God, he's not begrudging.
He says, "Come, let me make you clean."

The other takeaway is that we are bearers of hope *now*.

God's future can invade your life now.

God has some good stored up for us – hope, peace, joy and love – and you can experience that now.

You can have quality of life after you die, a quality of life when Jesus returns *and* a quality of life *now*.

And so many people are *not* experiencing that today.
The statistics are there.

³ 1 Timothy 4:16

My hope is that we would be the kind of church where you feel comfortable to bring your friends or family that they might find hope.

My hope is that in you conversations, at your BBQ's and in your Christmas work functions or even over fence, you and I will be able to share a word of hope.