

Dear Disciples of Jesus,

I was sitting at the intersection of Southern Ave and Hardy Dr. in Tempe waiting patiently behind the white stripe in the turn lane to make a left hand turn. This lady comes north on Hardy Dr. Making a right hand turn. She has two full lanes in which to safely make a right hand turn. All of a sudden she is coming right at me. I looked at the drivers spot in the car and I see the driver looking back over her left shoulder the other way. She turned her head and was in shock that she is 10 feet in front of me headed straight for me. She spun the wheel of her car and hit my right front and went past me into oncoming traffic. Thank the Lord that she did not hit anyone else. She did get a ticket for the incident.

I tell you this story because I was on my way home from church for lunch. I had a good morning. I was looking forward to a sandwich and getting back to work. I never knew I would be in an accident. It happened suddenly. Thankfully I was prepared. I was mindful of what was going on and I had my seatbelt on so I was prepared.

Jesus calls on us in the gospel reading to be prepared. Of course he wants to be prepared and alert when we are driving. However, in the Gospel reading, he urges us to watch and be prepared for his Second Coming. It is going to come very suddenly like that car accident. The good news is Jesus prepares us through the Gospel. As we hear the message today our Lord is helping us to **Be Ready When Jesus Comes**.

### **1. Not preoccupied with the affairs of this life. (36-39)**

I was told a story some years ago about a mother with a dozen children. She was so busy getting herself and everyone ready for church that she failed notice, until she arrived at church, that she was still wearing her bedroom slippers. We can understand, especially the moms in the congregation, how that could easily happen to a busy mother.

What may not be so easy to understand is how a Christian can get so distracted that they would fail to be ready when Jesus comes. Jesus issues the warning to his disciples. Being ready for his coming means not being preoccupied with the affairs of this life.

A. Once in a while a pastor will come to me and say that several pastors are thinking of having a special meeting. One example would be on local

outreach or witnessing. I ask them when the meeting will be because I am interested. They will typically respond, “We are seeing if enough people are interested.” I will tell them, “I am interested in local outreach.” Let me know when it’s happening. At that point I will completely forget about that meeting. Why? Because I have no idea when it is going to take place. I already have real meetings on my calendar. I am not going to give much thought to a meeting that isn’t scheduled and may never be. I believe that many other pastors, executives, attorneys, even busy moms and dads would tell you the same thing.

I believe that Jesus saw a danger that this kind of thinking would slip into our spiritual lives. The devil will certainly tempt us to think this way. It is thinking, *“I don’t know when Jesus is coming, so I am not going to invest a lot of my busy time in preparing for his return.”* They may even think, *“If I see signs that his return is imminent, then I will prepare for Jesus’ Second Coming.”*

There are also many people who aren’t that busy unless you count spending time on fun and entertainment as being busy. Some people don’t want to put in the effort at preparing for Jesus’ return because it involves work. A person has to listen to what is being preached. A person has to read the Bible and take it to heart. A person even needs to repent of their sins. It is much more fun to pursue entertainment and pleasure. I believe this will cause more than a few Christians to be surprised and unprepared at Jesus’ Second Coming.

Jesus purposefully reminds us that none of us knows when he is returning, so that we will be concerned and make every effort to be prepared. Then it won’t matter when he returns, because we will be ready. Listen to Jesus’ warning and prepare yourself.

B. Jesus uses Noah and the people of his day as an example. In retelling this story Jesus’ makes a point of how suddenly the flood came.

1. He tells us that the people of Noah’s day were busy with life. They were getting ready for weddings. A wedding can be a very busy time in a family’s life. As these people ran about their daily business it began raining and it didn’t stop until they were all dead except for Noah and his family.

Our English Bible says, **“They knew nothing.”** That isn’t a good translation. The Greek says, **“They did not pay attention.”** The Living Bible translates: **“People wouldn’t believe what was going to happen.”**

2. Jesus says **this is how it will be with the coming of the Son of Man.**

People are busy. They have received the warning, but most refuse to believe he is coming back so they go about their business. One day Jesus will

suddenly appear and they will be surprised. Peter repeats this thought in 2 Peter 3:10, **“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.”**

## **2. Conscious of the eternal significance of his coming. (40-41)**

The question then is *“How do I get ready?”* You and I can get ready by remaining conscious of the eternal significance of his coming. It helps with our readiness when we know what is going to happen.

A. Jesus tells us in verses 40, 41, **“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.”** Believers and unbelievers will be separated at when he returns. Jesus tells us in Matthew 13 that angels are the harvesters doing the separating.

1. This reason they are separated is because life as we know it will not continue. Jesus’ return is a day of Judgement.

2. There are two possible outcomes for people. Those who are judged righteous through faith in Jesus will be taken by the angels to eternal life. People who ignored the warnings and refused to believe will be taken away to eternal condemnation.

B. The Bible speaks of two destinations. Believers are taken to Heaven to live with God. Unbelievers are sent to Hell where they will live away from God and without his blessing. This is pictured in the Bible as torment. What make this serious is that it is permanent and final. There are no redoes or second chances.

C. We are so blessed! People have questions about God. They don’t know what to believe. We know God and he has told how we are blessed on Judgement Day because of Jesus, the Savior. This is not a “maybe”, but a certainty. As St. Paul expressed in 2 Timothy 1:12, **“I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.”**

## **3. Always expecting his return. (42-44)**

What is left for you and me is to be ready by always expecting his return.

A. Jesus told his disciples, **“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”** (42) How do we keep watch so we are expecting his return? Noah again is a good example.

1. The rain was coming, but it was over a 100 years before the flood came.

How would Noah remember? We can imagine that Noah may have written the Lord's communications down. He probably shared them with his children and discussed the significance of what the Lord was going to do. Peter even tells us in 2 Peter that Noah warned his neighbors and others of the coming catastrophe. (2:5) All of this kept his faith fresh and active.

Then Noah did what the Lord commanded he built the Ark and made preparations for his stay there. (Genesis 6:9,22)

2. Today we have the Lord's urgent communications written down for us in the Bible. Jesus wants us to use it to keep our faith fresh and vital so we are prepared for his Second Coming.

The key thoughts in the Bible are that we need to repent of our sins and receive forgiveness in Jesus. We sin in many ways, and sometimes it is in not taking the Lord seriously about watching for his return. Jesus is willing to wake us up with a sharp call to repent. He graciously offers forgiveness in his innocent sufferings and death. As we look at the cross we see our salvation, and we see God's love. It is hard to forget Jesus when we are thinking about these things.

B. Still it is possible and so he add one last warning to help us. He wants us to keep watch at ALL times.

1. Jesus mentions that an owner of a house suffered a financial disaster because a thief broke in and took his treasures. If he had been watching, this wouldn't have happened.

2. Jesus concludes **“So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”** (44) Jesus coming is going to even surprise Christians as to the time. Things will seem very normal.

C. His point is don't ever stop being prepared. Don't let your guard down because you just don't know. So I would say continue to focus your faith on Jesus through regular receiving of the Word and Sacraments. If you are focused on Jesus you will not only be prepared for his Second Coming, you will also be prepared to celebrate his first coming this Christmas.

Conclusion: Driving up to Flagstaff this time of year you have to prepare by listening for travel advisories. They will tell you if it snowing, you may need to bring chains to put on your tires, because you don't want to get stuck in snow or slide off into the ditch which can be steep in some places. That is hard to think about for you and I who rarely deal with snow. I am tempted to think, *“nothing is going to happen.”* If I jump in my car and start heading north without a thought I may be heading into trouble. I may put my life and

the lives of others if I don't properly prepare.

Jesus is calling on us to be ready. This is even more serious because he is talking about things that are eternal. Failure to be prepared, falling asleep spiritually can cost our eternal salvation. Jesus doesn't want that to happen. He warns us and he encourages us through this message in Matthew 24. In fact as we remember Jesus our faith is strengthened. He has saved us. He is watching over us. I need to focus my faith on him. The Gospel in Word and Sacrament does this. Then we are ready when Jesus comes. Amen.