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Jesus is preaching and teaching about what it looks like to be saved. What identifies people who have a relationship with the Saviour. Kingdom people. What are the different facets of being a person who dwells in this world, but who is not a citizen of this world any longer.

Christians are citizens of heaven. Paul says; 20 *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;*

Ppn 3:20

Everything Jesus says in this sermon is predicated on the idea that we, if we are really christians, are no longer citizens of this present age. We are removed from this cosmos. The systems of this world.

This present world and all of it's systems, revolve around the ruler of this world, Satan. Christians are detached from this world. But . . . and this is huge . . . we still live in this world.

What does that look like? That's what this sermon, this long teaching in chapter 12 is about. All of the different facets of the diamond of belonging to Jesus, of having our citizenship removed from this kosmos, this world system that belongs to Satan, and having our citizenship re-instated in the authority to reign, the kingship, the kingdom of God. Satan no longer has authority over us. Jesus does.

Listen with your brains turned on for a moment to a conversation that Pontius Pilate had with Jesus. He asked Jesus if He was King of the Jews; 36 *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."* Jn. 18:36

We belong to a King whose kingdom is not of this world. Belonging to Jesus, being a Christian, is a weird situation. We live in this current world where Satan still reigns and controls all of the cosmos, the world systems. All the money, all the world religions, the wars, the conflicts, the sin. Satan is ruler of this world.

And we are in this world, but we are no longer of this world. I'm here, but my heart isn't here. My heart is longing for a home I've not yet seen. My citizenship is in that realm, that world that Jesus spoke of to Pilate. My body, soul, and spirit belongs to Jesus. He has authority to reign and rule over me.

But I'm very much here, smack dab in the middle of this world that is under the authority and control of Satan. A world that is getting weirder and scarier every day.

And Jesus is addressing, has been addressing in the past 5 weeks studies since we've been studying together in the 12th chapter of Luke, what that dichotomy looks like.

Different facets of the reality of belonging to a King whose rule is in another realm, but we are still here in another ruler's realm. An evil usurper's realm. And we no longer answer to him, we now belong to Jesus. What is it like to live in that tension? In this world, but not of this world.

That's what Jesus is teaching about. All the different facets. And this morning He is going to address an important component of that idea. What will He find us doing, when He returns. Do we blend in with this world so well no one can tell any difference.

And within that idea, another very important consideration. We don't know the hour or minute of His return. That's an incredibly important element of this whole discussion. He told us He's coming again. He didn't give us a date.

The importance of that one idea cannot be over-stated. The church has lived within that tension for 2000 years. Jesus can return at any moment. What will He find me doing, on that day? In that hour? That's the question being addressed. In Luke 18 Jesus will say; *when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?"*

We dare not make guesses at God's motivation for doing something. He is all wise, all good, all gracious, all merciful, all knowing. But we can't help but wonder if this isn't a gift to us.

You've got a master with a bunch of slaves, and the master has to go to a different country on a journey. What better motivator for those slaves than to tell them, I could be back at any moment, and when I do come back, what I find you doing will be very important to you as regards rewards and or punishment.

What kind of motivation is that. When I return, if you're mistreating the other slaves and off drunk somewhere, I'll cut you into pieces. Think maybe God planned this whole deal as motivation for us? It kind of sounds like a good idea.

Let's begin. I'm going to start with a spoiler. I'm going to preface the rest of the study with vs. 40 *"You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."*

That's the whole point that He's going to make over and over in this section with a whole bunch of metaphors that show us that one thought, one truth. Be ready, you don't know when I'm going to show up.

We've said it often in this pulpit. The entirety of the whole book, the single

narrative that ties the entirety of this book which is a collection of 66 books by a plurality of authors over a 1500 year period; the single theme, by the single author, the Holy Spirit of God, is this.

The world is lost in chapter 3 of Genesis, by sinful man, with the help of a usurper, Satan, this planet has fallen into death. But God is sending His Son, to this world, to die in our place, to take the punishment we deserved, to give us His righteousness, to gather a people for God's name, and then to ultimately come and judge the usurper and all of the enemies of God, and return this world to it's rightful owner, the King of kings.

From Genesis to Revelation there are prophecies that define bits and pieces of that general truth. And Paul says; you have to rightly divide the word of truth, this book. And what that means is, he was a tent maker, and to make a tent, you had to take a pile of animal skins in different shapes and sizes and put them together like puzzle pieces in order to not waste a bunch of valuable material.

We are to spend enough time in the study of this book so that when we read something, like what Jesus is saying here, we can put that puzzle piece in the right spot in the puzzle. Where does this information that Jesus is teaching here this morning, fit with all the other animal skins in the full tent?

Where does the puzzle piece of information Jesus is speaking about in this passage fit in the whole puzzle?

Revelation 1:7 says this; *7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him— even those who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. So shall it be! Amen.*

40 “You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”

The coming of Jesus is somehow both things. He comes secretly, like a thief in the night, and He comes in power and great glory and every eye on earth

will see Him coming.

What do we do with those two conflicting puzzle pieces that seem to define the same event. Jesus is coming. Every eye will see Him and many will mourn. But He's coming like a thief at an hour unknown.

Also, make an important mental note about Revelation 1:7. Who witnesses Jesus coming in glory? The jews, those who pierced Him, and the tribes of the earth. The church is not mentioned in that verse. The whole earth all sees Him coming at the same time. But the church is missing. You've got jews, and you've got the nations, but no church.

Those can't be talking about the same event. Every eye will see Him coming all over the globe, but He's coming like a thief? That doesn't work very well at all.

Well, yes it does, for those of us who are pre-mil, pre-trib. OK, now I need to define some terms; Pre-mil is a term for those of us who believe Jesus will return at the end of the tribulation period to set up a 1000 year reign, thus millennial reign on David's throne in Jerusalem. A simple literal translation of what He said, what all the prophets said.

Pre-trib defines those of us who believe that the beginning of the 'return of Christ' is when He comes and meets His bride, the church, in the air. The rapture is the event that triggers the 7 year tribulation period. Pre-trib is short for pre-tribulation rapture, or catching away, of the church.

So then, there is no conflict at all if the events Jesus is describing in our passage this morning is when He comes to call His church, His bride, out of this world before the tribulation period. We do not know the day or the hour. We live in the same blessed tension that the church has enjoyed for 2000 years. It could be today.

That's the event that is un-announced. The rapture of the church. The glorious 2nd coming in judgement when every eye will see, and Israel will be

delivered and all Israel will be saved, that part of the 2nd coming is seven years after the rapture, and we, the church, will be with Him, coming in the clouds.

So then, with that background, let's look at several word pictures or perhaps we can call them mini-parables, metaphors that are about when He comes to receive His own, the church, out of this world before the time of the tribulation period.

The folks in the tribulation period have lots of specific indicators down to days by numbers in many prophecies. No surprise to anyone who's reading this book in that day. OTOH, we only know one thing about when Jesus will call the church home. It's in our passage this morning. Be ready. Always. He may come at any time.

We've got indicators of the general time. For centuries christians have been watching the world stage, watching the pieces come together that look like a good fit for end times scenarios. We believe more than ever before that the world stage is set for the end times. But . . . we don't know the day or the hour, or the year.

Some of you will remember a few years ago this fellow Harold Camping who had a big radio audience, Family Radio. He predicted the rapture would be September 6, 1994. Oops, sorry had a wrong half number, September 29th. Oops, October 2nd.

Millions of dollars poured into his ministry. Why not, we're out of here and he's the prophetic voice, right. 1994 came and went. Then, like the voice on the Garmin, recalculating, recalculating . . . ahh, October 21st, 2011. Remember the billboards. Millions and millions of dollars worth of billboards.

40 "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

36 *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 37 “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. Mt. 24:36, 37*

Anyone who tells you they know the day and the hour is calling Jesus either a liar, or worse, an idiot. The reference to the days of Noah is because in that judgement, those folks got up and it was business as usual, until water enveloped them like a tidal wave.

Suddenly your feet are lifted up off the earth and there's nothing but water. None of them saw that coming. Biz as usual one minute . . . then you don't know what hit you, and you're doing the dog paddle like a mouse in a bucket of water, for what, 5 minutes if you're a strong healthy person.

The reference to the days of Noah is often mis-understood. The lesson of Noah's judgement is that the world was doing what the world does until the moment the judgement came and caught them all by surprise. The suddenness.

We are in the same suspense that the church has been in for all of it's existence. Be ready. NO one knows the day or the hour. It could be today. First 2 word pictures;

35 *“Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight.*

There are two possible options for what Jesus meant by this metaphor of being dressed in readiness.

Dress in readiness. If you lived when Jesus lived, it was a time of long robes. Tunics over other wraps. You were swathed in material.

Now if you were strolling on stage giving a Ted talk, that might be fine. Very dignified. Like the scholars at a commencement. But if you were a farmer in a field doing heavy work, or a soldier in a battle that needed to run, not so much.

The term, gird up your loins, is fairly common in scripture. In fact it's in vs. 37. What that meant was, you had a belt, and you lift up most or all of the hanging down stuff, not so you expose yourself, but girded around your loins and tucked that flowing stuff under a belt. Now your legs are free to run.

Jesus says, dress in the ready form. Be ready to run. Ready to do battle. Ready, as opposed to being encumbered so you can't move fast when He calls. He's using physical pictures to describe your spiritual state.

We are to be ready, spiritually. Not encumbered with sin. Not fast asleep spiritually. Not off in left field doing something that has nothing to do with what our Master has tasked us to do. Ready. And the next picture helps along the vein.

and keep your lamps alight Jesus loved to use this analogy. In Mt. 25 we have the parable of the 10 virgins. Waiting, waiting, waiting. It's night time and they have little oil lamps. But 5 of the virgins aren't ready. Their lamps are going out because they're out of oil.

Oil in the bible is always associated with the Spirit of God. 5 have the Holy Spirit. 5 do not. So they go to buy oil, but it's too late. The bridegroom comes and shouts and the virgins who were ready, go in to the marriage ceremony.

Part of spiritual readiness is to be un-encumbered with this world. And part of being ready is being filled with the Holy Spirit. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Jesus is mixing His metaphor's. But for these first two let me give you a 2nd possibility for dressed in readiness that could be included in a common metaphor. Jesus also tells a parable of a wedding, the wedding is an often used theme for the parable of heaven.

And He orders His slaves to go out to the highways and byways and compel

people to come to the wedding, because the towns people are dis-interested. So the slaves go get people from everywhere. And then the master is sending would be guests . . what . . He's throwing them out of the wedding, why? Because they aren't dressed for a wedding. They don't have wedding garments.

So then, 35 *“Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight.* could mean, dressed in fine linen, white and clean. The Holy Spirit quickens us from the dead and removes our sin, and we are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus, when we believe. 35 *“Be dressed in readiness, sins forgiven and removed as far as the east is from the west and keep your lamps alight.* Filled instead with the Holy Spirit.

Readiness for the Master's return begins at salvation. The churches are full of unsaved people who think they're OK because they're going to church. But they don't have their wedding garments on, and they don't have oil in their lamps, and when the Bridegroom comes with a shout, they won't be ready to leave with Him.

36 *“And be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks.*

OK, we've got the clothing of salvation, fine linen, white and clean, our sins are forgiven and removed, and we are given a righteousness not our own, it is the imputed righteousness of Jesus, given to us. That's our clothing. Then we have the oil of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

People who have had a real conversion. A transformation that is real. Does it last? One of the signs of true conversion is that it lasts. 50 years later you're still excited to know Him and you still long for the day when you will see Him. This next metaphor is about maintaining that readiness over the long haul. Days turn into months. Months turn into years.

This is a new metaphor. This picture is of a master, gone away, with slaves

taking care of His business while He's not there.

You know, if you're a slave, and the master is away, most slaves will break ranks and find the nearest barca-lounger. No need to keep up appearances. The boss is out, and we think he'll be gone quite a while. At ease. That's sort of normal.

But Jesus says, no, His true slaves have maintained high alert, and when He comes home, the door is open and the red carpet is out before He gets half way from the carriage to the door stoop. They've been waiting in readiness the entire time He has been away.

What is the motivation for that level of readiness? Jesus says, there is reward for those slaves who have maintained readiness. Slaves who don't have the proper clothing, slaves who do not have the Holy Spirit, are slaves who wander off somewhere else while time elapses. We don't see them any more.

37 "Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.

This is over the top. The reward for these obedient slaves who were waiting in readiness for their master to return is, He's going to gird himself to serve them! The God of the universes is going to create a feast for us! If we're ready, He's going to throw a party for us!

That was unheard of over the top in that culture, and indeed in ours. God is going to throw a party and serve us! Blessed are those slaves. Happy are those slaves. Motivation to be in readiness.

38 "Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

Here's the rub. Second and third watch are those hours when most of the world is slumbering. It's one thing to be in readiness during the normal work

hours of the day. Anybody expects that. But then the work day is over and everybody goes home.

Weariness and sleep are the norm. It's difficult to keep the high alert going after the first 8 hours. Second watch is perhaps dinner to midnight. Third watch is midnight to early hours of the AM. The longer the master delays, the harder it is to keep up high alert.

And that picture works spiritually too. The first century Christians expected Jesus to return. Any moment. But Peter wisely said something that I'll bet most people dismissed as too far out.

3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." 2 Peter 3:3, 4

Not going to happen. Great thought Peter, but we seriously doubt your words will ever be necessary. But now 2000 years have come and gone.

8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, 2 Peter 3:8 - 10a

And here we are in 2020. The third watch seems far spent, and the church is sound asleep, off somewhere showing the world, we can be just as hip and cool as you all are. We can make the church look so much like the world that no one can tell the difference. Coffee bars and Barca-loungers.

The thief is the fourth metaphor. Dress for departure with wedding garments, white and clean. Lamps filled with oil, ready for departure. Watching constantly, and ready to open the door for the master when He returns, whatever the hour or watch of the night, and finally, the element of surprise.

He comes like a thief.

We had the perfect illustration provided for us a week ago. How many of you went to bed on the 14th thinking there would be an earthquake at 4:03 AM. Raise your hands. That earthquake was a total surprise! Nobody thought about an earthquake that night or any night when they went to bed. It just happens!

The element of surprise is illustrated for us by the thief metaphor, and we just heard Peter re-use that metaphor again. He comes, unexpected. Like a thief. Like an earthquake. Like a tidal wave at Noah's day when the sky's opened and people were swept away in minutes. The element of surprise.

*39 "And be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into.
40 "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."*

Let's recap Jesus 4 metaphors, 4 mini parables and do a readiness check that applies to everything He taught on this morning 2000 years ago.

If He comes today, do I have the proper clothing? Do I have my wedding attire? Am I dressed in fine linen, white and clean? Do I possess a righteousness, not my own, a righteousness imputed to my account, given to me by Jesus in that transaction He accomplished on the cross.

He gives me His righteousness, a perfect righteousness, acceptable to God the Father, and likewise, He takes my sin upon Himself at the cross and bears the necessary punishment. Am I clothed in His righteousness? Dressed in that readiness?

Next is the metaphor of burning lamps. Do I have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in me. Paul says to the Corinthians; *5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?* 2Cor. 13:5

Christians are those who have been indwelt during conversion by the Holy Spirit of God. Christ in you, the hope of glory. The Holy Spirit is who and how I woke from the dead spiritually and was quickened to life. Spiritual life. My lamp is burning because the oil of the Holy Spirit dwelling in my heart, never runs out.

I'm clothed in righteousness and I have a lamp burning. Both of those things, if they were required of me to do it, I would have failed long long ago.

The 3rd metaphor is perseverance. The perseverance of the saints. Real christians are still real christians after the days and weeks and months come and go because of the first two things. I have an imputed righteousness. It had nothing to do with me attaining it, it was given to me.

And I have the Holy Spirit living in my heart, the same person who quickened me from the dead, has dwelt with me and in me, year in, year out, through every trial of life.

And that is the secret of my perseverance. It also has nothing to do with me. It is accomplished by the same Holy Spirit who woke me from the dead at my conversion.

50 years have come and gone. I'm still waiting. Still anticipating that at any moment, I may hear that trumpet blow, and that voice shout; *Come Up Here!*

Rev. 4:1

Jesus is coming for His church, and it will be as un-expected as that earthquake was the other night. Not a thought. But then it happened. Suddenly.

For those who are the kept ones, the property of Jesus that is protected and kept by His Holy Spirit, the suddenness is not a problem. The same Spirit who quickened me from the dead is keeping me in readiness for the Master's shout.

Will the churches be empty the Sunday following His coming to gather His elect from the four winds? Or will they be full? That's the question that troubles me most.