

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church – Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Last Sunday of the Church Year  
November 24, 2024  
Sermon by Pastor Christopher Pflughoeft  
**Jesus is at the door**

*<sup>26</sup>Then you will see the Son of Man coming on clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup>At that time he will send out his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of the sky. <sup>28</sup>“Learn from this illustration of the fig tree: Whenever its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup>So also when you see these things happening, you will know that he is near – at the doors! <sup>30</sup>Amen I tell you: This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things happen. <sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. <sup>32</sup>“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup>Watch! Be alert and pray, because you do not know when the time will come. <sup>34</sup>It is like a man going away on a journey. When he left his home, he put his servants in charge and assigned what each one was to do. He also commanded the doorkeeper to keep watch. <sup>35</sup>Therefore keep watch, because you do not know when the owner of the house is coming: whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or early in the morning. <sup>36</sup>If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. <sup>37</sup>What I say to you, I say to everyone: Keep watch!” – Mark 13:26-37 EHV*

“Knock, knock, knock,” “Ding-dong,” “Buzz” with a notification that there is someone at the front door, “Ruff! Ruff! Ruff” as the dog looks out the window. “They’re here!” yell the children who were waiting with eager expectation. There are many clear ways to know that an anticipated guest has arrived at the door. Is the family ready for them?

If you rewind the scene to an hour prior to the moment, you can see all the things that the family did in order to prepare for the arrival of their guests. The younger children picked up their toys. The older children made their beds. Mom prepared the dinner while dad vacuumed the floors.

This family was ready for their guests. This was going to be a great day. Fast forward back to the beginning of the scene, the oldest child opened the door and mom announced from the living room as she walked toward the door, “Come on in. We are so happy to see you.”

We have all been in this place before, haven’t we? We have had guests over and we wanted to be ready for them. We cleaned the rooms. We lit the candles. We turned on the background music. We prepared the meal. We wanted to be ready for when the guests would arrive.

Brothers and sisters, in our text for today, we hear a call to be ready. This call is to be ready as we watch for the one who is coming. He is coming very soon. This is the Son of Man, Jesus. Jesus is coming in judgment. He will take the righteous to eternal life. He will send the unrighteous to eternal destruction. This text calls people to be ready for Jesus is at the door.

Today’s Gospel is found within a section in which Jesus spoke to a few of his disciples regarding the temple. Immediately after Jesus commended the poverty-stricken widow for her generosity - just a couple of weeks ago we read about her during worship - he left the temple for the last time. As he departed the temple with his disciples, one of them remarked at the beauty of the building. In response to this disciple’s remark, Jesus let them know that the temple would be destroyed. In this response, Jesus foretold what we know was fulfilled in 70 A.D. The Roman forces under future Emperor Titus leveled the Temple along with all of Jerusalem.

Privately on the Mount of Olives, Peter, John, James, and Andrew had more questions to ask Jesus regarding the destruction of the Temple. These disciples had two main questions for Jesus. First, when will this be? Second, what will the signs be? The first question is what Jesus addressed in today's reading in which he expands to speak about not just the destruction of the temple but also the end of the world.

In the greater context of Jesus' discussion with these disciples, he tells them about various signs of the when the end of the world will come. As believers reading what Jesus said to his disciples nearly 2,000 years later, we must recognize the increased urgency from our perspective. All the signs that Jesus lays out regarding the end of the world have been fulfilled. There have been the wars and rumors of wars. There have been the natural disasters. There have been the signs in the sky. The love of most has grown cold. The gospel has been preached throughout the world. Therefore, we heed these words recognizing that Jesus is at the door.

What will that day be like when Jesus comes? It will not be missed by anyone. Although there are various false teachings out there about what the Last Day will be like. Jesus' instruction is clear. Jesus' coming will be a spectacle. When Jesus returns he will return with glory. He will send his angels who will gather people on his behalf. There will be no secret coming. There will be no first collection of the believers before the final coming. Jesus is coming with power and glory. Everyone will know that Jesus has come.

Jesus told his disciples that these things will happen. He also increased their urgency by pointing them to a fig tree. When the leaves start to sprout, you know that summer is near. Therefore, when the signs of Jesus' second coming have been fulfilled, you know that Jesus is near. So, when the signs of Jesus coming have been fulfilled, it can be known that he is coming soon. Jesus is at the door.

Jesus' message for his disciples was clear. This should be taken by us as well. When you see the signs of Jesus' coming have been fulfilled, as they have been already today, be ready for him. There is an uncertainty of when he will arrive. Will this be today? Will this be tomorrow? Will this be in a thousand years? We do not know. Yet, we certainly know that he will come.

Knowing that Jesus is at the door creates the obvious question; how is one ready? Jesus answered this question in a couple of ways. This is that God makes people truly ready. Also, people who are made ready are called to live as such.

First, since Jesus is at the door, you are called to be ready. In Jesus' discussion about the end, he spoke about the collection of the elect from all over the world. Who are God's elect? God's elect are those that he has chosen to make his own. This is the doctrine of election. The Bible speaks about this in a way to comfort believers. This is as it is written, "*he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy and blameless in his sight.*" (Ephesians 1:4 EHV) God chose you from before the foundation of the world to save you. Therefore, when Jesus spoke about the gathering of the elect, you can apply that to yourself.

In connection to this, Jesus spoke about the power of his Word. He said that although this world will pass away, his Word will not pass away. God chooses to work through the means of the Word to create faith and strengthen faith in a person's heart. God has called you by Christ and he brought you to that faith through the Word. He strengthens that faith through the Word.

With Jesus being at the door, how do you know that you are ready? God has made you ready. He chose you in Christ, who washed your sins away and gave you his perfection. He sent the powerful Word to you through which the Holy Spirit created and strengthened saving faith in your heart. Jesus is at the door and you are ready.

Now, the second aspect of being ready is what Jesus called out in his parable about the doorkeeper. The master had left the house. He gave various servants jobs. Then, Jesus focused in on the doorkeeper. The doorkeeper was to keep watch while the master was away. He could not fall off guard. He could not be caught sleeping. He had a calling to be faithful to. He needed to keep watch until the master returned. Then, Jesus applied this call to all people. All people are to keep watch as the Son of Man could return. Today, we know that means he could return at any moment, Jesus is at the door.

How does someone stand ready for the master to return? How does a believer stand ready for Jesus to return? Live as a person who has been made ready. We know that God has made us ready. Yet, the Scriptures also say, *"So let him who thinks he stands be careful that he does not fall."* (1 Corinthians 10:12 EHV) Yes, live as a person who has been made ready. The life of one who has been made ready looks like the following: Going to the Word and living in your calling.

God's Word endures. God's Word is powerful. God's Word is what makes a person ready. A person who knows that Jesus is at the door will go to God's Word constantly. This is what will prepare the person. This is what will redirect the person's focus. A person who has been made ready for Jesus' return will go to God's Word which will keep him ready.

Notice that in Jesus' story of the doorkeeper that the doorkeeper had a role to do. A person who has been made ready will live in his role. This watching includes working. This is not that works can make a person ready, but instead these works result from the person's readiness.

It has been said that Martin Luther answered the question of what would he do if the world ended tomorrow with a statement that he would plant a tree. If the world would end tomorrow, he would plant a tree. What does this mean? Well, this saying is to demonstrate the thought that being ready for Jesus' second coming is shown not in stopping and staring at the skies. Instead, it is shown in serving God by serving other people. It is likely that Martin Luther never actually said this, but the concept communicated is Biblical.

In Paul's letters to the believers in Thessalonica, he urged them to live in the readiness of knowing that Jesus will come again. When a believer knows that Jesus' second coming is immanent, this does not mean that he will be lazy or idle. He will not simply stand there and wait. Instead, since Jesus is at the door, believers work.

Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., a famous author and physician, once accused people of being so "heavenly minded that they were no earthly good." C.S. Lewis, a great Christian writer, however, turned the concept around. The heavenly minded Christians in reality do the most earthly good. This is exactly the point that Jesus is making and that I am sharing with you today. Living like the world could end today with your eyes on the skies means that you are living in service to God and others.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus is at the door. Are you ready? Do you live as a person who has been made ready? You could fall in one of two ditches. You could fail to keep watch recognizing that Jesus could

come at any moment and be caught unaware. You could also recognize that he is coming tomorrow and start to just do nothing but stare at the sky. If you are not serving God by serving others motivated by the fact that Jesus could take you home to heaven at any moment, that is the problem. More than a problem, that is sin. God has called you to be ready.

Remember, God has also called you to be ready in that he has made you ready. You can look forward to Jesus' second coming because of his first coming. Jesus lived under God's law for you. Jesus died upon the cross for you. In Christ Jesus, you are ready for that day.

"Knock, knock, knock," "ding-dong," "buzz," "Ruff, ruff, ruff," Jesus is at the door. Let us live like those who are ready for his second coming. Let us live with our eyes on the skies. Let us live without the fear of judgment. Let us live with startling generosity. Let us live knowing that it only gets better. The fact that Jesus is at the door can move us to be of amazing earthly good to others. We can serve in peace until that day. Amen.