**Calvary Fellowship 2.5.2023 Matthew 24:36-44; 25:1-13 “Ready or Not…”**

* **So I used to work at this hoagie shop when I was in High School**
* So there would be a lunch rush, then things would calm down before dinner
* Paul, the owner, would leave during that break & we were supposed to get the store ready for dinner - what we usually did was play poker until dinner
* 1 day the delivery orders were coming & we were playing poker b/c Paul was in Delaware, so there was no worry of him showing up
* Then, we heard a slam & it was Paul, who was very much not in Delaware - To say he was mad was an understatement - he freaked out & threatened to fire us
* After that day, he’d say, ‘I’m leaving, but I’ll be back when U least expect it.”
* **A few months later I came in on my day off & made myself some mozzarella sticks & didn’t pay for them b/c he wasn’t around**
* 10 minutes later, Paul walks in & asks my friend Drew who was working that night why he let me have mozzarella sticks w/o paying for them
* We freaked out asking how he knew - he said, “I’ve been watching U w/ my binoculars from across the street!” Drew had to pay for them!
* First of all - that’s so weird that he was watching us from across the street
* **But how do U think I would have acted if I knew Paul was watching me & could have entered at any moment? We would have acted differently**
* But b/c I wasn’t living w/ the certainty of his return, I disobeyed
* **So we’re in message #38 in a series through the Gospel of Matthew & we are in a section that theologians call the Olivet discourse b/c Jesus is giving his disciples a private teaching on the end times**
* It started w/ their question to Jesus about what the condition of the world would be like at the time of His return
* So Jesus has been telling the disciples what the world is going to be like, but now He’s going to drill down & get specific & to be ready
* He wants us to be ready, but most of the time, we aren’t
* **When we’re single, we say “Jesus don’t come back until I get married b/c I’d really like to get married.”**
* Then U get married & you’re thinking, “Jesus, don’t come back until I have kids b/c I’d really like to have kids. So could U wait until then?”
* Then U have kids & you’re praying, “Jesus, please come back. These kids are driving me crazy. Beam me up. I need to get out of here.”
* But Jesus is going to tell us that what we really believe is seen in our actions
* B/c those who believe He could return today live a certain way & those who don’t feel the freedom to take the commands of God as suggestions
* B/c they really don’t believe He’s coming back or will care what we do
* **And everything in this next section we’re going to study is undergirded by this idea: that our behavior is a reflection of our beliefs**
* B/c we can say we agree w/ something, but if we don’t do anything about it, then we don’t really believe it - And U already know that to be true
* Does a smoker believe smoking is going to kill them? - yes, in theory
* But he only quits when it becomes truth - and that belief changes behavior
* This is true in relationships - Is it love just b/c someone says they love U? Or does love have to be followed by action? We all get that
* The same is true in every area of life - so what should living in light of Jesus’ return do? Should it make U afraid? That’s not what Jesus says
* Should it cause us to become survivalists & stock up 1000’s of cans of Spam & tuna fish for the coming apocalypse? That’s not what Jesus says
* Jesus says that the reality of His return should cause us to live differently
* And that’s what will make every difference in every relationship, interaction, & decision U make - that’s what Jesus is going to show us…

**———(v. 36; 40-44)———**

**#1 - The Time of Jesus’ Return is Unexpected for Everyone**

* **There’s some confusion here b/c some aren’t sure where these people are taken - is being taken a good thing or being left a good thing?**
* “Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left. ‘Where, Lord?’ they asked. He replied, ‘Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.’” (Luke 17:33-37)
* **Have U ever seen a vulture at work? About 5 years ago, Mia opens the blinds, looks in the backyard & says, “Dad, there’s a bird in our yard.”**
* So I look & it’s a giant vulture & I say, “Mia, that’s a vulture.” - She says, “that’s cool.” - I say, “Yeah, it is pretty cool.” Then I say, “Why is a vulture in my yard?”
* So I walk outside & I see a trail of blood all along the pavers & at the end of the trail there’s this huge possum that’s wounded & bleeding profusely
* Apparently, the vulture had taken a few bites out of him & this guy was a goner
* Then the possum stop moving & it’s over - he’s gone - so now I have a problem
* I have this dead possum in my back yard, there’s blood all over my pavers & by the way, we have 50 people coming over for Livi’s 2nd birthday the next day
* So I devise a plan - before I tell U, I’m going to ask that U don’t judge me
* I’m not sure I would do this today, but 5 years ago I was in a different place emotionally, so don’t give me grief over what I’m going to tell U
* I have a giant wall in my backyard & on my side of the wall, I have to take care of things, but if something is on the other side of the wall, the HOA handles it
* So I say, “If this possum were 5 ft over, on the other side of the wall, the HOA would have to deal w/ disposing of this carcass & I could have my party”
* So I go in my garage & grab a shovel… then I go to my backyard as I approach the possum, Mia is screaming & banging on the window, “Don’t do it! It’s not worth your life!” - So I go to scoop up the this thing & toss it over
* Just as I’m about to, that possum turns & stick out its teeth & it very much alive
* I yell b/c I’m startled or according to my daughter, “I screamed like a girl.”
* By the way, the phrase “playing possum” is a real thing
* So I go inside b/c I’m dealing a w/ a deadly animal & I call a critter removal company & tell the guy, “Be careful. This thing is deadly.”
* He gets to my house, walks into the backyard - then he grabs the possum by the tail & puts him in a cage & the possum was totally cool w/ it
* I don’t know what happened to the possum after that - I like to think that he received medical attention & is now living w/ his family in Boca Raton
* But here’s the point - vultures show up when there’s a dead body & the idea Jesus is sharing is that these people are taken to judgment
* Then those who are left will enter into the kingdom of God
* **There’s another issue that’s important to note that’s found in verse 36**
* Jesus says, “No man knows the day or the hour” - the Gospel of Mark says that Jesus even adds “Not even the Son” - what does that mean?
* This has troubled some people b/c they think that if Jesus is really God, then how could there be things that He didn’t know?
* “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (Philippians 2:5-7 NIV)
* The phrase “made Himself nothing” is the Greek word Kenosis - it means to empty - the idea is Jesus set aside certain divine privileges to become human
* God is omnipresent - that is, God is present everywhere - however, when Jesus became a man in the incarnation, He had to lay that privilege aside
* In the same way, the knowledge of His return is something that He laid aside during His time on earth
* But I do find it amazing that Jesus said no man knows the day or the hour, but every couple of years some yahoo shows up w/ his calculations about the day or the hour of Jesus’ return
* **I remember this early on when I 1st became a Christian, there was an author named Harold Camping who wrote a book called, 1994**
* He had figured out the day of Jesus’ return down to the day - the problem is, I found the book in the bargain section of a Christian bookstore in 1995
* He predicted that October 21, 2011 was the day - which I was fine b/c that’s my birthday - however, it didn’t happen & all those carbs I ate still counted
* But I did hear a story about someone who talked to him after his prediction didn’t come to pass - Some said to him, “Cheer up, it’s not the end of the world”
* **The point of all this isn’t to create our charts & try to figure the day**
* The point that Jesus is making is to stay vigilant - in fact, that’s the literal translation of word “watch” - it’s not to observe - it’s to be engaged
* Listen, there’s too many Christians living lives that are disengaged
* Living a life that’s vigilant means we filter everything through the lens of Jesus’ return - the words we use, the decisions we make, the level of integrity we have
* Why?B/c when I believe Jesus is coming, I live a life that’s ready for His coming

**———(v. 37-39)———**

**#2 - The Time of Jesus’ Return Feels like Normal Life**

* **Jesus says that the season of his return is like the days of Noah**
* Now, I know there might be some who don’t believe Noah’s flood happened
* Over 90 cultures have a story in their history about a worldwide flood where only 1 family survived - but that’s not even the best reason to believe it
* The best reason to believe the flood happened is b/c Jesus believed it & if U rise from the dead I’m just going along w/ whatever U say
* Jesus is making a point that everything is going feel normal - people are still getting marriage & there’s new restaurants opening that we have to try
* But under the surface, the culture is rotting & only those looking for it can see it
* I want U to notice that Jesus doesn’t say, “like it was in the days of Isaiah or Moses or David” - He specifically says Noah - why?
* What were the days of Noah like & can we identify if we’re living in them?
* **#1 - It was a Time of Population Explosion**
* “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth…” (Genesis 6:1)
* Here’s how the population has exploded in the last 150 years - from the time of Noah to 1867 - that’s how long it took us to get to 1 billion people on the earth
* From 1867 to 1935 - Less than 70 yrs later - that’s when we hit 2 billion people
* 30 years later from 1935 to 1965 - that’s when we hit 3 billion people
* 30 yrs later - from 1965 to 1995 - we didn’t add 1 billion, we doubled to 6 billion
* Right now we stand at 8 Billion people on this planet - we’re multiplying
* By 2050, there’ll be 10 billion people, which scientists say is beyond capacity & that’s why everyone is trying to push everyone to start eating bugs
* **#2 - It was a Time of Sexual Confusion**
* “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.” (Genesis 6:1-4)
* The phrase “sons of God” is the Hebrew phrase [b'nai elohim](https://www.google.com/search?safe=active&client=safari&rls=en&q=b%27nai+elohim&spell=1&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjl3e752tngAhXwxlkKHRcWBYUQkeECCCkoAA) - that’s only used in 1 other book of the Bible - in Job to describe angels
* So this is where the Bible is going to go all X-files on us
* But what many scholars believe is that this union is between fallen angelic beings & human women & the result was these giants or literally “fallen ones”
* Now, U might be saying, “That’s weird.” - Guess what? God agrees that it’s weird & this is 1 of the primary reasons why the flood came - why?
* B/c Jesus came to save human beings - not whatever this union produced
* “For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.” (Hebrews 2:16)
* There’s a lot that can be about this, but the point is that it was a time of sexual confusion - and that’s the world U & I live in today
* If U don’t agree - ask someone how many genders there are
* I don’t say that to poke fun - I say it b/c things that used to a given in our society are now completely confused
* U know, if you’re a parent, talking to your kid about sex is a weird conversation
* I don’t know any parent who is looking forward to it, but U do it b/c it’s important for your kids to get their questions answered by people who love them
* Today, we have some teachers who are obsessed w/ the idea of talking to their students about sex - they think it’s their right to talk to kids about sex
* I’m sorry, but that doesn’t fly w/ me - maybe U should focus on teaching reading & math & less on what your pronouns are
* By the way, my kids asked me the other night what I would say to someone if they asked me what my pronouns were
* I said, “I don’t have pronouns. I have verbs b/c I’m a man of action.”
* **A study was done a few years ago w/ the High School students of 10 industrialized nations - it tested them on several areas**
* In math, the US came in 10th (last) - in science, last - in geography, last
* In literature, last - In foreign language skills, last
* The only thing we came in 1st in, was self-esteem - it’s like, we’re idiots, but we feel really good about it
* **#3 - It was a Time of Evil Imaginations**
* “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5)
* What does this mean? Imaginations or images - people are not only thinking evil, but have the ability to engage in evil through images
* This has never been possible until our generation - if U want to kill someone, U can play a video game, if U want sex U can download porn - & it’s killing us
* We live in a time where whatever the type of media you’re on, there’s pornography & some kind of financial scam are there
* By the way, people talk about pornography in our culture as a sign that we’re more sexually free - but it’s killing us as a culture
* Pornography addiction is preventing young men & women from having a normal relationship & it’s the leading cause of erectile dysfunction that’s affecting young men as early as their teens - And what is the cure?
* Stop looking at it - these are secular doctors who aren’t Christians saying this
* They’re saying what God has been saying - that evil imaginations are killing us
* Listen - God isn’t a prude - God invented sex, not Hugh Hefner - God simply knows what helps us & what hurts us
* **#4 - It was a Time of Widespread Violence**
* “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” (Genesis 6:11)
* The Hebrew word for “violence” here is Hamas - Hamas is the name of the largest or at least one of the largest terrorist groups in the Middle East
* In January Hamas graduated 13,000 youths from their terrorist program - that’s twice as many as the year before
* We hear about so many shooting & bombings that we’ve almost become desensitized to it - that’s how much violence is happening in our world
* And what does Jesus say? He says everyone is getting married & partying
* It’s going to be business as usual for most b/c they can’t make the connection
* Noah was a preacher of righteousness & then the door of the ark closed
* This is exactly what I believe will happen w/ the rapture of the church
* The church is preaching the Gospel, good news to the world & they don’t want to hear it, but when it happens, they’ll remember & understand
* “And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” (Revelation 6:15-17)
* All of these people who don’t believe will know that what’s happening isn’t the normal course of life - this is all coming from God

**———(v. 1-13)———**

**#3 - The Time of Jesus’ Return Challenges Me to be Wise and Waiting**

* **Here we are introduced to 10 virgins, or in our language, 10 bridesmaids**
* Why? B/c the number 10 in the Bible is almost always associated w/ testing
* **Question #1** - How many plagues were there in Egypt? 10 (Why were there 10 plagues? B/c God said He was going to test Pharaoh’s heart 10 times)
* **Question #2** - How many commandments on the 2 tablets of stone? 10 (God tested Israel’s hearts)
* **Question #3** - How many times did God test Israel in the wilderness? 10
* **Question #4** - How many times were Jacob’s wages changes by Laban? 10
* **Question #5** - How many days was Daniel tested in Daniel 1? 10
* **Question #6** - How many days of testing are mentioned in Revelation? 10
* **Question #7** - How many disciples were there? 12 (that’s just me testing U)
* **But these 10 bridesmaids are tested as well & what makes 5 of them wise & 5 foolish is their preparedness - 5 had oil & 5 didn’t**
* Now oil throughout the Bible is pictured as a type of the Holy Spirit & that’s the point that’s made here - that’s why the 5 foolish bridesmaids are left out
* They don’t know Jesus - this is where we start drilling down to the graduate level understanding of this passage
* This is important b/c this parable ties everything that Jesus has said in the last chapter together & for us it brings the whole message to His disciples together
* **Jesus is speaking to Jews, so He’s using Jewish imagery that we might not catch at 1st reading - but Jesus is speaking of a Jewish wedding**
* A couple of the disciples were married, so we know they understood
* When a man wanted to marry a woman - the father of the bride would set the price negotiate the price based on his love for her - so it was high price
* This was called the “Dowry”, which was money that would be used for her to life in case the guy turned out to be a loser - basically, it was alimony in advance
* Then the man would pay the price & go back to his father’s house to prepare their home - then His father would set a date for the man to get his bride
* Usually it was in the middle of the night - he would enter the town & blow a trumpet, signaling he had returned for his bride
* The bride & groom would go back to their new home for a 7-day honeymoon & afterwards present themselves to the community & have a marriage feast
* **This is exactly what’s going to happen - Jesus paid the price for us by & went back to the His Father’s house to prepare the place for us**
* “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:1-3)
* Then the trumpet is going to sound & Jesus is going to get His bride, the church
* "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.: (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18)
* The is what’s called the Rapture of the church, where Jesus takes His church to heaven for a 7-year honeymoon w/ Him
* While we are w/ Jesus in heaven, there’s all of this wild stuff we read about in Revelation called the Great Tribulation that’s going down on earth
* Why? B/c God is going to pour out His wrath on this world - b/c U know how people say, “Why doesn’t god do something about the evil in this world?”
* This is when it’s going to happen - but there’s also another issue at world
* God loves Israel - they are His people - and during this tribulation time, they are going to recognize Jesus as Messiah when all of the OT prophecies are fulfilled
* Once that’s done, Jesus returns w/ His bride, the Church & we will have what Rev. 19 calls the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb”
* Here’s the point - all the things Jesus said the world would look like before His return are happening right before our eyes
* That’s why as Christians, we’re not looking for antichrist, we’re looking for Jesus Christ
* We’re watching & waiting, listening for a trumpet to sound, & when it does, we’re out of here