The Coming of a King

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

*But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.* For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. *But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.* Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

There is nothing quite like the festive atmosphere that settles over the nation’s capitol when a foreign head of state comes to visit.

- State Visits are the highest form of diplomatic contact between two nations, and they are filled with ceremonial pomp and diplomatic protocol.
  - There is a grand arrival ceremony with military honor guards and brass bands.
  - And there will be a tremendously extravagant state dinner, a black tie affair, in the honor of the visiting dignitary.
- In modern times, just as it was in olden days, it’s a big deal when a king comes to visit.
  - Nation’s put their best foot forward, crowds gather to catch a glimpse of famous figures, it seems as if the whole world watches with grand expectation.
- However, I want to talk tonight about a kingly visit that almost went unnoticed!

From the very beginning of time, the coming of this king had been forecast.

- In Genesis 3:15 it was prophesied that although a descendant of Eve would be wounded by Satan that same descendant would bruise Satan’s head.
  - In Genesis 22:18 it was prophesied all nations would be blessed through one special descendant or seed of Abraham.
- Isaiah declared in Isaiah 7:14 that a virgin would conceive and give birth to a baby boy who would be called Immanuel, meaning God with us.
  - What a wonderful promise.
  - A king is going to come to visit humanity and he is none other than God, with us.
- The very well known Christmas prophecy of Isaiah 9:6 declared that a child would be born who would be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.
  - Isaiah went on to declare that he would rule forever over David’s throne and kingdom.
- Micah 5:2 declared that he would be born in the city of David, in lowly Bethlehem.
• There was never any doubt,
  o the evidence was overwhelming,
    ▪ a king was coming to visit this world.
  o But not just any king,
    ▪ not just another royal ruler arrayed in pomp and circumstance.
    ▪ This was the king of all kings, the lord of all lords.
    ▪ The creator of all that is, the ancient of days, the one who was and is to come,
    ▪ the almighty was going to pay this world a visit.
• Through all the ages, as prophecy was laid upon prophesy, it became more and more evident that the great day was approaching.
  o The King was coming.
    ▪ The whole world waited in anticipation.
      • It was the most prophesied event in all of history.
  o His coming had to have been the focus of much scholarly study, and the source of hope in many Jewish homes.
    ▪ His coming was forecast.
      • All of the details were there.
    ▪ The place was known,
      • the extent of his power and authority was known,
      • even his identity had been declared.

However, while everyone knew that he was coming, no one knew exactly when he was coming.
• And, though the prophesies of his coming had been made with much anticipation and great fanfare, it seemed as if they would never come to pass.
  o The world waited for the coming of the king.
    ▪ The world waited to celebrate the birth of a savior.
  o With great anticipation, the world waited, and waited and waited...
    ▪ But nothing happened.
  o Days became weeks,
    ▪ weeks became months,
    ▪ months became long years,
    ▪ and years became decades.
  o Hundreds of years after the last prophet was buried and gone,
    ▪ still there was no word of the coming of the king.
• Day in and day out for hundreds and hundreds of years, life went on and the king never came.
  o No doubt there were those who clung to the old promises,
  o no doubt there were those who declared with confidence that the king is still coming,
  o but day after day passed and with each new day his coming seemed more and more distant.

I remember, as a kid, when it seemed as if Christmas took forever to get here.
• Even when the date was known,
  o even when it was a settled thing,
  o each long day of waiting stretched into another long day of waiting,
  o until it seemed as if Christmas morning would never arrive.
• Can you imagine how much more difficult it would be to anticipate something with no set timetable.
  o They knew he was coming,
    ▪ the whole world was aware,
    ▪ all who read the scriptures ere keenly aware of the fact that the king was coming.
  o But day after day,
    ▪ week after week,
    ▪ year after year,
    ▪ they watched and waited,
    ▪ seemingly in vain.
• Their expectation was fruitless.
  o Over time folks became wrapped up in day-to-day living.
    ▪ Many simply quit watching for the King.
  o There was never any doubt that he was coming
    ▪ but that knowledge was tempered by the fact that, in thousands of years, he had not yet come.

This is important because, on that fateful day when he finally came, most of the world completely missed the big event.
• There was no pomp and circumstance.
  o There were no grand ceremonies and wild celebrations.
  o No honor guard was there to greet him.
    ▪ The king came and the world barely noticed.
• Of course, it didn’t help any that he came during the busiest season of the year.
  o It didn’t help any that it was the most inconvenient time for thousands of years of prophesy to come to fruition.
    ▪ Right in the middle of the rat race of tax season,
      • the king finally came and just about everybody missed it.
• Had it not been for a group of shepherd that were entertained by a heavenly host
  o and those kings of orient that followed a star,
    ▪ nobody would have even known that the king had come.
• Nobody that is, except Anna and Simeon,
  o the only two people in the biblical record that were still faithfully watching and waiting for the coming of the king.

That’s the tragedy of Christmas;
• the king of the universe was wrapped in swaddling clothes
and laid in a manger because there was no room at the inn.

- The supreme commander of the armies of heaven was not met with an honor guard but was watched over by donkeys and shepherds.
  - The ancient of days, the monarch of the ages, was relegated to a peasant’s birth in a flea ridden stable.
    - Because the world had long since quit watching for its king.
- Oh! If only they knew then what we know now.
  - If only they had the foresight to see what was yet to come.
    - How they would have exalted that baby boy.
- They would have fallen at his feet to worship,
  - he would have been laid in the best bed in the world,
    - his name would have been shouted from the rooftops,
      - everyone would have known that the savior had come.
- But that wasn’t the case at all.
  - In the darkness of night,
    - in the sleepy town of Bethlehem,
      - while other seemingly important business was being conducted,
    - the king of all kings was born to a virgin girl and laid in a manger.

The real irony tonight is that the same king is coming again.

- Once again the prophetic evidence is overwhelming.
- In Acts 1:11, right after Jesus was caught up in the heavens,
  - as they disciples stood there gazing into the sky
  - two angels appeared with a prophetic message,
    - "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?"
    - this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven,
    - shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."
- Titus 2:13 declares that we, the church, are waiting for the "blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."
  - Hebrews 9:28 announces that "Christ, who was offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear for a second time apart from sin to those who eagerly await him for salvation."
- The forecast is certain.
  - I Thessalonians 4:16-18 says,
    - "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the 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 in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."
- The king is coming again.
  - He will return a second time.
  - He’s coming for you and for me.
The Coming Of A King

- When he came the first time,
  - he came to redeem that which was lost.
- But when he comes the second time,
  - he’s coming to claim that which is his!
    - The king is returning for his church,
      - like a groom coming for a bride who has made herself ready.
- The kicker is, that while many are aware that he is returning,
  - and while we can readily point to the signs that declare that his coming is drawing nearer and nearer,
    - no man knows the exact day or hour when he will return.
  - Just like the first time that he came,
    - the timing of his coming remains a great mystery.
- Our text declared that his coming would be like a thief in the night.
  - And his second coming,
    - like his first is going to take the world completely by surprise.
- Once again, in spite of the prophetic evidence.
  - In spite of the fact that he has given ample warning
  - and ample evidence that he is returning soon and very soon.
    - Still, the world will be taken totally by surprise.
- Peter went so far as to prophesy in II Peter 3:3 that “scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.
  - They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming?"
    - They’ve been saying for hundreds of years that he is coming, but he still hasn’t come.
  - Thousands of years have passed since he left and nothing has changed.
    - Deceiving themselves,
      - they will convince themselves that since he hasn’t yet returned, he will never return.
    - And humanity will make the same mistake this time that it made last time.
- But I want you to know tonight that, even though most folks have quit watching the eastern sky
  - and have quit listening for the sound of a trumpet,
    - the king IS coming again.
  - The scripture goes so far as to warn that during the long period of waiting for his return,
    - even the elect are at risk of falling away if they aren’t careful to maintain their watchful vigilance.
- I need you to hear me tonight, because the situation today is no different than it was over 2,000 years ago on that wonderful night when Jesus was born.
  - The world has grown tired of waiting
    - and people are busy going about their lives as if the king will never come.
  - But mark my words,
One day soon,
  - while the world sleeps and slumbers,
  - the king is going to split the eastern sky
  - and issue a call to his bride.
- And the church is going to leave this old world behind.

- Just as surely as he came on that silent night in Bethlehem,
  - the king is getting ready to come again.

He’s coming, according to our text, “Like a thief in the night.”
- The imagery there is so rich.
  - It’s a phrase that is used multiple times in scripture, even Jesus, himself, used it to describe his coming.
    - It describes the suddenness and the surprise involved in the coming of the Lord.
- Make no mistake about it, the world will be just as unprepared this time as it was last time.
  - It will be business as usual.
    - It will be an inconvenient time for the king to come.
  - People will be too busy to slow down and take notice.
- On that fateful day they will be busy with their lives,
  - buying and selling,
  - eating, drinking,
  - carrying on with their busy lives.
    - They will never considering that this could be the day when the king will come.

However, our text declares that the coming of the king should not take the church by surprise.
- We are described as being the “children of the light”
  - and, as such we are admonished not to sleep as others do
  - but to watch for the coming of the Lord.
    - We are to live expectantly.
- The point of the passage and my point tonight is to remind the church again that the Lord is coming soon.
  - If we aren’t careful we will be lulled to sleep just like the rest of the world.
    - We must live our lives in such a way that we constantly remember,
      - nothing in this life really matters except making heaven my home.
  - We must live in a constant state of readiness.
    - We must live with a constant anticipation in our heart.
      - Rev 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments…
- As I ponder the Christmas season,
I am stirred by the fact that the King of all Kings

- visited this world on that night of all nights
  - and hardly anyone even noticed.
- And I am reminded that he’s coming again,
  - and his second coming will be much like his first.
- He’s going to split the eastern sky one day
  - and the whole world will be taken by surprise.
- On that day, I want to be ready and waiting.
  - I want to watching for the return of my Lord.
    - I want to live with my ear tuned to the sound of a trumpet.

Closing

- Christmas is, undoubtedly, the busiest time of year.
  - It seems as if everything gets thrown into fast-forward.
    - There is so little time and so many things to do.
- However, in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, I want to remind you tonight that the King is coming.
  - On a day when you don’t expect him.
    - At a moment when you least anticipate,
      - the king is coming.
- On that day, only the faithful will be found ready.
  - On that day only the faithful will be found watching.
    - Having kept their garments clean,
      - having kept their lamps lit,
      - having lived in expectancy of that very day...
- On that day we, which are alive and remain faithful and ready, will be caught up with him in the heavens.

Recognizing that we talked about the return of the Lord this morning,

- I feel in my spirit that there is some benefit to stopping to remember the circumstances that surrounded his first coming.
  - The whole world should have been a state of anxious anticipation.
  - The whole world should have been ready to greet its king.
- But, as angels sang to shepherds and wise men followed a star,
  - Nobody really took the time to notice that a baby was born in Bethlehem.
- Its getting ready to happen again.
  - The king is coming.
    - But when the trumpet sounds, the world will – once again – find itself in the state of unreadiness.

I believe that we would each do well, in this holiday season, to renew our anticipation of his coming.
• We would each do well to remember that all the things of this world that we get so tangled up in will amount to nothing on that day.
  o On that day only one thing will matter:
    ▪ Am I ready to meet the king?
      • How about you? Are you ready?
      • How about you? Are you watching and waiting?
    ▪ Or have you been lulled to sleep by the things of this world.
  o Let us not sleep as others.
    ▪ The king is coming and we must be busy about his business for as long as he tarries.
      • We must work while it is day.
      • We must reach our world while we can.
      • The night is coming where no man can work.
        o SOON, ITS GOING TO BE TOO LATE.