TITLE: The Great and Terrible Day of The Lord

TEXT: Mt. 24:13-14,36-39,42-51, Joel 2:28-31;

2 Pet. 3:3-4; 1 Co. 9:22-23; 1 Thes. 4:13-18

INTRODUCTION: Last week we talked about some of the signs of the times that Jesus said to watch for that would be an indicator to us that the time of His return was drawing closer. Last week we talked about an increase of deception and false teachings and false prophets being among the first of those signs.

Then Jesus talked about an increase in wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom and an increase of famines and earthquakes in various places. These things Jesus says are the beginnings of birth pains or the signs that will appear first as we enter this time of history.

Then Jesus speaks of an increase of severity of the signs as the time draws closer and closer.

Increase in persecution of Christians, the Church being more and more hated by the world, many turning away from the faith of their fathers, the deception of this time grows to even come against the elect and an increase in wickedness and a decrease of love within our world.

And then Jesus says in:

**Matthew 24:13-14(NIV) 13. but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.** **14. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

The signs of the times will speak for themselves.

We each will discern for ourselves just where we may be today, in relation to the signs that Jesus has given us as a general indicator of the time of His return, as that time approaches.

We are given general signs to watch for but discouraged from picking or trying to discern an exact date.

**Matthew 24:36 (NIV)** **36“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**

What I want to talk about today though is about that day of the Lords return.

Scripture has much to say about this day in both the Old and New Testaments.

The prophet Joel foretells of this time in:  
**Joel 2:28-31(NIV)**  **28  “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.**  **29    Even on my servants, both men and women,      I will pour out my Spirit in those days.**  **30    I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke.**  **31    The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.**

**(KJV says great and terrible day of the Lord)**

How can a day be both great and terrible at the same time?

It will be a matter of Perspective!

Perspective will make all the difference on how that day will be viewed!

Example: If a robber breaks into a rich man’s house and steals his most valuable possessions, from the perspective of the robber he has had a great day but from the perspective of the one robbed it is a terrible day---(especially if the items stolen were not insured.)

This is how it will be on the Day of the Lords return.

For those who have embraced Jesus as the Lord and savior of their life His return it will be a great day!

But for those who do not know Him, the unsaved, it will be the most terrible day they have ever experienced!

Back in Matthew chapter 24 Jesus tell us some things about that day itself….

**Mt. 24:37-39 (NIV) As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.**  **38. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;**  **39. and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.**

In the days of Noah before the flood came and took them all away it says that people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.

And then Jesus says: That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

In other words it will be just an ordinary day. People will be shopping and planning weddings and going to work, mowing their laws or shoveling their walks.

So Jesus goes on in:

**Matthew 24:42-51(NIV)**  **42. “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.**  **43. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.**  **44. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**

You don’t think that the Lord will come today? That just means that it is the perfect time for Him to come because Jesus said He will return when we least expect Him to!

Every Church age has looked forward to the return of Christ in their lifetime.

The disciples of Jesus and the 1st century Christians believed that Jesus would return for them in their lifetimes.

Yet here we are some 2000 years after the promise of Jesus return was given by Jesus Himself and He still has not come.

**2 Peter 3:3-4(NIV)**  **3. First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.**  **4. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”**

I am sure many today feel the same way. Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”

Interestingly, even questioning the delay of Christ return, is a sign of the times of His return.

Jesus goes on in Matthew chapter 24 with some instruction on how we are to bide our time until He does return. He uses this example to get this point across in:

**Mt. 24:45 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?**  **46. It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.**  **47. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.**  **48. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’**  **49. and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards.**  **50. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.**

**51. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

The point of this example that Jesus uses is that we are to always be ready for and anticipating Christ return.

Martin Luther once said, ‘*If I thought the world were going to end tomorrow, I would plant a tree today.'*

What in the world did Luther mean?

*‘If I thought the world was going to end tomorrow, I would plant a tree today!*

Martin Luther was evidentially planning on planting a tree the day that he said this!

The point being that Luther was living his live anticipating the return of Christ at any time. He was personally ready for the Lord to come!

And if planting a tree was important for him to do that day then that is what he should be doing.

**Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?    
 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.**

If we would change our plans if we found out that the Lord was coming today then we need to question the importance or integrity of what we are planning to do!

What that would indicate is that we are not really ready for the Lord to return!

Tony Campolo shared how when he was a teenager and wanted to do something that was maybe questionable for a Christian teen to do, his parents would often tell him, just conceder how you would feel if the Lord would come while you were doing it.

He said it really ruined a lot of his fun. He said every time he went to a movie he feared that the Lord would come right in the middle of the movie and he would miss the ending, never know how the movie came out!

Maybe he didn’t really get his parents point!

The point is we should never do anything that we would be ashamed of if the Lord would come while we were doing it. We should always be ready for Christ return.

And if we are living our life in that readiness anticipating that the day may very well be today and we have planned on planting a tree today than we should get up and plant that tree.

**46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.**

The Lord has delayed His return a long time now by our perspective.

We are finite creatures--God is infinite.

We live in a dimension of time and space. Everything that we do is measured by those dimensions. God lives outside the dimension of time and space. Actually, time and space are in Him, He is not in them.

That is what Scripture means when Peter goes on in: **2 Peter 3:8-9(NIV)** **8. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.**  **9. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**

**But do not forget this one thing, -- With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.**

In other words, time is irrelevant to God because He resides outside of the dimension of time and space.

Some have said that God resides in the eternal now!

But we are finite and do live in the dimension of time and space and everything we do is done according to those two measurements.

So for us it seems as if the Lord has delayed His coming a long, long time now.

So it is easy for us to get apathetic about His return.

Apathy is possibly among the biggest hazards to the Church, and in our own lives as a Christian.

An attitude that thinks the Lords coming is a long, long way off or perhaps not coming at all, so we get lax in our Christian duty and living a truly Christ-like life.

Question—be honest, how many of you wake up every day thinking, I wonder if the Lord will come today? Will today be the day of His appearing?

If you have this conscience thought, I wonder if Jesus will come today, every day when you wake up than I really admire you because in all honesty I can’t say that this is my waking thought each day.

The point being is that it should be because it is a possibility each and every day that we awake. Today could be the day Jesus comes back!

And thinking that thought would show that we are truly anticipating that day.

There are three major groups of thought on when the Lord will return to take home His Bride, the Church.  
 Pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation and post-tribulation.

Pre-tribulation believes that Jesus will come just prior to the 7 years of great tribulation toward the end of the age.

Mid-tribulation believes that Jesus will return for His Church half way through the great tribulation period.

Post tribulation believes that Jesus will come for His church at the end of the great tribulation and it is synonymous with His second coming to rule from the earth from Jerusalem for 1000 years.

I imagine that everyone here this morning has their own view and supports one of these three positions.

Tony Campolo once said that he used to be so pre-tribulation in his thinking that he wouldn’t even eat post toasties.

There seems to be Scripture to support each of these three views.

I believe that God intended that there be a certain amount of uncertainty or cloudiness about this.

My personal philosophy on the subject is this:

Pray for a pre-tribulation rapture of the Church but be ready, be prepared for a post-tribulation rapture of the Church. For only a strong devoted Church will make it through those times.

A man visiting a certain elementary school informed a class that he would give a prize to the pupil whose desk he found to be the cleanest and most organized when he returned. “But when will you return?” some of them asked.

“That I cannot tell,” was the answer.

A little girl, who had been noted for her disorderly habits, announced that she intended to win the prize.

“You!” her schoolmates jeered; “why, your desk is always a mess.”

“Oh! But I will clean it the first of every week.”

“But what if he should come at the end of the week?” someone asked.

“Then I will clean it every morning.”

“But he might come at the end of the day.”

For a moment the little girl was silent. “I know what I’ll do,” she said decidedly; “I’ll just keep it clean.”

So it must be with the Christian who would be ready to receive the prize at his coming. It may be at midnight, in the morning, around noon or supper time, today, tomorrow, next week, next year or in 10-20-50 years. The exhortation of Scripture is not, “Get ye ready,” but, “Be ye ready.”

Scripture doesn’t put as much emphasis on the when Christ will return as it does on being ready for Christ’s return whenever He comes.

And the only way that we will be ready then is to know Jesus now!

Know Him as Lord and Savior of our life!

Daily surrendering our life to Him and allowing Him to live His live vicariously through us.

This, I believe, is what the Apostle Paul was saying when he says in:

**1 Corinthians 9:22-23(NIV)   
22. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.    
23. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.**

The greatest blessing that we will share in is when we surrender our life to Christ and live for the sake of His Gospel, making us daily, even moment by moment, ready for His return to take us home to be with Him for eternity.

When speaking about the Day of the Lords return Scripture gives us some encouraging words as we await that day..

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18(NIV)**  **13. Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.**

**14. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.**  **15. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.**  **16. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.**  **17. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.**  **18. Therefore encourage each other with these words.**

What are the words of encouragement that we are to encourage each other with?

The greatest promise of Scripture for the child of God is…

**16. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.    
17. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.**

**And so we will be with the Lord forever!**

**Rev. 21 1-5 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.**

**2I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”5He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”**

This morning are you truly anticipating the return of the Lord Jesus?

Are you ready for that day if that day would be today?

The only way we will be ready then is to know Jesus now! Know Him personally as Lord and Savior of our life!

Lord is a word that means supremacy. Is Jesus ruling supreme in your life today?

If so, than you will be ready for His return whenever it is that He comes..

If you are not ready or are not sure than why not get ready today by making Him your Lord and Savior, surrendering your life to him, livening your life for Him so you will be ready when the day of His appearing does comes.