

## Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2022

### Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church Welcome

Today we have another chance to come to our great and mighty God and worship the king of Kings and the Lord of Lords. As we prepare to do so let us turn to Psalm 91 and remind us ourselves why this is such a good thing to do.

**Psalm 91.** *"Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. <sup>2</sup> I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.' <sup>3</sup> Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. <sup>4</sup> He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. <sup>5</sup> You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, <sup>6</sup> nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. <sup>7</sup> A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. <sup>8</sup> You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. <sup>9</sup> If you say, 'The LORD is my refuge,' and you make the Most High your dwelling, <sup>10</sup> no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. <sup>11</sup> For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; <sup>12</sup> they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone <sup>13</sup> You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. <sup>14</sup> 'Because he loves me,' says the LORD, 'I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. <sup>15</sup> He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. <sup>16</sup> With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.'"*

**Let us pray.** *Father we thank you for church this morning. Whether we are seated at home or in the building together, we thank you for the salvation we enjoy. Forgive us for the times this week when we have forgotten your goodness and greatness. We are sinful. We are selfish. We deserve to face the storm of your justice and wrath. Lord, we ask for your mercy and grace. We thank you that Christ bore the judgement we deserve, in his body, on the tree, but then three days later, rose from death, victorious, the risen, conquering king. We thank you for our forgiveness. We thank you for our assurance of salvation. We thank you that heaven is our home. Who else could rescue me from my failing? Who else would offer His only Son? Who else invites me to call Him Father Only a Holy God. Amen*

### Song – Blessed be your name

1. Blessed Be Your Name, In the land that is plentiful  
Where Your streams of abundance flow, Blessed be Your name
2. Blessed Be Your name, When I'm found in the desert place  
Though I walk through the wilderness, Blessed Be Your name

#### Chorus

*Every blessing You pour out, I'll Turn back to praise  
When the darkness closes in, Lord, Still I will say  
Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be Your name  
Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be Your glorious name*

3. Blessed be Your name When the sun's shining down on me  
When the world's 'all as it should be', Blessed be Your name
4. Blessed be Your name, On the road marked with suffering  
Though there's pain in the offering, Blessed be Your name

Chorus

Bridge You give and take away, You give and take away

My heart will choose to say, Lord, blessed be Your name (Repeat)

Chorus

## Bible Reading – Mark 13:1-13 (NIV)

*As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”<sup>2</sup> “Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”<sup>3</sup> As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately,<sup>4</sup> “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”*

<sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>6</sup> Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. <sup>7</sup> When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. <sup>8</sup> Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains. <sup>9</sup> “You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. <sup>10</sup> And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. <sup>11</sup> Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. <sup>12</sup> “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. <sup>13</sup> Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

## Announcements

**Focus for the month – Fellowship.** Fellowship is often best done when combined with hospitality. Having someone around for a cuppa or a meal or meeting them at a coffee shop or Maccas allows us to catch up with them, encourage them and ask how their Christian faith is going. How can we show that sort of fellowship this week and with whom?

**Flood Appeal.** The Presbyterian Church is running an appeal to support the Churches & their communities that were so devastated by the recent floods in Northern NSW. If you would like to pray or financially support this appeal please go to the Jericho Road webpage on click on the link [Flood Appeal - Jericho Road](#)

**First Aid Certificate.** The Church is updating its list of people who have a first aid certificate. If you have done your training and are willing to be called upon when needed please email or text Stephen

**Easter and Beyond.** We want to make Easter a special focus where we can invite our friends and neighbours along to hear the good news about Jesus. We are doing this by

- Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April Kids Easter Outreach
- Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April Last Supper Communion Services – Swansea (4:30pm) & Charlestown (6pm)
- Friday 15<sup>th</sup> April Good Friday services 8am & 9:45am
- Easter Sunday Resurrection Sunday Services 8am, 9:45am & 6pm
- Hope Explored Done within our small groups from Monday 1<sup>st</sup> May.

**Bible Study Groups (if room).** It would be great if you were to consider joining one of our small groups, we have the following groups. We have men, women’s, mixed, young adults and young families groups either on a weekly or fortnightly basis, most in person but some on ZOOM. If you would like to be a part of group, please see Stephen or Jon.

**Collecting Sprouts (creche) and Seedlings (preschool)** children after kids church: would parents/carers please come promptly after church and wait for your children outside on the grassed area near the cottage. The children and their teachers will come out all together at 10.55am to meet you there.

**Annual Congregational Meeting.** Will be on NEXT Sunday @ 11am. This will be a time to review the finances, appoint a Committee of Management and set the ministry staffs stipends for the year. We will not have the costings for our proposed ministry facilities ready by this time and so we will need to have another meeting in another couple of weeks.

**Work Day.** We will be doing some general maintenance at the Charlestown Church on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April from 8am. All welcome to participate in both skilled and unskilled jobs!

**Hot Drinks.** To keep our young people safe we will no longer be serving hot drinks to our primary school kids at morning tea. The risk of scolding is too great for both them and those they are hanging around with.

**Kids Spot:** Peter was warned by Jesus that he would deny him 3 times in Matthew 26 and Peter did not believe him. But it happened! Today we will learn from this story and be challenged to pray that we will never be ashamed of Jesus. Question of the week: Who do you find it hard to tell that you follow Jesus?

## Song – Let your Kingdom come

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|---|---|
| <p>1. Your glorious cause, O God<br/>Engages our hearts<br/>May Jesus Christ be known<br/>Wherever we are<br/>We ask not for ourselves, but for Your renown<br/>The cross has saved us so we pray<br/>Your kingdom come</p> | <p>2. Give us Your strength, O God<br/>And courage to speak<br/>Perform Your wondrous deeds<br/>Through those who are weak<br/>Lord use us as You want, whatever the test<br/>By grace we'll preach Your gospel<br/>Till our dying breath</p> |
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### *Chorus*

*Let Your kingdom come*

*Let Your will be done*

*So that everyone might know Your Name*

*Let Your song be heard everywhere on earth*

*Till Your sovereign work on earth is done*

*Let Your kingdom come*

## Pastoral Prayer Points

**Psalm 8:** “What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” (v. 4). God is the true philanthropist - lover of humanity. And even though we are fallen He still loves us, and sent his only Son to save and restore humanity to the image of God. Jesus came to taste death for everyone, and bring many sons and daughters to glory.

**Pray for Egypt:** Pray for a stable and trustworthy government to act in the interest of all its people. Pray for the Church to continue to overcome evil with divine forgiveness and love. Pray for Jesus to reveal Himself to an unprecedented number of Muslims disillusioned by Islamic State.

**Pray for our current political leaders:** Pray they would have wisdom, humility, and courage as they fulfil their responsibilities.

**Pray for annual congregational meeting:** Pray that we would be united as a church in moving forward. Pray God would give us his wisdom to make decisions that will best bring Him glory.

**Pray for Vanuatu.** Last 2 weeks has seen the first wave of community transmission of covid that did not happen last two years so prayer for the people as its really affecting the communities and guidance for leaders at this time.

## Bible Reading – Mark 13:14-37 (NIV)

<sup>14</sup> “When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>15</sup> Let no one on the housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. <sup>16</sup> Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. <sup>17</sup> How

dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! <sup>18</sup> Pray that this will not take place in winter, <sup>19</sup> because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equalled again. <sup>20</sup> “If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. <sup>21</sup> At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. <sup>22</sup> For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. <sup>23</sup> So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

<sup>24</sup> “But in those days, following that distress, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; <sup>25</sup> the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ <sup>26</sup> “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power & glory. <sup>27</sup> And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens. <sup>28</sup> “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup> Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. <sup>30</sup> Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

<sup>32</sup> “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup> Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. <sup>34</sup> It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. <sup>35</sup> “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. <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: ‘Watch!’”

## Sermon – Birth Pains

I don’t like talking about subjects I know very little about but I am going to begin my sermon this morning with one such topic, pregnancy. As a male, I have never experienced pregnancy so I don’t know much about the ins and outs of it. But I am married to a woman who has brought three healthy babies into the world & so have seen the various stages of pregnancy.

Slide 2

From the joy of finding out that we are going to have a baby, to the growing development of the fetus. Onto the time when doing things for the mother becomes more and more tiring and difficult, then onto the beginning of labour pains and finally the birth. One of the most wonderful experiences of my life was being there at all three of my children’s birth.

And it seems to me that the prophecy that Jesus gives in Mark 13 says the destruction of the Jewish Temple and the subsequent destruction of the world itself is a bit like a pregnancy. There will be signs that something will take place in the future as certain events occur more and more. There will be birth pains indicating that an arrival is imminent. And then finally the climax of the whole process will come. So, we need to keep watch so that we will be ready when the time does come. And we need to be on our guard for the times ahead will be challenging. But in the end, it will be all worth it. Let’s see what I mean.

Slide 3

“As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!” <sup>2</sup> “Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

The starting point to this discussion is the Temple, one of the great buildings of the ancient world. It was the size of 12 football fields in area. When full, it held some 250,000 people. Even the smallest stones weighed 2 to 3 tons and the biggest were around 50 tons! And it was made of white limestone so dazzling

in the sun that people had to avert or cover their eyes as they walked toward the city. It was said from miles away that it appeared as a large snow-covered mountain.

This was one impressive building. This was the meeting place between God and man. And the disciples thought to themselves that this building would stand the test of time, it would be there until the very end of the world. But... but Jesus knew better. It was going to be so utterly destroyed, no stone will be left on another but every one would be thrown down.

Slide 4

But when? the disciples ask. <sup>4</sup> *"Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"* Two questions. When? And what sign? Jesus will answer both those questions in turn. Firstly,

Slide 5

### 1. When? (Verses 5-13)

<sup>5</sup> *"Jesus said to them: 'Watch out that no one deceives you. 'Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. 'When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.* Slide 6

<sup>8</sup> *Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains. 'You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues."*

Slide 7

Jesus says there will be six developments before the Temple's destructions. These developments are not linear meaning one will happen after the other but they will be like the first and second trimester of a pregnancy. Each of them will remind you that the final climax is inevitable. That it will happen! And the first one is you will see around you

- a) *False Messiahs*. People who claim to speak on God's behalf. People who believe they can save you from your problems. People who want to rule over you.
- b) And there will be *wars and rumours of wars*. Countries will fight other countries. Rulers will want to extend their boundaries & influence. Around you people will die.
- c) There will also be *earthquakes* in various places. The world itself will look like its breaking up.
- d) And there will be *famines* people throughout the world will not have enough to eat.
- e) And there will be *persecution of Christians* both in the synagogues by the Jewish people and from the councils or the Roman overseers.

All five of these things are evidence that we are living in a broken world and that this broken world will one day lead to the destruction of God's temple in Jerusalem. Maybe like birth pains they will get more intense the closer we get to the end but from now until the end there will be these religious pretenders & these global phenomena and Christians will have these personal experiences of persecution.

But we don't need to be afraid of these things. Jesus is telling us they will happen. God is in control of the whole show. And look at what will happen when these things touch us personally, Jesus is saying to his disciples.

Slide 8

*"On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. 'And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. 'Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit."*

You get it? The Holy Spirit will give you the words you need. God Himself will provide us with all the help we need. Maybe he won't save you from prison or death but you will get to tell the people around you the good news that everyone needs to hear. God will give you opportunities even amongst the rich and

influential people of your nation. And some might even respond positively and be saved. But many, even amongst your family won't!

Slide 9

For... <sup>12</sup> *"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. <sup>13</sup> Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."*

Preaching the gospel causes offence. It will divide families. It will separate even the closest of relationships. Just like it did to Jesus Himself with His family and close friends. But the gospel must take precedence over everything and everyone. The good news of Jesus has to go to the ends of the earth. And as we wait for the end, God will give you the opportunity to represent Him. To be His mouthpiece. Wow, what a privilege. But when we see these things happen, we need to remember that Jesus predicted they would all happen before the end.

Which means we can't trust in family, no not ultimately, or in buildings, even magnificent structures like the Temple or what other people say or even in the world itself. The things that look like they will give us security and support won't. But if we stand firm we will be saved. If we keep trusting in Jesus, he will deliver us to that place of ultimate security.

Slide 10

So, Jesus has now answered the when question, when these things are happening, watch out. Be on your guard because they are like the initial stages of pregnancy & the climax will happen soon in the future. This magnificent Temple's time is soon running out. But what is the sign that it is imminent? The labour pains that indicate it could happen any moment now? Well one thing in particular will stand out.

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## 2. What? (signs) (Verses 14-23)

<sup>14</sup> *"When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>15</sup> Let no one on the housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. <sup>16</sup> Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. <sup>17</sup> How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! <sup>18</sup> Pray that this will not take place in winter, <sup>19</sup> because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equalled again."*

Jesus points his disciples to a prophecy from Daniel 11 that revolves around *'the abomination that causes destruction.'* This will be a crucial piece off the puzzle. And so, the readers need to understand this. When this abomination appears, the Temple is about to be destroyed. But guess what, the abomination had already appeared some 200 years earlier and the Temple it appeared in, a previous Jewish place of worship) was completely and utterly destroyed. So, like many of the OT prophecies the initial fulfilment in the time of the Greek occupation of Israel, is a forerunner to an even bigger and better finale.

You see the Jewish book of 1 Maccabees, which interesting enough is in the Catholic Apocrypha, recounts what happened in 167BC to the second Jewish Temple (the first one being the one that Solomon built and had been destroyed by the Babylonians). The Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes IV offered a sacrifice of a pig to a pagan god. This according to 1 Maccabees was the fulfilment of the Daniel prophesy as images of pagan gods and sacrifice to pagan gods is an abomination and certainly don't belong in God's holy temple.

Slide 12

But now Jesus is saying it will be deja vu all over again! Another abomination will appear & there will be such carnage and distress that will be even worse than the atrocities of WW1 or the Taiping Rebellion or even WW2. And the events around the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple were about as bad as gets, according to Jewish historian Josephus

During the siege around 500 Jews were crucified every day outside the city gates. Over a million were slaughter at once when the wall was finally broken down. And the Roman commander (and later Emperor) Titus then carries in the Roman standards into the Temple, makes sacrifices to them and later sets fire to the entire temple. But interesting enough, Josephus also explains that the Christians got out of Jerusalem before this all happened because they were responding to a word of prophecy they received about the imminent destruction. And that word of prophecy is Jesus words here in Mark 13!

Slide 13

Now it would be easy for us today to switch off and say this has nothing to do with me and besides it is all been done and dusted. But later on, in verse 30 Jesus will say *"I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away."*

The Temple will be destroyed. Other magnificent buildings will come & go. Nations will rise & fall. Persecution will happen. Families will be split, the things that we rely upon cannot be trusted. But God's word can be trusted. Just look at all the prophecies in the Bible? They come true, don't they? Just look at all the prophecies predicted the coming of Jesus, they all came true as well. Because God speaks the truth. And His Son Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. And even this prophecy of Jesus came true within 40 years of him saying it.

Slide 14

There might be earthquakes and famines and persecutions and even powerful men doing what they shouldn't do in places they shouldn't be but none of this catches God by surprise. And it shouldn't catch us by surprise either. They are like birth pains. They point us to what is going to happen in the end. They keep our mind focuses on the bigger picture. And what is the bigger picture? That Jesus is Lord and that one day it will not be the Temple that is destroyed but the whole earth that will be destroyed.

For if you think that the destruction of the Temple was bad, then you ain't seen nothing yet. It is foretaste, a dress rehearsal of what will happen at the end of the world. For the destruction of the Temple is a sign itself. For just as the abomination that causes destruction is the sign that the temple will be destroyed. And it was. So, the temple being destroyed is a sign for an even more massive cosmic event that will happen next. The world will end.

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### 3. World (Verses 24-27)

<sup>24</sup> *"But in those days, following that distress, "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light;*

<sup>25</sup> *the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'*

<sup>26</sup> *"At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power & glory. glory. <sup>27</sup> And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens."*

You see just as a piece of classical music often builds towards the finale, so the themes of false messiahs, earthquakes, famines, persecution, division and destruction are going to repeat again in yet another cycle prior to the end of the world itself. So the destruction of the temple, the ticking off of the second last prophecy to be fulfilled in the Bible, means there is only one series of prophecies left. And that is when God will judge the living and the dead on the very last day of the earth we currently live on.

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Because the only thing you can compare the destruction of the Temple to is the destruction of the whole world. In 70 AD God allowed the place where he met with his people to be completely annihilated but one day, He will destroy the place where he first walked and talked with Adam and Eve, the earth! Just as the Temple will not last forever, so this world will not last forever. And if the labour pains were bad coming up to the end of the Temple, it is only going to get worse in the last days of this world.

And by telling us the signs that will come, Jesus is showing his disciples that God is in control of the future. None of us will know when it will happen. No one will accurately predict the day or the hour, why not even Jesus knows that information and if he doesn't know the day or the hour then don't trust your minister, your guru to know it! They will be deceiving you!

Slide 17

Yes, there will be false Christs and false teachers but God's word will never let you down. God will ensure that the elect, that Christians, will never be permanently deceived. Yes, there will be wars and rumours of wars but God is ultimately in control. Yes, there will be persecutions of God's people but God's Holy Spirit will come to you and enable you to say the right thing and to live the right way. Yes, your earthly family may turn against you but your heavenly Father will always stick by you.

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And so, we need to learn the lessons of the fig tree. When we see that the Temple has been destroyed, we know the next station that this train is going is the end of the world. When we see persecution of Christians, and divisions within families and wars and famines and earthquakes they are like the leaves of the fig tree. They tell us the fruit is just around the corner. They are like the birth pains of a pregnant woman. The end is well and truly in sight.

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Friends the Kingdom of God is near. The Jews knew that summer was around the corner when the fig tree starts sprouting leaves. And when you see wars, persecution, famine and division, you know the Kingdom of God is near. The birth pains show that the birth is imminent. So, friends the Kingdom of God must be near indeed. And that means we need to

Slide 20

#### 4. Watch (verses 32-37)

<sup>33</sup> "Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. <sup>34</sup> It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Slide 21 <sup>35</sup> "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. <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: 'Watch!'"

Watch! It's a word that has been carefully placed at the beginning and in the middle and at the end of this passage. Watch. Look for the signs. Notice when the birth pains come. For that will help you to be ready. You won't know exactly when Jesus is coming again but you know enough to be constantly on the watch for him. Ready for him. Prepared for him.

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There's an old story told about a fleet of ships coming back home on their prearranged day to a Scottish village after many days out fishing. As the boat neared the wharf, the men squint their eyes toward the dock to catch a glimpse of their loved ones. The skipper sees thru his scope, "I see Jock's Hannah, & there is Hamish' Mary. And yep that Lachlan's Beth."

But one man was very anxious because his wife wasn't there. He left the boat with a heavy heart and walked up the hill to where he lived and he saw a light on in his cottage. As he opened the door, his wife ran to meet him, saying "I have been waiting for you! But he replied, "Yes but the other men's wives were watching for them."

Friends, what does it mean to keep watch for Jesus? Well, it means staying away from the false teachers. Staying away from false doctrine. Not following the crowds when people say Jesus will never come again. And not having an unhealthy appetite for the latest books on Revelation which says Jesus is coming now because of what is happening in Russia or the EU or in Israel. Stay away from that sort of speculation and instead stay close to Jesus.

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But it also means stay awake. We are like those servants and we have been put in charge of God's earth. We have positions of responsibility within our families and within God's family. And we can't afford to be found asleep at the wheel. Because that will be disastrous for both us and the people who love us and depend upon us.

In Jesus parable the master has gone away and we don't know when he will come back. Now mostly it would be in the first watch at the end of the day before the night gets too dark and the roads gets too dangerous. Or it could be in the fourth watch, some time in the future when the dawn is breaking and night is over and the master has had a good rest. But it could be in the second watch coming up to midnight or on the third watch where the night is as dark as it gets. We just don't know. Jesus could return any time when there is a war or earthquake or famine going on or when there is a time of peace and prosperity.

So, stay away, stay awake and stay alert. Be on your guard. Have a sense of urgency not complacency. Keep informed, don't be ignorant. Be proactive not passive. If we can keep our hearts on the things of God, our minds on the task at hand, our lives pure and our priorities straight then whether Jesus comes today, next week or after our deaths, we will always be ready. We will be prepared. We will not be caught with our pants down.

So, as we wait, we keep preaching the gospel. We keep making disciples. We keep trusting in God's word. We keep serving our Saviour. We keep relying on the Spirit of God to make us holy and more and more like Jesus. Friends Jesus has not given us this chapter to fill our minds with more information but to promote faith and obedience. He doesn't want us to be scared about what is happening, he wants us to get off our backsides and do something! Because, we can't afford to wait any longer. We must be ready, NOW.

Slide 24

A young lady busied herself getting ready for a blind date. Dinner at an exclusive restaurant with live music and dancing. She had her hair done, did her makeup, put on her best dress and was ready for her date's arrival. But his expected arrival time came and went. After waiting an hour, she decided she was stood up. She put on her pyjamas, gathered her favourite junk food & sat down to watch TV. A few minutes later there was a knock at the door. It was her date. He looked at her with a surprised expression and said, "What? I gave you extra time and you're still not ready to go!"

Slide 25

Well friends guess what, Jesus has given us extra time. So are we ready NOW? The signs are there. The birth pains are happening around us. That means the end is near. Are we ready?

## **Song – Mine eyes have seen the glory**

[Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory \(Battle Hymn of the Republic - 4vv\) \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

1. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord  
 He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored  
 He have loosed the fateful lightening of His terrible swift sword  
 His truth is marching on  
 Glory, glory Hallelujah, Glory, glory Hallelujah, Glory, glory Hallelujah, His truth is marching on
2. He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat  
 He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat (glory Hallelujah)  
 Oh, be swift, my soul to answer, oh, be jubilant, my feet  
 Our God is marching on  
 Glory, glory Hallelujah, Glory, glory Hallelujah, Glory, glory Hallelujah, Our God is marching on

3. In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea  
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me (glory, glory Hallelujah)  
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free  
Our God is marching on  
Glory, glory Hallelujah, Glory, glory Hallelujah, Glory, glory Hallelujah, Our God is marching on
4. He is coming like the glory of the morning on the wave,  
He is wisdom to the mighty, He is honour to the brave.  
So the world shall be His footstool and the soul of time his slave  
Our God is marching on  
Glory, glory Hallelujah, Glory, glory Hallelujah, Glory, glory Hallelujah, Our God is marching on

## Closing.

<sup>32</sup> "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup> Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. ... <sup>37</sup> What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"