

Bible Text: Matthew 24:32-44
Preached on: Sunday, January 2, 2022

Mountain Lake Independent Baptist Church
1005 Broadford Road
Oakland, MD 21550

Website: www.mlibc.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/mlibc

I'd like for us to read together in unison verse 44. This is our memory verse for the month of January and it introduces our theme for the year 2022. Maybe today. Maybe today. And I want to challenge us, as I said a moment ago, let's each day we get up, let's spend a little time, get alone with the Lord, spend a little time in his word in prayer, and just keep in the forefronts of our mind, if we would, every one of us, keep in the forefront of our mind, it's a very real possibility the Lord could come back today. We don't know when he's coming, but we know that he is and I just thought a good theme for this year is to keep that in mind every day. Maybe today, my Lord will come for me.

Look at Matthew 24:44. Let's read this together in unison, if you would. Ready?

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

I've entitled the message, "Ready Or Not." Ready or not. Anybody here ever play hide and seek? Anybody ever do that? And you pick out the sucker, he is the one who has to find everybody, and he has to close his eyes up against a post or something, close his eyes, count to 497 or something, you pick out some number. And then when he's done counting, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, what does he say? "Here I come, ready or not!" I think in our passage here, this verse, the Lord is saying in so many words, and I know I'm being very free with my interpretation here, but I think he's saying, "I'm coming back. Ready or not, I'm coming back."

Let's pray.

Father, we ask now you bless our study of this truth in the word of God. I pray that you would prepare our hearts, that we'd follow your instructions here, that we should be ready, because we don't know when you're coming, Lord. And so maybe you'd use a statement, a truth, a verse, somehow impact in our hearts and lives that it is important how we live, and that our actions do matter, and that, Lord, when you come, that we would be ready in every area. And Lord, I ask before I close out the prayer, I ask, Lord, you please fill me with your Spirit once again, as I yield my will, present my body, please, Lord, you speak through me in my earnest, sincere prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Today's the first Sunday of 2022. How many people are aware of that? A new year out before us. I don't know about you, but I like new beginnings. I like mornings, new day ahead of me. Brother Steve Heimbal preached Wednesday night a tremendous message, and one of his points was that the Lord's mercies are new every morning. A new start. We can reestablish our goals, and I know some people frown on resolutions and all that, and a lot of times they're not much more than just a statement, but I just think it's a good start to get up and set new goals, establish a new vision, and face a new year with enthusiasm, with optimism, with anticipation, facing a new year.

So we're starting out, January 2, 2022. We have no idea what the next 12 months are going to hold for us. Anybody this past year get broadsided, something you never saw coming? Anybody know what I'm talking about? In these last two years we did, that's for sure. But every year it's the same. We have no idea. We have no comprehension what the next 12 months are going to hold for us. For some, there's going to be tremendous opportunities. The Lord may give opportunities for service, for ministry that maybe you've never dreamed I'd be able to be involved in something like that. Maybe opportunities to travel. Maybe opportunities to make new friends. I don't know. Opportunity to win some souls to Christ, spiritual opportunities, material opportunities. We don't know. We don't know what trials are going to wait for us this coming year. We don't know what obstacles, sicknesses, setbacks, valleys we have to go through. I was thinking when we were singing the song, "Follow on, down in the valley with my Savior I would go," and some of us might have to go through some dark valleys this coming year. Some maybe will have mountaintop experiences like we never dreamed of. Maybe some trials we have to face, some blessings. I know many of us are praying for friends and loved ones that are unsaved. This could be the year that they come to Christ. Maybe that wayward child, that wayward spouse, maybe this will be the year that they sell out for Jesus Christ. We don't know. We don't know. But I do know this, whatever this year holds, if we know Jesus Christ as Savior, he's going to be with us right through every step of it. Every day, every day.

2022 could very well be the year that our Lord returns. I'm not prophesying anything. I'm just simply going by what the Lord told us, that we're to be ready because we don't know when he's coming. We don't know when he's coming. And by the way, that's probably a good thing that we don't know. If we knew he was coming in 2025, on August 16 of 2025, I know some folks would be horsing around up till August 20, what date did I say? Till the day before, we'd be horsing around. Then the day before, "Oh no, the Lord's coming back tomorrow!" We'd quick run around and get things. Can I get a witness? Yeah. My dad was a truck driver. He'd take off on Sunday nights a lot of times, early Monday morning, be gone for the week. I'm home by myself there. He'd give me a list of stuff to do that week. "I'll be back Friday afternoon. I want this stuff done." And I'd go about Thursday midnight, I'd think, "Yikes, dad's coming tomorrow. I better get all this stuff ready." That's the way we'd be. There's no doubt. But maybe we don't know when the Lord's coming and it could very well be 2022. It could very well be today. Today.

Anybody here ever have a parent, any of you parents ever say this, any of you kids, your parents say this, "I'm going to tell you one time and you better get it." Anybody know

what I'm talking about? Did you ever tell your kids, "I'm not saying this again." If our parents told us one time we ought to do something, they meant business. We ought to do it. They didn't have, when I was a kid, they didn't have, "I'm counting to three." They didn't do none of that. It was 1, wham, you got it. They didn't put us in the corner. The only reason we were in the corner is because we were hurting from what happened in the bedroom. So the parent says, "I'm telling you one time. I'm not telling you again." If God tells us something one time, would you agree with me that's important? If he says something to us one time, that's important but what if God tells us over and over and over and over and over from Genesis to Revelation, God says, "Jesus Christ is coming back again. Jesus Christ is coming back again. Jesus Christ is coming back again." If the number of times a truth is mentioned in the Bible determines its importance, then I know there's two doctrines that are incredibly important, and they all are, it doesn't matter how often he mentions it, but if we're going by the number of times it's mentioned, there are two doctrines, two teachings in scripture, two truths that are incredibly important for you and I to grasp. Number 1 is salvation is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Period. That's all through the Bible that scarlet thread, the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. And there's another one that is repeated nearly as often, in fact, some Bible students suggest more often is the fact that Jesus Christ is coming again to establish his kingdom. I'm telling you the truth of the Second Coming of Christ is vitally important from Genesis to Revelation. The second coming is mentioned over and over and over.

I noticed something the other day. If you would keep your place here in Matthew, and I want to show you, and we're going to look at several verses this morning, go to the second last book of the Bible, little book of Jude, right before the book of Revelation. Jude, of course, there's only one chapter in Jude. It's just a small book. So go to verse number 14. I want you to notice a statement that the Bible tells us about the seventh man from Adam. Adam and then the seventh man down in all of human history. Notice Jude verse 14. He says this, and this is the inspired word of God, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying," now look at this, Enoch, the seventh from Adam was saying this way back in the early days of human history. He was saying this, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints." Let me ask you a question: was he talking about Jesus being born in the manger there? No. Did Jesus come with 10,000 saints when he was born in the manger? No. What's he referencing? He's referencing the Second Coming of Christ. Way back, the early days of human history, way back in seventh from Adam, they're declaring the Second Coming of Christ.

I'm telling you, it is impossible to believe this Bible and not believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. I'm telling you, the Bible teaches it. You cannot take this Bible literally and not understand the fact that Jesus Christ is coming back again. Listen, if there's a preacher and he's not preaching on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, he is not faithful to his calling to preach the whole counsel of the word of God. It is in the Bible. I wouldn't, to be honest with you, I wouldn't go to a church that didn't believe in the Second Coming of Christ. I wouldn't go to church that didn't preach and warn and tell folks and teach people Jesus is coming again. Jesus is coming again. You can't be loyal, you can't be faithful, you can't believe and interpret this book literally at face value and not believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Now, if you would come back to our text here in Matthew 24. Chapter 24 and 25 are what Bible students refer to as the Olivet Discourse. The Olivet Discourse. If you would notice in verse number 3 of chapter 24 is where we get this. Matthew 24:3 says, "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming," they knew he was coming back, "what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" So this is referred to as the Olivet Sermon. The Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5, 6 and 7, that was stood on a mountain and he preached to huge crowds, but here his disciples are with him privately and they approach the Lord and they ask him a very specific question. They say, "When shall these things be," he was talking about the temple previously and being torn down, "so when is this going to happen?" And then their curiosity got the best of them and they said this, "What shall be the sign of thy coming? How do we know? What do we look for? And of the end of the world?" Isn't that what people ask a lot? Don't they? "Oh, when's the Lord come? Oh, the signs. Oh, all these signs taking place." People have been trying to figure out the date of the Lord's return for thousands of years and I'll tell you, God tells us very clearly we'll notice this here in a bit, God tells us very clearly no man knows the day nor the hour. We don't know when Jesus is coming back.

Getting a little ahead of myself on this, but let me just throw this out. If somebody comes out with a book or you hear some sermon, somebody sends you a CD or some yard bird preacher on TV tries to tell you that Jesus is coming back on a certain day, of a certain month, of a certain year, you might as well just turn that channel off right there. You might as well just throw that CD, throw that book away because the Bible is very clear no man knows the day nor the hour. And so we need to be very, very careful about that.

So they want to know, "What are the signs and when are you coming?" Jesus says to them, as I mentioned, basically he says to them, "I'm coming back whether you're ready or not." I want to give, make a few observations, few thoughts this morning. My first one is this, to be ready for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Somebody says, "Preacher, how do I get ready? You say Jesus coming back, I've got to be ready, how do I get ready?" Number 1, I must first accept the First Coming of Christ. I must accept the first coming of Jesus Christ. What was the purpose that Jesus came the first time? Somebody help me out, what was the purpose he came first time? Yeah, we preached on it, was it last week? "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The angel told Mary, "Thou shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." He said, "For this cause am I come." Jesus Christ came the first time to give himself as a literal, physical, eternal sacrifice for your sins and my sins. It is the only hope of salvation. It is the only way to escape hell. It is the only way to find eternal life. It's the only way to get to heaven is through Jesus Christ and what he accomplished the first time he came.

Now for some people that may just be, oh we blow it off, talking about getting saved, talking about eternal life, talking about heaven and hell. "Oh, I'm not interested in that. That's the most boring thing I've ever heard in my life. That's the least thing I'm worried about." I tell you what, there's a day coming when you're going to be awfully worried about that. There's a day coming when it's going to matter whether you've trusted Christ as Savior or not. This old world thinks it's just nothing, thinks nothing about it. I've

found, again I'm getting way ahead of myself, I got some points later in the message I can't wait to get to and I keep jumping ahead to them. But I tell you, I found one thing out, somebody that never gives thought to the future, somebody that never plans for the future, usually ends up making a mess of their life. Right or wrong? Somebody that never gives thought about my eternal destiny, somebody that never gives thought, never cares, not a care in the world about where I spend eternity, heaven or hell, don't worry about it at all, do you know what I've found? Every one of them that died in that condition ended up in hell. Did you ever read Luke 16? That man in hell wished he'd have worried about it a little more. In fact, it worried him enough, he said, "Lazarus, send somebody to my family, tell them so they don't end up here. Please, tell them to take this seriously. Tell them to get this settled. Tell them not to ignore this. You've got to tell them!" He says, "Well, they've got the word of God. They've got the word of God."

I'm saying this: nobody's ready for the Second Coming of Christ until they first accept what was accomplished in the First Coming of Christ. If you're here this morning or you're under the sound of my voice and you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you've never turned to him and let him forgive you and cleanse you of sin, give you a new life, give you eternal life, you are not ready for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Say, "Well, when I see that rapture take place, if I go to church and everybody's gone and if I'm sitting in church and man, all of a sudden, boom, everybody vanishes and just shoes and socks and clothes laying there and dentures and artificial knees and all that hearing aids all laying on the pew, boy, when I see that happen, I'm going to get saved." I've got some bad news for you: it's too late. Read Thessalonians very carefully. Every person has an opportunity to be saved. Every person that was given the knowledge of the truth and they rejected it, they neglected it, they said, "I'm not worried about it," every single one of them will be left behind and listen to me, he says they will believe the lie of the Antichrist. They will not get saved. You say anybody gets saved during the tribulation period? Yeah, millions will. Folks that never heard. Do you know there's billions of people in the world never heard the plan of salvation? If they're left behind, they'll have opportunity to be saved but not one church member, not one unsaved church member that had opportunity to be saved, not one unsaved person that had opportunity to be saved and rejected it and neglected it, not one of those will be raptured or have opportunity to be saved after the rapture.

So would you agree with me, it's awfully important that I make sure I accept what was accomplished in the First Coming or I'll never be prepared for the Second Coming? For the Second Coming. If you've never trusted Christ, you say, "Preacher, I've been coming here for years and years and years and all we ever hear is you've got to get saved, you've got to get born again, you've got to accept Jesus as your Savior, and why is it every time that's all you say?" I'll tell you why: because you've got to get saved and you've got to get born again, and you've got to accept Jesus as your Savior or you're still in your sins and you'll be left behind. And so, ready or not, Jesus is coming back again. Maybe today, the Lord will come for me. Maybe tomorrow. Maybe next week, next month. Maybe next December. We don't know when he's coming but we know he is whether we're ready or not, and one way we need to be ready, the first way to be ready, we have to accept what was accomplished at the First Coming.

There was a fellow years ago here in our community and a nice fellow, we kind of were friends a bit, and an older man, much older than me, and I'll tell you, the older I get, if you're older than me, you're getting old, I'll tell you. But anyway, every time I'd talk to him, we'd say, hey, hey, and we got to be buddies and he'd always talk about the Second Coming. He'd say, "Boy, things are bad, aren't they?" I said, "Yeah." I'm talking 20 years ago, 25 years ago. And he'd say, "Looks like the Lord's coming back. Looks like the Lord's coming back." I said, "Yeah." I said, "It's in place. Everything's ready. We don't know." And he would just be so concerned about everything was, "The Lord's coming back, maybe the Lord's coming back. Lord's coming back. Lord's coming back. It's the end times." I said, "I agree with you." I'd ask him, "Do you know for sure your sins are forgiven on your way to heaven?" "No, I'm not worried about that." And that old boy never would get saved. Now, he knew the Lord was coming back again. He knew, all he'd talk about every time I saw him just about, he talked about it but he never, but he wasn't saved. Listen, you're not ready for, you can know, you can know every sign that the Bible gives about the Second Advent of Christ but if you've never trusted the First Advent, what was accomplished, you're not ready for that event. Now, I do got good news. I did a funeral one time and he was there and I gave the invitation. Old boy raised his hand. I prayed and called on the Lord, trusted Christ there. I haven't seen him in years. I got that much anyway that I trust that he trusted Christ as Savior. The point I'm trying to make is this: Second Coming is a dreaded event if you haven't first accepted what was accomplished at this First Coming. His First Coming.

So number 1, be ready when the Lord comes. I must accept what was accomplished at the First Coming of Christ. Number 2, to be ready for the Lord's coming I must anticipate the Second Coming of Christ. Accept the First Coming and then anticipate the Second Coming. Look with me if you would here at verse 44 of Matthew 24. He goes through and he gives these signs and these indicators. He's talking about the Second Advent. We'll explain that here in a moment. But he says verse 44, he says, "Therefore be ye also ready." I do what I always do. I did what I always do. I looked up that word "ready." I wanted to see what the word means that it came from. I wanted to see how it's used other places in scripture. I wanted to understand exactly what the Lord says when he says "be ye therefore ready." Anybody want to guess what the word "ready" means? Be ready. It means to be, now this, I thought this was an interesting definition, to be in a state of readiness.

Now that sounds to me an ongoing thing. Some people are ready for the Lord to come right after revival services are over. Right? And I got things right with God. God convicted me. I confessed and repented of my sins and I got all that. I got my Bible reading down. I got my church attendance down. I've got the garbage out and music and videos and I got all that out and I'm ready for the Lord to come. About three days later all that stuff kicked out floods right back in. Can I suggest to you that's not being ready? When the Lord said be ready he meant be in a continual state of readiness. Be prepared. Any of you fellas ever say to your wife, "Hey, you ready to go to church?" "Oh, I'll be ready in a minute." Forty-five minutes later you're out in the car honking. None of you guys are going to admit that one bit. But the Lord says you ought to be ready. Be in a perpetual state of preparation. The implication here is you ought to be anticipating the

Lord's return at any moment. You ought to be anticipating the Lord's return at any moment.

Now we're told in the Bible we should not worry about the future, right? "Take no thought for tomorrow," Jesus said in Matthew 6. "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought of itself. Don't worry about tomorrow." We're told in Proverbs 3, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Don't be worried about stuff." In Philippians, "Be careful," it means be anxious, "Be careful for nothing. In everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be known to God and the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds." How many people understand the Bible tells us we should not worry about what happens in 2022? Well, there's a few folks who understand that. We're not supposed to. We're told over and over and over in the scriptures, "Don't worry about tomorrow. Don't worry." But not one time, listen, not one time are we told in scripture not to be prepared for tomorrow. World of difference. And by the way, if we prepare for tomorrow, the temptation to worry about tomorrow will be a lot less.

Would you take your Bible, again keep your place here. I want to come back and look at this verse some more. But turn to the Old Testament book of Proverbs. I tell you, Proverbs is a tremendous book. I just love it. I want to challenge you this year, read a chapter of Proverbs every day and correspond to that calendar day. Today is January 2, read Proverbs 2. I did that on purpose. Look with me, if you would, at Proverbs 22. Go to Proverbs 22. But I was saying, I want to challenge you, read a chapter of Proverbs every day through 2022. I'm telling you, first thing I do in the morning, within the first 15 minutes I wake up, I try to read Proverbs, that Proverb for the day, that chapter for the day.

Look at chapter 22. Come to verse 3. Boy, here's a good verse to underscore in your Bible. Look what it says. Proverbs 22:3, "A prudent man," what's a prudent man? Somebody help me, a prudent man is somebody that's what? They're wise. They're careful. They think things through a little bit. They want to make sure things are right. How many people would like to be a prudent man or a prudent woman? I want to be a prudent man. I want to be, ladies want to be a prudent woman, prudent young person, wise, careful, think things through. Not just barrel through stuff, unthinking. A prudent man, look at this, what's that next word, "foreseeth," can see ahead, looks ahead, plans ahead. "A prudent man foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself." He plans ahead. He prepares for what's ahead. Look at the last part of that verse, "but the simple," foolish, just simple, "pass on and," what? "Are punished," they pay the price for it. They pay the price for it. We're told over and over in scripture, "Don't you worry about tomorrow. Don't you take, God will take care of you tomorrow. Don't you worry." But not one time are we ever told don't you prepare for tomorrow. And I'm telling you, if you've got the attitude, "Well, I'll worry about Jesus Christ coming back whenever he shows up, I'll worry about it then." You are a simple person. You're foolish. And the Lord tells us to be prepared, to anticipate, be ready in a state of readiness, anticipating the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

You say, "Well, preacher, I'm watching for these signs. And you read chapter 24 and other places in the Bible, boy, the Lord gives all kinds of signs, earthquakes and wars among nations and all these different signs," and you say, "Well, I'm going to be watching for those signs." Listen, if you're looking for signs, you're looking in the wrong place. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and many of us are very familiar with this, but I want to reestablish in our minds, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is not just a one singular event. You study the Bible very carefully, it becomes very, very clear that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is in what I refer to as two stages. The first stage in the return of Christ is what we call the rapture of the church. How many people are familiar with that term? The rapture of the church. The word "rapture" itself is not found in the Bible, but the truth is, and what the Bible teaches is that there's going to be a time, we do not know when, there will be no signs for the rapture, there's no indicators, it is what we call an imminent event. In other words, it could happen at any moment, at any time, no indicators, no signs that it's going to take place. The next event in God's time frame in the return of Christ, the first stage of his return is the rapture of the church. That's when every true born again believer in Jesus Christ, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the trump of God, and the archangel's shout will be caught up together to be with the Lord in the air. How many people are familiar with that truth? And so that's the next event. There are no signs. You say, "Man, all these forest fires and all these earthquakes and pandemics and pestilence, oh, signs, the rapture." No, there doesn't have to be any of that. The rapture can happen at any moment. Now, I think these are factors, maybe, and we can talk about that but as far as the rapture is concerned, it can be at any moment.

Then immediately following the rapture, then we begin that seven year period we call the tribulation. How many folks are familiar with the tribulation period? Question: good or bad time? Horrible. In fact, Jesus says there never has been a time like this and never has been and never will be a time as horrible, as horrific as the period called the tribulation period. One third of all mankind will die during that tribulation period. I can't go into details, but the planet is going to be devastated by the wrath and judgment of God, the vials of God poured out, his wrath on mankind. Israel in particular will be preparing then.

So you have the seven year period tribulation period, that is when the signs take place that the Lord is talking about here. There's earthquakes, the pestilence, all of that, and you think this pandemic is bad, brother, during the tribulation period, this is a Sunday school picnic compared to what they're going to face in the tribulation period. And those signs take place and these earthquakes happen and devastating one third of all the earth, one third of all vegetation, one third of all the life in the sea wiped out. So devastating that rivers turn red with blood. Then the second stage of the Lord, the Battle of Armageddon, second stage of the Lord is what we call the Second Advent. That's when the Lord comes physically. Every eye sees him. He comes with 10,000 of his saints. He returns to earth. He judges the nations of the earth. He squashes the enemies of Israel at the Battle of Armageddon. And he establishes the thousand year reign of Christ.

So that's an overview of the return of Christ. Every Bible believer ought to have a clear understanding of the end times. That timeline ought to be very clear in our minds. And so the Lord gives these signs, but the signs are for after the rapture. There are no signs leading up to the Rapture. He says, "Be ye therefore ready." In 1 Thessalonians 4:17, Paul

anticipated the rapture in his lifetime. He said, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up," raptured, "caught up together to be with the Lord in the air." He said "we." Paul expected the rapture, anticipated the rapture in his lifetime. You know what Paul was doing? He was obeying what the Lord said, "Be ye therefore ready." Anticipate it. You could say, "Oh, boy, we're going to be caught up out of here." One of these days, that is a true, that is a true good statement to make. We may not. We may have to go to heaven through the grave, but it's a real possibility we may be raptured out of here. How many folks would rather be raptured out of here than buried in a grave and go through death out here? Yeah, me too. But we don't have any guarantee.

I was doing our bulletin on Wednesday. Jackie comes in during the week and just cracks the whip, just Lord's it over us poor workers here. And so anyway, I did the bulletin. I had our theme on the front of the bulletin there. You see it. "Maybe today my Lord will come for me," and she proofs it so if there's mistakes in the bulletin, it's her fault, not mine, because she proofs it. But nevertheless, I ran, I was in my office, I ran it through the copy machine, it came out, she was proofing it and she said this, "Oh, that would be wonderful." Remember saying that? "Oh, that would be wonderful if the Lord would come today." You know what that attitude is? That's anticipation and the Lord is telling us that's the way we always ought to be. Maybe today. "Oh, it'd be wonderful if the Lord came." Wouldn't it be great if we woke up this morning, first thought in our mind, "Oh, maybe today. Maybe today." Anticipation.

Several years ago, it's probably been 10 maybe, some of you all might remember better than me, but we had a series of break-ins at the church here. How many folks were around there? You remember that? And they were breaking in and stealing stuff. And it happened on a fairly regular basis and we were trying... And one week, we were working with the sheriff's department. They were great. They were helping us. And they eventually caught the guy. But before they caught him, while it was still, it seemed like every, it was like Monday nights we'd get broke into. We had the offerings and stuff. So we got this bright idea, Tom and I, we decided we're going to spend Monday night here at church and we're going to catch this sucker and deal with them. Now, I'm saying this because if you would come back to Matthew, I want to show you why I'm telling you this little story here. Matthew 25. Look with me at verse 42. "Watch therefore," verse 42, Matthew 24. I said 25, Matthew 24:42. Jesus said this to his disciples, "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Then he illustrates the importance of being ready, anticipating, "But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have," what? "He would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore," because of that, "be ye also ready," just like that guy that knows when that thief is coming, what watch of the night he's going to be ready and that old boy ain't getting in the house. He ain't stealing our stuff.

So Tom and I got this great idea. We're going to stay here at the church. We're going to sleep at the church here and we're going to catch these guys when they come in Monday night. I'm telling you, we were armored up to the tee. I got my P gun out and my BB gun and slingshot. We were ready. These guys come in here, we're getting them. And we sat there and it's about 10 o'clock. Everybody's gone. We're sitting there. Ain't nobody yet.

11 o'clock. We're kind of... But here's what I noticed. It was dark. Everybody's gone. We're sitting there. We're quiet because we don't want them to know we're here. All the lights are out. And every little peep and squeak, "Here they come. We're ready." Little mouse runs across the fellowship hall. I mean every little sound, every little peep, every little creak and you know, a building creaks and groans a lot at night when everything's dark and nobody's around. And about one o'clock in the morning, we said, "I'm tired. I'm going home." We went home. But the way we were that night, just anticipating, we knew that guy was coming any minute we were ready and watching and waiting, anticipating, just like the goodman of the house. If he'd known what time that thief was coming, he'd be ready.

Listen, that same level of anticipation, I believe you and I ought to have for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Any moment. Every time that siren goes off on the fire, we think, "Oh, it's a rapture. Oh, no, okay." Every little thing ought to prepare, make us think Jesus is coming again, Jesus is coming again. You know, the world thinks we're nuts, but we're simply doing what God told us to do. Be ready. Be ready.

Number 1, accept what was accomplished in the First Coming. Number 2, anticipate the Second Coming. By the way, do you know that the Lord's Supper is designed to help us anticipate the Lord's coming? He says in 1 Corinthians 11:26, he says, "This do to remember his death." And let me turn there. I was going to try and quote it. But the Lord's Supper, the whole purpose, one of the main purpose of the Lord's Supper is to keep us in anticipation of the Second Coming. Let me read real quickly to you. 1 Corinthians 11 and verse number 26. He says, "For as oft ye eat this bread and drink this cup," listen, "ye do show the Lord's death till he come." Every time we take the Lord's Supper it ought to remind us Jesus is coming again, Jesus is coming again.

Let me give you my third thought. Number 1, accept what was accomplished in the First Coming. Number 2, anticipate the Second Coming. Number 3, be alert to deception. Be alert to deception. If you look at chapter 24 and 25 very carefully, over and over and over the Lord says, "Beware. Take heed. Watch out." Look with me at verse number 4 He says, "Take heed." The very first thing the disciples ask him, "When shall these things be? What shall be the sign of thy coming?" The very first thing the Lord says is, "Take heed that no man deceive you for many shall come," verse 5, "in my name, saying, I am Christ and shall deceive many." Look at verse 11, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." Verse number 23, "That if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect." The Lord emphasized over and over and over and over and over in the last days before the coming of Christ, there's going to be tremendous deception. There's going to be tremendous false teaching. There's going to be tremendous spiritual lies. And he says, "You beware and you take heed, and you be very, very careful that you don't let this old world and this old devil deceive you and get you believing things that are not true."

I'm telling you, we live in a day of false teachers and false teaching on every hand. Not everything that calls itself Christian is Christian. Not everything that says it's Bible is

Bible and we need to use discernment, and we need to be wise, and we need to understand that Satan is a liar, and Paul told the church at Corinth, he is an angel of light, disguises himself, and his ministers are angels of light. They look like they're so good. They look like they're so right. And I'm telling you, we live in a day and age when wrong is presented as if it's right, and right is presented as if it's wrong, and you and I must not be deceived. If God says it's wrong, it's wrong. If God says it's right, it's right. And we hold to that.

On every hand, we have people falling for false teaching and false doctrines. One chief characteristic of the last days is spiritual deception, spiritual opposition, and one of the best ways you and I can be ready for the Lord's coming is to make sure our faith and our life lines up with this book right here. I've got to line up with this book. Listen, if you're getting your Bible doctrine from social media or from the government, and by the way, every now and then you have some politician tries to tell us what we should and should not believe, if that's where you're getting your Bible doctrine, if that's what your faith is in, I'm telling you, you're being deceived. It's that old book. You say, "Preacher, the whole world's against that book." Then we're against the whole world. We're not going to be deceived in the last days. We must not, if we're going to be prepared. If we're going to be prepared make sure our church is lined up with the word of God.

Titus, if you would, and I'll wind down here, Titus 2. Would you turn over there real quickly with me, and I may preach another message on this sometime. I hope you're sticking with me here. Titus 2. I'm telling you, if just our churches would get back to the Bible, we could have revival in this old nation. If we just get the Bible, the truth of the Bible back in our homes, what a change that would make. Look at chapter 2, look at verse 11, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," look at this, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." He says, listen, we're saved by grace, and we're looking for the Lord to come, and that ought to prompt us to live godly, and not to adopt the world and the pleasures and the principles and the partying of the world. I tell you what, when Christians are partying, and you can't tell the difference between a Christian party and the world's party, we're not ready for the Lord to come. I tell you what, it just grieves my heart that so many churches that one day were good, fundamental, Bible preaching churches, held to the old book, held to the old standards, held to the old doctrines, and nowadays are allowing the world to come in and rocking and rolling and carrying on, no different than the world, I'm here to tell you, that is not being prepared for the coming of Christ. We are to be distinctively Christians in every aspect of our lives, not just on Sunday mornings, but Saturday nights also. Amen or nod? Man, don't leave me up here by myself now. He says, we need to live godly. We need to do right in these last days.

So 1, accept what was accomplished in the First Coming. Number 2, anticipate that Second Coming. Number 3, be alert to deception. Don't let this world deceive you and suck you into its thinking and get you to conform to this world. No. And last of all, let me end with this, be actively serving the Lord till he comes. I wish we had time. I wanted to go to Acts 1. I just love that passage. And the Lord's resurrected. He's about to ascend to

heaven. The disciples don't know it. He's about to ascend to heaven and the disciples come and they grasp that he's coming back at some point and they say, "When will you come back again?" I'm putting this in my own words. They said, "When are you coming back, Lord? When are you coming back?" And he said this, and I'm probably not going to quote it exactly, but he says to this effect, he says, "Ye know not the hour. It's not for you to know the day nor the hour when the Son of man comes. It's not for you to know that. But ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." They said, "When are you coming, Lord? What are the signs? When are you coming?" He says, "Listen, that's none of your business when. Your business is to be out there getting people saved, being a witness in the whole world, in the whole world."

You say, "Preacher, how do I be ready for the Lord's coming?" Giving ourselves to getting other people saved. Giving to missions. Getting involved in missions. Getting involved in local witnessing here. Maybe taking soul winning class. Giving out gospel tracts. I always thought I'd love, there's several times I would love for the rapture to take place. Now God's the one that decides it but I always thought I'd love for the rapture to take place right when I'm all worked up behind the pulpit, preaching the Bible. "You need to be saved." Woo, out of here! Wouldn't that be something? I thought it would be another time to be cool I'm knocking on someone's door and they come out and I say, "Can I show you from the Bible how to be saved?" They say, "I'd like for you to show me." This is my imagination. "Oh, I'd like for you to show me how to be saved." I get my Bible out, I show them, they bow their head, they accept Jesus Christ as Savior. Boom, we blow out of there! Wouldn't that be great? I don't know when the Lord's coming back. I hope it's not when I'm doing something stupid, right? So what we need to do is keep those stupid things to a minimum so we're ready. You follow my saying, what I'm saying?

Anybody here recognize the name Homer Rodeheaver? Anybody recognize that name? I got one. I figured I'd have one. Anybody recognize the name Billy Sunday? Ah! Great evangelist, powerful evangelist, 1920s, '30s, back in the early 1900s. Meetings all across this country, powerful meetings. Over a million people walked the old sawdust trail accepting Jesus Christ as Savior under the ministry of Billy Sunday. What a man! Homer Rodeheaver was his song leader in the great tabernacles, great meetings. You ought to read him. I got a biography. An amazing man.

They were having meetings, one somewhere, there was a little boy named Joey, probably a young teen, and Joey was what we would in our day and age say was mentally challenged. He was mentally handicapped but Joey loved Billy Sunday and Homer Rodeheaver. Joey came to the services and he'd come up in the choir. They had an invitation, come up and sing in the choir. Huge choirs. Three, four, five hundred choir members. Little Joey was up there and Homer Rodeheaver said that little Joey was just simple, he was slow, and he'd follow Homer everywhere he went and he'd say, "Thank you, Mr. Rodeheaver, for letting me sing in the choir. Thank you, Mr. Rodeheaver, for letting me sing." And Homer Rodeheaver said later, he says, "I felt bad but that little kid got under my skin." He said, "He just kind of bugged me, following everywhere and all the time." He said, "After about a couple weeks of meetings," now you understand, their

revival meetings went on for a month, six, eight weeks sometimes. And they were into this meeting a good little ways. One evening afterward a fella came up to Homer Rodeheaver and he says, "Mr. Rodeheaver, I want to thank you for something." He said, "What's that?" "Thank you for letting my boy, Joey, sing in the choir." He says, "You don't know what that meant to him." He said he would go out in the neighborhood and work odd jobs, just do something, and people give him a dime or a nickel, back then that was something, give him a dime or a nickel and he'd bring that in so he'd have something to put in that offering plate in the meetings. He said, in fact, he says, "The reason I'm thanking you for this is Joey would come home and he would bug his mother and I that we needed to come to that meeting. We needed to come to that meeting." And he said, "He bugged us to death. So we finally started coming out to the meeting and his mother and I have trusted Christ as Savior. All his brothers and sisters, our family's been saved." And he said, "Last night his 75 year old uncle at Joey's invitation came to the revival meeting and he walked that sawdust trail with 75 year old uncle, trusting Christ as Savior." He said, "Thank you. Thank you for allowing Joey to be a part of this."

I thought about the Lord's coming. I want to be like Joey. I would far rather be maybe a little handicapped mentally and have what Joey had than to be the highest intellect in the county and miss out on serving God like that. Amen or nod? I want to be like Joey when the Lord comes back. I want to be singing God's praise. I want everything that I have and about to give to the cause of Christ and I want others to be saved. I want others to be saved. Maybe today the Lord may come for me. Are we ready? Maybe this year.

Father, bless our invitation, I ask. Stir us to live for you. Stir us to be true and genuine and sincere, not to be like this old world but to be like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heads are bowed, eyes are closed. How many this morning would say, "Preacher I've accepted what was accomplished at the First Coming of Christ, I've accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior. That's settled. I know it. I'm saved. I have it settled." Any like that? Uplifted hand. "Preacher, that's my testimony." God bless you. God bless you. I trust that's true. How about those of us that know Christ as Savior can we honestly say we're ready? Maybe there's some adjustments need to be made in our home, our relationship with others, our walk with God, our witness. I wonder how many would say, "Preacher, this morning God's Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and there's some adjustments need to be made in my life. There's some things need to be rearranged, some priorities need to be readjusted." Any like that by the uplifted hand? "Preacher, if I'm going to be ready, there's some things have to be dealt with." God bless you. Hands all around. Can I be honest with you? That's a lifelong endeavor. For every Christian it's a constant effort to keep things where they ought to be. Get and keep them there. Let's make 2022 a year of walking with God, of being ready for his coming. Is there some here say, "Preacher, I know someone that's not saved. My heart would be shattered if they were left behind. My heart would be shattered if they died without Christ." You'd say, "Preacher, I want to be a witness to them. I want to do my part." Is there any like that? "I have someone I want to see saved so badly." And maybe God will use you this year if we'll just let him. We'll just let him. One last question, is there someone here say, "Preacher, I've never been saved. I'm not ready for the Lord's coming. I'm not ready to face him through death or rapture.

I'm not ready." You say, "Preacher, I need to be saved." Is there any like that? Uplifted hand, "Preacher, pray for me. I've got to get this settled. I've got to get this settled."

Father bless our invitation now, I ask, as we respond to what you've spoken to our hearts about. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's stand together heads are bowed, eyes...