

Matthew 24:37-44

“But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this; if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Reflection Questions (Matt. 24:37-44)

The Context: This gospel text is found in the middle section of the two chapter apocalyptic section of this gospel (Chp. 24-26). At the beginning of Chp. 24, the disciples ask Jesus “When will the temple be destroyed? And ‘What will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the world?’” The temple was destroyed in 70 AD and this gospel was written somewhere around 80-85 AD. The first question had already been answered, so the chapters focus on the answer to the second question; “What will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the world?” Jesus answers the disciples, telling them of persecutions (24:9-14), the desolating sacrilege (Mt. 24:15-28), the celestial signs and the coming of the Son of Man (24:20-31) and the parable of the fig tree (24: 32-35). Take a look at three parables; Parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Slaves (24:45-51), the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids (25:1-13) and the Parable of the Talents (25:14-30). Compare these parables with this passage.

- 1) In this passage, Jesus uses three scenarios to speak about the coming of the Lord; 1) Noah and the great flood, 2) co-workers, (one left, one taken), and 3) the thief who comes in the middle of the night. Which of these three images speaks to you most profoundly? Why?
- 2) In each of these three descriptions someone is surprised. Why are the people in scenarios 1 and 3 surprised? There is a time that comes when the opportunity for preparation is passed. What helps us be prepared for the coming of His Kingdom? What could have helped them be more prepared? What does this tell us about the coming of the kingdom?
- 3) When referring to Noah’s peers, Jesus does not focus on their sin, but instead on their *complete indifference*. Noah’s neighbors had plenty of warning as they watched Noah build the ark over a period of time. They chose to make fun of him instead of heeding the warning sign. In what ways can we be lulled into apathy (secular indifference) about the things that Jesus cares most about (Matt. 25:35-40) and therefore miss the “signs” that Jesus has for us? Have we ever found ourselves mocking or being indifferent towards someone who later turned out to be an agent of God’s message?

- 4) “Two will be in a field; one will be taken and one will be left.” (vs. 40). Take a look at this verse and see similarities between that verse and the verses- Luke 17:34-35; 1 Corinth. 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 5:2-4. This is where various protestant denominations get their theology of the ‘rapture’ (the ones who are taken go directly to paradise and those ‘left behind’ have to suffer). The Catholic Church does not have any specific theology of the ‘rapture’, but it is good for us to know what others are thinking so that we can dialogue with them. What do you think about the theology of the ‘rapture’? (pre-second coming).
- 5) In verse 42 Jesus tells His disciples directly how they can avoid being caught unaware. He tells them to WATCH. The word “vigil” comes from the Latin, “vigilia”, means to “watch”. For which kinds of things do we in our every day lives hold vigil? (e.g a missing child, the imminent death of a loved one dying of a disease, a school application, academic/medical test scores, anticipation of a gift, of meeting a person, the outcome of an election, the outcome of a meeting between political leaders). How are these things that we hold vigil for in our world related (or not) to the way in which we hold vigil until Jesus comes again? Which prayer practices in our lives (e.g. rosary, meditation, contemplation, journaling, attending mass) help us enhance the quality of our “vigil with/ for Jesus” until He comes in glory? We are called to be both extremely vigilant and humbly patient. Both stances when placed side by side seem to contradict each other, and yet that is what God calls us to do. How does Christ help us to be both eagerly vigilant and humbly patient at the same time?
- 6) The coming of the kingdom is likened to a thief that breaks into a house. In what ways does this help us understand the ‘breaking in’/breaking through’ of Christ in the Second Coming?
- 7) What kinds of spiritual practices and social justice practices (Matt. 25) can we add to our lives that will help us prepare for Christ’s coming again?