

The Messiah Leaked (Matthew 24:36-44)

8am Holy Communion – 30th November 2025

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you O Lord

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

This is the gospel of the Lord

Praise to you O Christ

<Prayer>

Something is coming soon which will change everything, but I can't tell you what or when, but just to prime your anticipation I will leave you in a state of heightened alert, such that you will not settle but constantly speculate, predict and catastrophise until all is revealed. **Does that sound like the Budget and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.** Considering the proximity of Christmas, and today is Advent Sunday, shall I draw attention to the annual budget pantomime?

The old term is *budget purdah*, when not so long ago the only expectation was that there would be *nothing said* because literally it was all locked away – in a box, and the treasury staff and ministers were sworn to silence. Back in 1947, Chancellor Hugh Dalton gave an impromptu briefing on his budget to a lurking journalist as he entered the commons on Budget Day. The newspapers rushed the leaked details into their evening copy, which was printed and on the streets, even before Dalton's speech was ended. He lost his job for that.

Speculation on the contents of the Red Dispatch Box from Number 11 Downing Street is a traditional bit of quirky Britishness that we have come to know. This year, not for the first time, the weeks prior to Budget Day have been a litany of suppositions and warnings, fed not only by industrialists and economists, but also by the Chancellor who felt it necessary to give a warning about taxation, and then to rescind it.

Jesus taught his disciples: 'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.'

The coming of Christ, thankfully is not like this. **Details of God's plan were leaked centuries before.** The Messianic prophecies, the intended actions of God, were very well briefed well ahead of time. For some it is comfort, for some it is warning, yet for so many other sadly it is an irrelevance.

There is of course a serious component to all of this, and not least because The Almighty has a previous track record of arriving in unexpected ways and unexpected times. Jesus reminds us of the Great Flood when the Earth was cleansed. **Back then the key point was a separation of those worthy and those unworthy.** In four Sundays' time, we shall celebrate that other great arrival, no less surprising because instead of great power, baby Jesus came in great weakness.

Many Christians, myself included, can recall a time when Christ arrived into their own lives, and when faith was confirmed. Perhaps without warning, or unexpected. **Are you surprised to be a Christian, or still a Christian?** Do you ever consider yourself against the huge majority and wonder why you are different?

Many of us in our quiet moments will sometimes feel that Jesus is right there with us: kneeling, listening, and taking our prayers to God the Father. Have you ever opened the Bible in a random place to find there the most relevant and targeted message that God seems to have directly aimed at you? Perhaps when standing here in church singing, or sitting listening, some words suddenly cut through and speak to you as if the very voice of God had singled you out. Christ may arrive for you at any point.

But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

It's clear here that Jesus's teaching is about a warning leading to repentance. **Jesus knew already that his entire work was to personify a fresh point-in-time when God would establish a whole new way of engaging with his creation.** We can barely imagine what kind of pressure and expectation he must have felt. It challenges every person since that time to make a decision.

This great new separation would be something like: *‘do you accept my Son as my great gift of love, or do you not accept him?’* Such a heavy question is not provided free of evidence though. God reveals himself as he guides us down the right paths with pointers all through our lives. **Be aware of his constant attendance through some of the ways we know:** through his word in scripture, through the love and good work of Christians and the church, through the sufferings of others and ourselves, through worship and the arts, I could go on. The pathway to faith, and beyond it is a maelstrom of God’s constant revelation. All the predictions were reliable. **God never seems to stop coming to us. It amazes me that people can reach the ends of their lives never having noticed.** Some just stand there and watch every opportunity go by.

The warning that Jesus brings here runs parallel to our whole lives. Never mind the date of the second coming or whether it will arrive in your lifetime, **because we all have a date that we certainly shall see.** The second coming is a big thing, and although we may not be around on the day, something just as big will be coming along for every one of us. **There will be a time when everything changes for us, when our lives come to an end.** After that there will be no more chances.

Repentance is not simply a case of divesting oneself of sin. The way we handle confession in worship is familiar to us – during the service we ask for God’s forgiveness and we are absolved and given assurance of sins forgiven. That is all to the good, but it can introduce the sense that confession in church is a sort of ‘utility’. **Regular gathering at the foot of the cross is certainly a part of repentance, but does not complete it fully.** Unfortunately, one of the weaknesses of liturgy is that it does sometimes seem like a process which leaves things complete or finished – ‘we came to church, we sank to our knees, and now we are done. Back next week.’

But true repentance I think is loaded with a deep and wide sense of one's ability to become separated from God. Yes, we turn away from our sin – that is true, **but it's the turning to Christ which gives repentance** its full value. **Repentance that is to be lived at all times.** There is a sort of spiritual proximity to God that comes into play – how near are we to God? **This idea of repentance as preparation, rather than reaction is at the heart of what Jesus teaches us today. Christians are repentance people.**

A good summary of it all is to be found in the word 'watchfulness'. But to watch and be ready is not to be static, like a rigid guard outside a royal palace. Indeed, those Jesus describes in his gospel are not static:

'Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and one will be left.'

Here the work of the day is being done in ordinary ways. These are the humdrum activities of life just like the ways we are all busy ourselves. Neither of these men or women may have been thinking much about God or being very watchful at the point of judgement, at that moment. Yet when the time arrives a separation is indeed made.

Those taken up to be with God are self selecting – it's those who have chosen to be watchful, it's those who have prepared, been repentant people, and do their best to walk with God. What will make the grade is the background of Christian life, a lived repentance and a sense of God being constant, and we always under him.

Do not live a reactive Christian life of unknowing - waiting for the final speech to see if you are a winner or loser in the cosmic budget. Get ahead of the predictions and speculations, be watchful in your soul expect no surprises. Live your repentance.

Amen