

November 19, 2023

Title: When is Jesus returning?

Matt 25:14

It's been almost 2000 years since Jesus ascended to Heaven. 2000 years since his promise that he would return in glory, as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. 2000 years since his promise to gather people from all tribes and nations around his throne. It seems like a lot of time has passed. A lot of people wonder if Jesus will ever return. Many people live their lives as if they do not expect Jesus to return. However, even though it may seem like a lot of time has passed, "Do not be mistaken!" Jesus and his second coming have not been cancelled. He delays for a reason. He delays for a reason. And a good reason for that. He delays because he is waiting for all those whom God has called to be born... to be born and become Christians. But while we are waiting, while we are waiting for that mystical number of Christians to be born, we might ask "Is there something specific that God wants us to do while we wait?" "Are we to just wait patiently for Jesus' 2nd coming?" "If so, does it really matter what we do, while we are waiting? Does it matter if we do anything at all?" After all, for those who put their faith in Christ are assured of a place in Heaven. We have our salvation. What more is there to do?

Our gospel lesson answers these questions with the parable of a nobleman and his three servants. In this parable, Jesus hints about His delay. And AS we understand the reason for the delay, we will also understand, OUR CALL for the coming years, OUR CALL until God calls us to be with him or until Jesus comes in Glory. Our parable... Matt 25 A master was leaving on a long journey. Before he left he summoned three of his trusted servants. To each one he gives some talents (A talent was large sum of money, about 20 years wages for a laborer, some large fraction of a million \$\$). He then orders the servants: "Put this money to work until I come back." "Earn something with it." After the master returns he summons the three servants. The first two servants, have invested his money, and have earned interest. They have been good stewards and developed the treasure they were entrusted to protect. They are commended by the master. The third servant however, has done nothing with the treasure that was entrusted to him, and he is punished for this. Now you might ask "why was he punished?" After all, he didn't lose the money. Everything that he was given he gave back. Why was he punished? Well, he was not punished because he failed to make money. Investing is a risk, and as with all risk, "there is a chance to win as well as lose." He was not being punished because he lost money or didn't make enough money. Rather, the reason why he was punished was because of disobedience. You see he was ordered to put his money to work. He was ordered to invest the master's money to see if he could make a profit. The command which he was given was NOT, "protect my money" The command was "Put this money to work until I come back." So, by burying the talent and not investing it, the servant was being defiant of the master's command. You even get a flavor of his disobedience in his words to the Master.

"I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown, gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground"

So the servant in disobeying the master was ultimately saying you don't deserve the harvest you don't deserve the interest on your money. In his defiance he did not do the work he was commanded.

The command was not "preserve my wealth" but rather "put it to work" This command has a spiritual lesson for us. Spiritually speaking, WE are the servants and Jesus is the master. As in the parable, Jesus has also left us, his servants for a period of time. He has promised that he would return. And until that time, we have been given a job to do. we have a mission. God has given each and every one of us time, talents and treasures which are gifts from God. The time we spend, every second we share with others, every moment of work and play is a gift from God. Our talents, the special abilities we have, what we are good at, our careers, are also gifts from God. Our treasures, the material riches which we have, are also gifts from God. None of what we own, is ours. They are gifts from God. God has charged us, to put our time, talent and treasures to work until Jesus returns. The challenge put before us by the parable is "will we simply bury our time, talent and treasures, and use them only for personal gain" "or will we use them to build God's kingdom?" God calls us to use our time, talent and treasure for His work.

What exactly is that work to be? As I had said before, there was a reason for the delay in his return. There is a reason for the delay in Christ's second coming. In fact, the reason for the delay in his second coming tells us "what our work is to be" tells us "what our mission is." 2Peter 3:9 tells us:

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance"

The reason for the delay in his second coming is that The Lord is waiting till all those whom he has called to be members of his kingdom have been gathered. The Lord is waiting till all those whom he has called from every tribe and every nation have been gathered into the church.

This now tells us our mission. This tells us what we are to be doing while we await Jesus' return. As members of his kingdom, we each have a job to do. As his church we have a mission... We're supposed to be gathering his people. We are to be about the task of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ... the good news that "God loves you and that through Jesus, you can live life with the comfort and hope, which comes from having God as your protector and friend." This is the reason why in the parable the third servant, who defiantly buries his treasure is so bad. The treasure which Jesus has left with us is his Gospel. We are not to bury the Gospel. We are not to keep it to ourselves, celebrating only our own salvation. Rather, we are to "invest it" invest it with others who have not heard about Jesus Christ.

When we had a preschool we used to sing a song "This little light of mine." Do you know it? Do you know the second verse? Hide it under a bushel "no" I'm gonna let it shine. Hide it under a bushel "no" I'm gonna let it shine. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. The preschoolers knew it. They understood what our mission is. They understood what it means to

invest the treasure which God has given us. The light of Christ is within us. Don't hide it under a bushel. Don't let Satan "poof it out" Rather, let your light shine all around the neighborhood.

The mission to which God has called Immanuel First is: to share God's love comfort and hope with all. Our Mission is about change. Our mission is about being active agents in that change. That's what a mission is all about. Because this is a sinful world, things are not as they should be. Not all humans love, worship, care, or have faith. This world is filled with people who have no meaning in their lives. They have no higher purpose than simply to please themselves. They hunger for a higher calling, but they have none. The world is not "what God created it to be." Therefore, change is needed. And we, Christians, are called to be active components in that Change. You must bring that higher calling to them. You can satisfy the need they have to know Jesus Christ. Our mission is to help people become "people who love, worship, care and have faith." We are to be the conduits through which the Holy Spirit works faith in others. And in doing so we change people from

"people do not have a relationship with God"
into
"people who have a relationship with God."

Mission – "what we do to bring about change in this world." Our mission is to use the resources which God has brought to us, in order to share His love comfort and hope with all.

What are some of the things we could do to share the Gospel with people, to be active agents of change. There were four steps:

Build a relationship
Ask about salvation.
Share the Gospel
Ask them to act

The final step, asking them to act, is vitally important. Some suggestions are

1. Pray with them
2. Give them one of our new out-reach business cards. How many people have given one out already? you can get more from the church office. I've already given out a bunch.
3. Ask them to read a bible or at least a tract. Give them a bible.
4. Invite them to church. If you do. There will be a better chance they will act upon your invitation if you ask for a commitment. I would challenge you to bring them or at least get a commitment to meet them at church.
5. Ask them to get baptized.
6. Ask them to join a Christian church (find one for them.)

God has richly blessed Immanuel First. God has richly blessed the people of our community through us. Next year, we will be celebrating that this church has been "sharing God's love, comfort and hope with all!" for seventy years. That's a long time to be proclaiming the Gospel. There are few who have been here since the beginning, since the beginning of Immanuel First,

that is. We praise God for the wonderful blessing you have been. But even for those who have been here only ten years, 5 years or even just one year, God has called each and every one of us to a great mission. God calls us to bring change into this world. God has given us a mission. To bring meaning to a world starving to hear a higher purpose in life. To share God's love, comfort and hope with all.

As you share the Gospel message with others I would like to remind you that the person you are talking to is not just "a person to evangelize". Think of them as your future brother/sister in Christ. maybe even your future "best friend." We have many Christian brothers and sisters who are not yet part of our family. We are still waiting for them to join. As we await the return of our Lord, make and develop relationships with our community. "Invite them to join our family!" As they come to know you, they will come to know our Lord. and they will know eternal life.