

Mark 13:32-37

Advent 1; December 3 & 4, 2017

Are you ready for the perfect Christmas?

Are you ready for Christmas? Perhaps, you are that type of person that can answer: *“Yes, I am.”* Maybe you are that person who has their Christmas letter all written and printed on the Christmas stationary. Your cards went into the mail on the day after Thanksgiving. Maybe you are the person who has all their Christmas shopping done. The gifts are all wrapped and ready to go for Christmas. The decorations are up at home and everything is ready. The tree is up and the music is playing. You look around your house and you say to yourself: *“I got this! I’m ready. Bring it on.”*

Or are you like the rest of us who admit that we are far from being ready for Christmas? We will not be ready tomorrow. All we can do is hope that we might be ready for Christmas on December 24. Are you ready for Christmas? Yet, we have this picture in our head of what a *perfect* Christmas would look like. Think of the money that is spent on Christmas gifts alone. This past week I heard that the average American spends about a \$1,000 on gifts. Once you get all those gifts, you have to travel to distribute them to your family members. You have to face the lines at the airports, and hope that you are not on one of the American Airline flights that are short of pilots. We try to have this Norman Rockwell picture of the perfect Christmas. Yet, what happens? We fall far short, don’t we? Isn’t it amazing that the season of the year that is supposed to bring peace on earth seems only to bring more chaos into our lives? Are you ready for the perfect Christmas? Let’s look at Jesus’ answer to that question.

Jesus was with his disciples in the temple at Jerusalem. It was Tuesday of Holy Week. He wanted to teach his disciples once again as to the “why” that he came to this world. He wanted them to know that he was going to suffer and die. He was going to rise and ascend into heaven. He was going to go away for a while, but he was going to come back. They were having some difficulty in understanding this. So, Jesus made it as simple as he could. **“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.”** There was a man who lived in a large house. He needed to go away for a while. He trusted his servants to take care of the house. He gave them their assignments.

Yet, isn’t it fascinating that with all the tasks that needed to be done, he singles out just one task and one person. He **“tells the one at the door to keep watch.”** He tells him to watch as if something could happen at any moment. He didn’t want this man to fall asleep. Jesus’ point is pretty simple in this story. He, of course, is that man that was going away on a journey. A week from now, he would have already died and arisen from the dead. It wouldn’t be long after that he would ascend back to heaven and leave them for a while. We are the servants. He has all his servants to take care of his Church. Even though this sounds easy, Jesus knew that it was not going to be easy. It would seem like the man was gone for a long time. The longer he was gone, the easier it would be to fall asleep.

Have you ever been driving late at night, and you begin to fight sleep? Maybe you’ve even closed your eyes for a second, and then with a jerk you open them. You know you have to stay awake. So, what do you do? You open the window and begin to blast the radio. Because the last thing you want to do is hurt yourself and your family by driving off the road. You will do everything you can to stay awake. So, how do we keep awake? How do we stay alert? How do we even know if we are ready for his return?

The answers to those questions center around that baby whose birth we celebrate in three weeks. *Christmas is telling you that you could never get to heaven on your own. God had to come to you.* He came to you. He grew up for you. He came to bring the perfect gift to this world. He brings you to trust in him. It was hard for the disciples to see all of that as they looked at Jesus in the temple that day. It would be even harder for them to see that when they would see him all bloody and hanging on a cross. He wanted his disciples to trust him. And so he gave them a promise: I **“will come back.”**

That sounds so easy, doesn’t it? *TRUST JESUS.* I have a confession to make this morning: That is hard for me to do some days. If you are like me, it isn’t as easy as it sounds. It’s so easy to let the little things of this world get in the way of the big picture. He says: I WILL COME BACK! The same Jesus, who dies for our sins, will come back. The same Jesus, who forgives MY sins, will come back. He has taken my sins away from me as far as the East is from the West. That’s the Jesus that is coming back.

As Jesus stood there in the temple that Tuesday, he wanted his disciples to understand just how much he loved them. He was willing to die for their sins. He would do all that it would take to save them. He would do everything so that we might be saved as well. Your sin has been paid for in full. Imagine a friend came to your house and you were not home. He tells you, *“Hey, I was at your house the other day, and I saw that one of your bills was due. You weren’t around, so I paid it for you.”* How would you respond? I suppose it depends on the size of the bill he paid. What if he paid off your entire mortgage? How would you feel? Maybe words could hardly express the thankfulness in your teary eyes. That’s why Jesus wants us to be **“Be on guard! Be alert!”** He doesn’t want us to fall asleep. This earth is not our permanent home. He wants to come back and take us home to heaven.

So, are you ready? Are you ready for the perfect Christmas? Jesus is. He came to this world in the perfect way. He came to live a perfect life. He came to die a perfect death to pay for your sins. He left us in the perfect way. He is preparing the perfect home for us in heaven. He will come back so that we can live with him in the perfect place forever. God bless your Advent preparations. Amen.