

## **“Be ready! What about it?” Mat 24:36-44**

**“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. <sup>37</sup> For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>40</sup> Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. <sup>42</sup> Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> But know this, that if the master 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. <sup>44</sup> Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**

This is the first Sunday of the new liturgical year. This is Advent time. Time when we remember the first coming of Christ and when we again meditate on His words regarding His second coming.

It's been already two millennia since Jesus Christ was born. Long time. Long, indeed. Entire world divides the time before the Christ and after the Christ birth. This event is the center of world's history. And how many generations had been waiting for this event.

Right after the Fall, right after human arrogance had broken relationships between God and humanity, God the Father gave His promise to Adam, that a descendant of woman will crush the head of Satan. When Cain was born Eve hoped that he was the one, whom God had promised. But it wasn't him. Instead, you know what happened... Cain killed his brother Abel.

Thousands and thousands of years passed and God Yahweh kept repeating His promise, that He will send Messiah, Savior, Redeemer, King, Servant, who will overcome the death, the sin and the devil, and who will bring all the faithful into God's Kingdom.

Two millennia ago, God fulfilled His promise. He fulfills all His promises, that's for sure. He sent His Son, true God begotten from the Father, and true man, born of virgin Mary, to live among us, to reveal to us the Father's loving and forgiving heart and to take all the sins and guilt of the world upon Himself. God fulfilled what He had promised. As always.

Today we read what Jesus was telling His disciples about His second coming. This is what Jesus said. We can't misunderstand it. "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." No one! Not the angels, not even the Son, but the Father only. These are plain words. Plain words in Greek, and plain words when translated into English as well.

But regardless of the clarity of what Jesus said, people have been tempted to figure out when this day is going to be. Many expected Jesus return already in the first century. Not a single century has passed without someone claiming that the day of the Lord is coming and will be here any minute.

The world is still here, we are still waiting for Jesus return. Why is He not coming yet? What is He waiting for? It's simple. He is not coming yet, for new and new children of God are brought into God's kingdom every day.

His patience is not over, regardless of how incredibly much evil we have brought and keep bringing into His good creation. He patiently waits for as many as possible people to be saved.

He waits for all those who are still far from Him, until there is the slightest chance to welcome them into His Kingdom. May be He waits until we'll bring the Gospel to all people in our lives. For we haven't done it yet...

The Father waits, for He knows that when the Son returns, there will be new heaven and new earth. Restored in its goodness, purified from all sin, evil and injustice, and prepared for the bride of Christ, for His Church, for us, for each of you.

But if we can't learn about the day when all of this happens, what can we learn from what Jesus was telling His disciples, from what He is still telling us today through His word?

I would propose that today we meditate upon **what Jesus urges us to do**, and how can we do it. What Jesus urges us to do, and how can we do it.

When Jesus told that no one knows the day and the hour, He said also that no one is going to miss His return. It will be like in the days of Noah, people were busy doing their own stuff, trying to satisfy their own desires and passions and they seemed to be safe. It really sounds like a good description of how people live today, doesn't it? Until ... the flood suddenly came and swept them all away. So will be the coming of the Son of Man... This day is coming. Our Lord has kept all His promises and He will keep this one as well.

Then comes Jesus advice to His disciples, and also to us. "Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." *Stay awake!*

“Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” *You must be ready!*

Stay awake and you must be ready! What does it mean for us? What are we required to do? It can be better understood if we know what Jesus second coming is about. What is going to happen. We can read it in the next chapter of the gospel according to Matthew.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'” (Mat 25:31-35) “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” (Mat 25:35-36)

But then He will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.” (Mat 25:41-43)

Impressive picture, quite frightening to be honest. He is coming to bring forth His Kingdom, but obviously not everyone will enter it. Will I? Will you? Who is going to enter it? How did we hear it read? Those who gave Him food, when He was hungry and drink when He was thirsty, those who clothed Him when He was naked and visited Him when He was sick? Right? Yes? Or no?

No! Of course not! That's true, this is how we often perceive what our Father in heaven expects from us. We think that God is looking for our good works, that we can show Him, or others, how moral and righteous people we have been, how nice lives we have lived. We have helped the hungry and thirsty, we have clothed the naked, and visited the sick... we are so good.

When we think this way, we have got it wrong. So wrong. We have made God look like us. For this logic works well for us. If you do this to me, then I'll do that to you. Deal. But this is not the way how true God builds relationships with us.

He doesn't require us to earn His love. He loves us first. As parents love and care for their children even before they are able to say or do anything remotely good, the same way God the Father loves and cares for us.

Let us look once more what exactly Jesus said. “Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you *who are blessed by my Father*, inherit the kingdom prepared *for you* from the foundation of the world.” (Mat 25:31-35) So, who will inherit the kingdom? Those who have done all these good works or ... yes, those, who are blessed by my Father.

Those who are blessed by God the Father. Not our running and striving to be good and moral persons in our eyes, or in eyes of others, but blessings of God the Father open for us heavenly doors. Father’s love, His blessings, His grace opens us His kingdom.

Yes, but what about this long list of good works which Jesus listed - feeding and giving to drink, closing and visiting, what about these? Didn’t He mentioned all these things? For we just read them.

Our problem is that we tend to confuse a cause with a result. We want to put our works as a cause and God’s gifts, His Kingdom among them, as a result. If we do this, then we’ll get that. We don’t want to accept God as God, we don’t want to admit that everything we have and everything we are, also every good thing we’ve ever done in our lives – that all of this we have received from our Lord as unmerited gifts. We want to be gods ourselves, we want to be in charge.

We want to have Him on the same level where we are. We want to negotiate with Him. We want to point to our life, to these few good things we have done among countless sins and we want to argue that we deserve, that we are entitled to receive His favor.

That’s so ridiculous. God is God and not one of us. He is Creator, He is the Lord of Universe. He gives us live, continually, He gives all our talents, He puts us in all our relationships, He creates opportunities in our lives, He encourages and helps us to live good lives.

We confuse the cause with the result. Our good works can’t earn God’s Kingdom. Quite contrary, when we learn about God’s grace, when we learn about His countless blessings, the we are inspired to serve others.

God’s love is the cause of everything good we do. Our good works, our selfless service to others comes from our assurance that God’s Kingdom is already ours, for we are blessed by the Father. It is already yours, think about it!

You see, His grace, His blessings are the cause for everything good that happens in our lives. When we understand it, when the Holy Spirit persuades our hearts and minds that God the Father loves us and has prepared for us His Kingdom, then we are moved to love others, to serve them as the Son of God serves us.

But old Adam doesn't want to admit that God is God and we are not. That He gives us everything... everything. For if He gives us everything, then He also can require from us everything. And this we want to avoid by all means. But that is what God actually requires - our undivided commitment, to use everything we have receive for the sake of others. That's our mission.

This is where our good works come in. God didn't created us just for our sake. He does not bless us only for our sake. He blesses us so that we can be blessings for others. This is not an option. We are created and blessed to life for others. Not to merit anything, but out of gratitude, as a natural response to the Father's love.

When Jesus described this second coming scene with God's chosen people on His right, He mentioned all the good things that they have done as the result of the Father's blessings. Do you know what they answered? With a true surprise they asked: "Lord, when have we done all of this?"

They didn't realize that they have done good things. How come?! For when they did something good, they were not looking at themselves... o, see, how good and moral person I am! No, they were looking at the needs of their neighbors. They didn't see their good works. They knew, that they were blessed by God and they wanted to be a blessing for others. That's how the Father's love transforms the world.

So, back to our question – what does Jesus command saying 'stay awake' and 'be ready'? What does He required us to do? He requires, if you will, to let our arrogance go, and to admit that God is God and we are not. He requires us to receive the Father's blessings. To acknowledge that everything, literary everything we receive from Him.

Especially here, in His house. God himself established the Divine service, so that He can come among us and bless us. Bless you! Here you receive His greatest blessings, when you hear His words, when you learn about His love towards you, when you are forgiven, when you receive good conscience before God, when your sins and sins against you are washed away, when you listen to Him you receive also the Holy Spirit.

What Jesus compels you to do is to receive God's blessings, so that filled with His goodness you can be a blessing to others. This is what it means to be awake and to be ready. Keep receiving God's gifts with grateful hearts, keep serving others with all you are and all you have, so that they can be blessed through you.

This way, even if you don't know when Jesus comes, you will be awake, and you will be ready to inherit His Kingdom.

Amen.