

## “Unexpected?!” Matthew 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. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 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, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 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. Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”**

There was something unexpected that happened in Latvia around this time of the year every year. Year after year. It was this unexpected ... first snow. Yes, it always caught our city councils off guard and unprepared.

“Unexpected first snow has again paralyzed the traffic in streets of our capital.” That’s how news outlets would report on what was happening. Unexpected. But, of course. It’s November or December. It is the beginning of winter. Every year winter has come with ... the first snow. Of course! Still... unexpected.

In our today’s reading Jesus also speaks about something unexpected. About the Day when He will return in His divine glory and grandeur. Up to this moment in the Chapter 24 Jesus was telling His disciples about the signs of the end times.

Now He turns His focus on the Day of His return. “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.” That’s quite something. Surely, we will be able to see the signs, but the Day... the Last Day will come unexpected.

“For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 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, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”

Fine, how was it in the days of Noah? “They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.” What can we read in these few simple words that describe this most tragic time in the history of mankind?

On the one hand these words help us to see the surprising and unexpected nature of the flood and also of the coming of the Son of Man. People were doing their usual stuff. Simply going about their daily businesses.

Then suddenly... unexpectedly... the flood happened. As if there were no signs, no indications whatsoever before, that something like that could happen. The flood caught everyone unprepared, for they just didn't see it coming.

This description almost begs the question: "Why did God do this?" Was that the angry God of the Old Testament? I guess we need to look a bit closer to what Jesus is saying, we need to understand what was going on before the flood.

We can read more in Genesis 6. "The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart." (Gen 6:5-6)

There is something terrifying, something chilling revealed with these simple words, – "They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." On their own, these are good things, nothing wrong with them.

In a way this sentence paints rather nice and harmonious picture. People seemingly happily going about their daily lives... as if there was nothing else, nothing greater and more significant than ... to satisfy their physical needs.

But when you pair this picture together with – "every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually" – then we get a different picture. Not one of innocent activities anymore, but of obtuse indifference to their Creator.

Isn't this rather fitting a description of our today's society? Where people are simply going about their daily lives, all in all rather busy trying to satisfy their bodily needs, and wants, and desires, and cravings.

At the same time rejecting, ignoring, sneering at, mocking the quiet and gentle voice of their Creator and Redeemer as He continually calls them to Himself. What a chilling stranglehold of spiritual indifference and complacency hidden under the disguise of these ordinary activities!

And we see it all around us. Too often. There are so many nice people. Going about their lives. Friendly. Social. Active. Involved. Committed to different causes. Many may actually self-identify as Christians.

Just one thing is missing. There is no place for God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit neither in their hearts, nor minds, nor in their lives. There is no place, no time, no need, no interest in knowing and being with the One, who gives them life and every breath and every heartbeat and everything ... every minute of every day. Just like in the days of Noah...

Unexpected?! How can the flood come unexpected? For hundred years Noah was building the ark and proclaiming what is to happen? Year after year people saw the next and the next stage in the building of the ark being completed.

Year after year Noah would speak on behalf of God Yahweh, calling people to repentance from their evil ways, from their indifference, warning about the day that was coming. It's not that they hadn't heard, it's just that they didn't listen.

It's not that they didn't know, it just that they couldn't care less. Why would they listen, why would they care?! Nothing like that had happened before. How could something like that happen?! It seemed impossible...

Perhaps they were friendly laughing about Noah and with fatherly understanding saying that: "He is not a bad dude, this Noah, he is just overly religious, that's just too much. The guy has just taken that stuff too seriously. He has gone nuts because of his faith."

And it was so "until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." How much like that it is also today?!

Perhaps you too know people who would have the similar sentiment towards you. "My folks, these Christians, are not bad people. For we all are spiritual. They just take things too literary, too seriously, that's just too much."

The Day will come unexpected. But how could that be?! Today the Gospel of Jesus Christ is being proclaimed around the world. In every continent, in every country, in every language, and using every possible media.

It is proclaimed face-to-face, the Bible is printed in almost every language, the message from Jesus is on radio, on TV, online, in your mobile, it is everywhere. It is almost impossible not to hear the voice of the Triune God and Jesus Christ.

"Return to me, my people! Shake off your spiritual indifference, turn away from your evil ways! Return to me! I am waiting for you... I am still waiting for you! I want to have you with me when I bring forth the New Heavens and Earth."

If only people had ears to listen, and eyes to see, and hearts to believe. But most of them simply go on about eating and drinking, about marrying and giving in marriage. Until ... unexpectedly the Day will come.

This is why Jesus is continually reminding us. "Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Surely, we could say even today that, perhaps, the Son of Man is not coming just yet...

It surely doesn't look like He is coming, right? No, not today. No, not this year... probably not that soon... Are you sure? This is exactly what Jesus was telling His disciples. It will happen unexpectedly. No one knows the day... we only know that it will come.

Therefore, be ready! But how can we be ready? What should we do? It seems that Jesus simply is reminding us about the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment. "You shall fear and love and trust in your God above all things." Do that and you are ready.

This is what we as Christians try to do day by day with the help of God's own Spirit. We do try to fear displeasing and saddening our gracious Father and our brother Jesus Christ, therefore, as Paul wrote to Romans – we try to “lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light”.

We do try to “live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy”. We do try to “make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires”. (Rom 13:11-14)

And also – we do try to love our God. For He keeps loving us even as we don't deserve and don't appreciate it. For He is our true Father in heaven, and from His hand we keep receiving everything we have and everything we are.

We do try to love our God, for He is our brother Jesus Christ, who left His divine splendor, became one of us and exchanged His life to ours, and now He comes and feeds us with His forgiveness and eternal life in His holy meal.

We do try to love our God, for He dwells with us, and not just dwells with us, but by indwelling in us, He embraces us into this wonderful divine fellowship with the Trinity, with the Father and the Son. As the Father is in Jesus, and Jesus is in the Father, so we may also be in them. (John 17:21)

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, let's be ready! I pray today that the coming of our Lord Jesus is not unexpected for us, but instead – the most expected and the most longed for a day of our life.

The day when all our hopes and all our dreams and all our longings are fulfilled by no one else, but by our Lord and our God Jesus Christ. As it was expected.

Blessed this Advent season! Amen.