

“So, so expected!” 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.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

The new Church year has begun. The Advent season. Which means that we will meditate on something so unexpected. On the return of the Triune God in His heavenly glory and divine holiness with all His powerful heavenly armies.

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

In our today’s reading Jesus also speaks about something unexpected. **“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 unexpectedly.

“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.” Now, how was it in the days of Noah?

“They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.” What picture can we see through 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 of the coming of the Son of Man. People were doing their usual stuff, going on about their daily businesses.

Not worried about anything. Then suddenly... unexpectedly... a 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. Really?! This almost begs the question: "Why did God do this?"

We need to understand what was going on before the flood. We can briefly read about the pre-flood situation 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)

The wickedness of mankind... There is something terrifying, something chilling revealed with these simple words, – **"They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage."** Can you sense it? These are good things, nothing wrong with them. On their own.

This sentence paints a seemingly nice and harmonious picture. People simply go on about their daily lives... as if there was nothing else, nothing greater and more significant than... to satisfy their physical needs and passions.

But then add to this picture – **"every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually"** – and a different picture begins to emerge. Not one of innocent mundane activities, but of obtuse indifference to their Creator.

Full stomachs, fat hearts, arrogant and self-centred, despising, rejecting the One who provided for them everything, who kept their hearts beating, and put daily bread on their tables, who continually called them to return to Himself, to the very source of life, to their Creator.

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

At the same time ignoring, sneering at, rejecting, 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!

We see it all around us and, if we are honest, in us as well. People are going about their lives. Friendly. Social. Active. Involved. Committed to different causes. Many may even consider themselves Christians. Just one thing is missing.

There is no or a very little place for God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their hearts, minds and lives. There is no place, no time, no need, no interest in knowing and being with the One, who gives us life and every breath and every heartbeat and everything ... every minute of every day. Just like in the days of Noah...

Unexpectedly?! How can the flood come unexpectedly? For a hundred years Noah was building the ark and proclaiming what is to happen. Year after year people saw the next and the next building stage 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 flood that was coming. It's not that they hadn't heard, they couldn't care less. Sure. Nothing like that had happened before. It seemed so impossible.

And today we all are like little Noahs, and the Church is the ark that will safely bring us through the coming flood of God's wrath and judgment to the promised New Creation. This is why we are here – to invite people on board, before it is too late, before God closes and seals the door and the flood begins.

What a great responsibility is entrusted to us, countless lives are at stake, we need to pray for God's help that we too have our opportunities to extend God's invitation: "Come, come onboard before it is too late! That Day is coming!"

We can imagine how people were friendly laughing at Noah: "He is not a bad dude, this Noah, he is just overly religious, just... too much. The guy has just taken that stuff too seriously. He has gone nuts because of his faith."

How much like that it is also today?! You too may know people who have a similar sentiment towards you. "My folks, my friends, these Christians, they are not bad people. They just take things too seriously, that's just too much."

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."** The Day will come unexpectedly.

But how could that be?! Today the Gospel of Jesus Christ is being proclaimed all 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.

"Return to me! Wake up from your sleep! Shake off your indifference! Turn away from your evil ways! Return to me! For I keep waiting for you! For you are important to me; I want you with me in New Heavens and New Earth. Yes, you!"

If only people had ears to listen, eyes to see, and hearts to believe. But most simply go on about eating and drinking, about marrying and giving in marriage, about working and resting and having fun. 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 make a wild guess that, perhaps, the Son of Man is not coming just yet...

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. We too tend to become complacent. Therefore, Jesus says: "You must be ready!" But how to be ready?

As we already reflected a couple of weeks ago, as Christians we have a unique perspective on the end times and on the Second coming of Jesus. For we are waiting for something magnificent, something grand and amazing to begin.

The great reunion! Can you remember a situation when you were waiting to meet someone you love and have been separated from for a while? The hour was coming when you were to see them again, when you will be able to embrace them again. Remember the feeling, the anticipation, the excitement?

Now multiply that by 10, by 100, by 1000. That is how your Lord and brother Jesus Christ is waiting for you; ready to welcome you, ready to embrace you, to show you around, to proudly introduce you: "See, this is my brother, this is my sister!"

The great coming home! Have you ever been waiting to move into your new home? Counting days when that will happen, waiting with eager expectations, impatient to finally be there? In your home. For this is what you are waiting for - your true home.

The great surprise! Have you been waiting for a loved one to arrive and have tried to prepare everything for them to bring them as much joy as possible? Now multiply that by 10, by 100, by 1000. For that is how Jesus is waiting for you; to surprise you with your new eternal home, which has prepared for you.

Whatever you can imagine, the reality will be much more beautiful. As Paul the apostle put it: **"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, God has prepared for those who love him."** (1 Cor 2:9) He had seen it.

Brothers and sisters, this is how we are to be ready. By longing for the day that is coming. Dreaming about it. Wondering about it. Anticipating it with our commitment as we strive to serve like little Noahs, inviting everyone onboard.

Meanwhile, joyfully building the ark, the Church, according to God's own instructions, as a pillar and buttress of the truth, so that she is ready to endure all the storms and waves of this hostile culture, capable of withstanding all the winds of deception and human cunning, making this divine ark a haven for everyone.

What are those instructions? You know them... Abide in Jesus' words, in the Father's house and in your homes, love one another as Jesus loves you, be together, pray for one another, carry one another's burdens, forgive, bless, comfort, encourage.

If we do so by God's grace, then His return will be for us the most hoped for, the most dreamed about, the most expected event. The day when all your hopes and dreams and all your longings are fulfilled by our Lord and our God Jesus Christ.

Just as He promised, and just as we expected. Blessed this Advent season! Amen.