

CLOSING THE LOOP

Week #4: The Way of Hope

“However, no one, not even the angels in heaven, nor I myself, knows the day or hour when these things will happen; only the Father knows. And since you don’t know when it will happen, stay alert. Be on the watch for my return.”

“My coming can be compared with that of a man who went on a trip to another country. He laid out his employees’ work for them to do while he was gone and told the gatekeeper to watch for his return.”

“Keep a sharp lookout! For you do not know when I will come, at evening, at midnight, early dawn or late daybreak. Don’t let me find you sleeping. Watch for my return!”

Mark 13:32-37 (TLB)

How do we “watch” for Jesus’ return?

- Be _____.

For you know quite well that the day of the Lord’s return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. When people are saying, “Everything is peaceful and secure,” then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman’s labor pains begin. And there will be no escape.

But you aren’t in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won’t be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief. For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don’t belong to darkness and night. So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-6 (NLT)

- Be _____.

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

Matthew 24:42-44 (NIV)

- Be _____.

So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”

He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"

Acts 1:6-11 (NLT)

Final Thought: Jesus can take my hopeless end and turn it into an _____.

For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.

1 Corinthians 11:26 (NLT)

Discussion Questions

1. Prior to hearing today's message, what was your understanding of Jesus' second coming?
2. In light of what you heard today, what are you hopeful for?
3. Think of someone in your circle of family and friends. Who can you share the hope of Jesus with this week?

Recommended Resources

- *Bright Hope for Tomorrow*, by Chris Davis
- *When Christ Comes*, by Max Lucado
- *Preparing for Jesus' Return*, by A.W. Tozer

(TLB) Living Bible

(NLT) New Living Translation

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Mark 13:32-37 (TLB)

How do we “watch” for Jesus’ return?

- Be ALERT.

For you know quite well that the day of the Lord’s return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. When people are saying, “Everything is peaceful and secure,” then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman’s labor pains begin. And there will be no escape.

But you aren’t in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won’t be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief. For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don’t belong to darkness and night. So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded.

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- Be READY.

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

Matthew 24:42-44 (NIV)

- Be ACTIVE.

So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”

He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

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Acts 1:6-11 (NLT)

Final Thought: Jesus can take my hopeless end and turn it into an ENDLESS HOPE.

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