

In 1987 George Tulloch (**pictures**) led his first of five expeditions to the spot where the Titanic sank in 1912. He and his crew recovered numerous artifacts. Before leaving the site, Tulloch's team set out to raise a 20-ton piece of iron. They were successful in lifting it to the surface, but a storm blew in and the ropes broke. The Atlantic reclaimed her treasure. Tulloch was forced to retreat and regroup. But before Tulloch left the bottom of the ocean, he did something curious. He descended back into the deep, and with the robotic arm of his submarine, attached a strip of metal to a section of the hull. On the metal he'd written these words, *"I will come back, George Tulloch."*

The Lord Jesus uttered similar words to His disciples: "I will come back." Jesus made a promise He intends to keep. We don't know how He will come for us. We really don't know why He'd come for us. We have our ideas and opinions. The only thing we can be certain of is that Jesus will come again. We have His Word on it. We can trust Jesus Christ to keep His Word. He is coming back. We just don't know when.

An often overlooked part of Communion is this same focus. As Paul gave the Church instructions about the Lord's Table, he included these words, *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death **until He comes**"* (1 Corinthians 11:26).

The return of Christ is something believers are to eagerly anticipate. The older I've grown, the more find myself echoing the words of the Apostle John at the end of the Book of Revelation, *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus"* Rev. 22:20 (KJV). These days I can hardly wait until the day dawns when Jesus will return to take me to that place where I'll always be with Him...where there will be no more sickness or death or tears or good-byes.

When life becomes stressful, as it often does – I just want to go Home. This wonderful promise is a source of strength and comfort. It's a promise that God has made repeatedly. Just as the Old Testament abounds with prophecies of Jesus' first coming, the New Testament overflows with promises of His return. Future events like the 2nd coming of Christ are mentioned over 300 times in the New Testament alone.

However, we should note that Scripture teaches that Jesus' Second Coming will be very different from His first. The first time He entered our world in a stable in an obscure village with only a handful of witnesses. When He comes back, people all over this globe will see it. In Matthew 24 Jesus described His return and said, *"...all the nations of the earth...will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."* (vs. 30) Revelation 1:7 says, *"...every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him."* 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 says, *"For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God..."*

There will be no doubt on the minds of anyone on this planet as to what has happened when the King of Kings reappears. Thoughts of Jesus' return and all the events leading up to it cause people to experience a wide variety of feelings. Some of us are uncomfortable at the thought. We're fearful of wars and rumors of wars and antichrists and Armageddon. Others entertain feelings of denial. They'd rather not deal with thoughts of Jesus' return. Many are disappointed when they envision the end of the age coming before they've had a chance to live out their lives. Still others are the opposite of afraid or disappointed when they think of Jesus' return. They're obsessed with thoughts of the event, consumed with charts and codes and "you-better-believe-it prophecies."

People experience many different feelings when they think of this promise that someday...perhaps even today...Jesus will return. How does God want us to feel about this promise? How does He want us to live in light of the truth of Jesus' return? First of all....

1. God wants us to be at peace when we ponder the Second Coming. Our Heavenly Father doesn't want Christians to be afraid or fearful. Our Heavenly Father gave us these words of the fulfillment of this promise to bring us a deep sense of happiness.

Remember Jesus' words in John 14? He was talking with His disciples about this and when He noticed their distress, He said, *"Don't let your hearts be troubled..."* Max Lucado (**picture**) writes, *"Issues like the millennium and the Antichrist are intended to challenge and stretch us, but not to overwhelm [us with anxiety] and certainly not to divide us. For the Christian, the return of Christ is not a riddle to be solved or a code to be broken but rather a day to be anticipated."*

How is it possible for us to face the end of time calmly? Let's be honest, according to Scripture, the end of the world seems like a very scary time. The book of Revelation talks about a tribulation and a one world religion and earthquakes and calamities. How can we face all of that with any degree of calmness?

Christians can have a peace about all this because God's Word assures us that no matter what happens in the end times, when it is all over God will win. Referring to the day Jesus returns, II Peter 3:12 says, *"That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat...."* It goes on to say, *"But in keeping with [GOD'S] promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."* You and I can

have a serenity about Jesus' return and the events leading up to it because we know the end of the story. We know how the latter days will turn out.

In his book, *When Christ Comes*, Max Lucado (**pictures**) tells of a time when, as a little boy, he sang in the Odessa Boys Choir. In the second year of his membership in this group, the choir was enlisted by a local junior college drama department to play the part of the Munchkins in their production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Lucado was to assume the role of a member of the "Lullaby Guild" and he took his role very seriously.

But Lucado had never heard of *The Wizard of Oz* nor had he seen it on TV because he was always at church on Sunday nights when it was broadcast. And since they rehearsed apart from the rest of the cast (until the night of the dress rehearsal), well, he thought that the Odessa Boys Choir was the cast and that the parts they rehearsed were the entire story. He assumed the play ended with him and three other Munchkins stepping forward as he sang, "*On behalf of the Lullaby Guild, we wish to welcome you to Munchkin Land.*"

Imagine how he felt when they were finally on stage with the rest of the cast, and after he sang his little solo...instead of applause and curtain calls...there came a puff of smoke and the cackle of a wicked witch running from stage right to stage left, cape flying and waving her wand menacingly! He said he didn't have to act afraid! He was literally terrified!

Of course he wouldn't have been if he'd read the entire script. But we can make the same mistake in life that Lucado made on stage that day. If we aren't acquainted with the end of the "script," we can grow fearful during the "play of life."

Terms like "*Armageddon*" and "*Lake of Fire*" and "*Beast*" are scary. Watching the news at night and hearing reports of riots or the latest war breaking out, or of the amazing increase of earthquakes and devastating freak storms never seen before can cause us a great deal of worry. News reports like this match perfectly with Jesus' description of the end times in Matthew 24:21 when He said, "*...there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now-and never to be equaled again.*" Things like this can cause us a great deal of anxiety.

Certainly, those who don't know the Lord have reason to be anxious in these seemingly end times. But Christians have no need to fear. They only need to read the end of the story which God has lovingly included in Scripture. The "last act" says that we end up with God in the paradise of Heaven while Satan and his demons end up in a lake of fire along with the beast to be punished day and night forever (Rev. 20:10).

God hasn't kept the ending a secret. He wants us to see the big picture. He wants us to know that He wins. He wants us to know that the evil we witness on the stage of life is not as mighty as we might think. Jesus said, "*In this world you will have tribulation,*" but He also said, "*be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" (John 16:33). Not "Will overcome" but "I HAVE overcome." The Lord Jesus spoke of an accomplished deed. The battle is over. The curtain has fallen.

Things may get a little rough as we approach the end times, but even Satan knows how things turn out. Revelation 12:2 says, "*He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.*" So we CAN be at peace when we consider the day Jesus will return. There is nothing for Christians to fear when it comes to the fulfillment of this promise. Another thing that God wants us to feel as we contemplate Jesus' return is **trust**.

2. God wants us to trust Him for the timing of this wonderful event. Even though Jesus pointedly told His first disciples that the date or timing of His return was basically none of their business (Acts 1:7), for 2,000 years many of His disciples have repeatedly put aside serving Christ and sharing the good news of His love with a lost world so that they could attempt to calculate the day and the time that Jesus would return.

In the 1960's a group of people in a Los Angeles suburb gathered on a roof-top early one chilly morning. The wind whipped the white-bed sheets in which they were robed and a newspaper photographer turned his camera toward the sky. They were there to greet the Lord when He came down from heaven because, according to their leader's schedule, this was when the great event was to occur.

Needless to say, after they waited until some of their group almost caught pneumonia and still there was no trumpet call from on high, they began to slip away to their homes. This all began when a self-styled prophet multiplied his own age by the number of his children, threw in the number 666 from Revelation, divided that number by the number of puppies in a litter their dog had, and came up with a date...on which he said the Lord would certainly return. The amazing thing is that, instead of getting this guy some help...some people actually believed him.

However sincere these people may have been, they were flying in the face of Scripture. As we read earlier, it is not for us to know the "*times or seasons.*" According to Matthew 24:36, Jesus Himself said that He did not know the day or hour of His coming. Yet in spite of this some people like this crowd from L.A. have persisted in trying to know more than Jesus.

The founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses set the date of Jesus' return three times and today that group claim Jesus has returned but it was invisibly so no one sees Him. In the year 999 A.D. many thought the dawn of the new millennium

would be the beginning of the end of time. Many others were wrongfully proclaiming that the world would end when 2000 rolled around.

Perhaps the reason so many of us are preoccupied with the exact date that this promise will be fulfilled is that, like little children, we have a tough time waiting for good things.

When my children were small, one of the first questions they'd ask when we loaded up and headed off for a visit at their grandparents is "How much farther?" How do you answer that question when you are dealing with someone who doesn't understand concepts like time and distance?

I could have said to Charity, Ben or Aaron, "Well, it's 300 miles from here to East Lansing, Michigan." But miles mean nothing to a child. If I did they'd have asked, "What's 300 miles? How far is that?" At this point I could go technical and say, "Well, a mile is 5280 feet so 300 miles equals 1,584,000 feet," Four words into that sentence and they'd simply ask again, "How much farther?"

Because the mind of a child is blissfully free of things like mile markers, they don't understand things like that. At this point I could get creative and speak in terms they do understand and Jane did. She'd tell them, "It's 10 Mr. Roger's programs." For a while that would work but sooner or later they'd ask again, and sooner or later all parents eventually say, "Just trust me. You enjoy the trip and don't worry about the details, like how long it takes. I'll make sure we get there okay." And we mean it. We don't want our kids to sweat the details. This is just what Jesus has done for us.

Just prior to His crucifixion, He told His disciples that He would be leaving them. In John 13:36 He told them, "*Where I am going you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.*" Peter spoke up and asked, "*Lord why can't I follow you now?*" Then in a reply that reflects the tenderness of a parent to a child Jesus said, "*Don't let your hearts be troubled. TRUST....trust in God and trust in ME...I will come back and take you to be with Me so that you may be where I am going.*"

In other words Jesus was saying, "You do the trusting and I'll do the taking." And that's exactly what God wants us to do. Our minds aren't equipped to handle concepts like eternity. We're not "old enough or wise enough" to understand a world with no boundaries of space and time. So God asks us to trust Him for that.

When it comes to Jesus' return, He wants us to leave the timing to Him. This doesn't mean that God wants us to forget about His return or put it totally out of our minds. No, in fact a third feeling or attitude that He wants us to embrace as we contemplate His return is....**readiness!**

3. God wants us to live lives so that we're always ready for His return.

If we knew that He would come say, November 1, 2020, then many of us would probably ignore the things of God until October 31, 2020. God wants us to live as if Jesus could return at any moment. As Matthew 24:42 says, "*Keep watch, [BE READY] because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.*"

In his book, *The Road to Armageddon*, Charles Swindoll (**pictures**) shares about working his way through college in a large machine shop. One of his co-workers was a man named "Tex." Working in a plant like that meant that his time was governed by the shrill blowing of a huge whistle. It would blow to tell him when to start work and another time to remind him when it was time for lunch, and again at the end of the day to inform all employees that it was QUITTIN' TIME.

Swindoll noticed that Tex was ready to go home before anyone else. He would always have his lunch box and coat handy, and was out the door at the end of the day before anyone else. One day Swindoll asked him about this and Tex replied, "Sonny, let me tell you something. I stay ready...to keep from gettin' ready. I stay ready for quittin' time."

You and I need to live like Tex — always ready for the time when, not a whistle but a trumpet will blow to signal that it's "quittin' time" on earth.

C.S. Lewis (**picture**) said, "*It is the second coming of Christ that is the medicine our condition especially needs. The great thing is to be found at one's post as a child of God, living each day as though it were our last, but planning as though our world might last a hundred years.*"

God wants us to always be ready for His return, which leads to the fourth way that God wants us to respond to the fact that Jesus will return one day.

4. God wants us to serve Him with an attitude of urgency. Immediately before Jesus ascended to heaven He commissioned us to, "*be His witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*" (Acts 1:8). We have a critical task to complete before He returns. The clock is ticking. In John 9 Jesus said, "*We must do the work of Him Who sent Me while it is day. Night is coming, when no one can work.*"

There's an urgency here. In a very real sense, we're on a sinking ship. That's why we must use every possible opportunity to share the good news of God's love. In II Timothy 4:2 Paul says that we are to share our faith "*in season and out of season*"...when it's convenient and when it's not.

Evangelism must be a priority in the life of every Christian. When the day of Christ finally does dawn, we will never regret having attempted to share our faith with someone who is lost.

Thanks to Steven Spielberg most of us have heard of Oskar Schindler (**pictures**) and the powerful movie, *Schindler's List*. During WWII, this German businessman used his factory as a haven for 1100 Jews....Jews that he saved from Hitler's gas chambers. At the end of the film there's a scene in which Schindler prepares to leave his factory running from the advancing armies of the allies. And, as he leaves, the Jewish factory workers line both sides of the road to thank him. One presents him with a letter signed by each person, documenting his deed. Another gives him a ring, formed out of the gold extracted from a worker's tooth. On it is carved a verse from the Talmud, "*He who saves a single life saves the world entire.*"

At this point they presented him with a gift and he showed emotion for the first time in the film as he leaned toward Isaac Stern, the factory foreman, and says with a low voice, "*I could have done more.*" Pointing toward a car he could have sold, he says, "That would have released ten prisoners." The gold pin on his lapel would have bribed an official to release two more. And in that moment, Schindler's life is reduced to one value. Profit is forgotten. The factory doesn't matter. Only one thing counts – people, only people.

When Jesus comes back, we'll feel the same way. We won't wish we'd had more vacations. We won't regret that we didn't own a bigger house or get a bigger promotion at work. All that will matter is people. We'll wish that we'd witnessed more, shared the gospel more, worked harder to lead more to make that decision that makes anyone **ready** for Christ's return.

Scripture is clear as to how God wants us to feel about the return of His Son. He wants Christians to be at **peace**. He wants us to draw **hope** from this promise. He also wants us to **trust** Him for the timing. He wants us to live in such a way that we are always **ready** for His return.

While we are waiting, He wants us to do all we can to lead more and more to a personal faith in Christ. Are you? When was the last time that you shared with someone how Jesus died on the cross to save them from their sin? When was the last time that you shared the gospel with someone?

Now, before Jesus ascended to Heaven He gave us a tool, timepiece of sorts to help us mark the days until He comes back. I'm referring to this ordinance that we call the Lord's Supper. It is an amazing time piece for it takes the past and the future, and it binds them together. Remember Jesus said that, "*As long as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.*"

As we partake of this ordinance, let me encourage all Christians present today to join us. Even if you're not a member of this church, join us in this time of remembering the past and anticipating the future. If you are His, this is Yours.

Conclusion: One of my favorite preachers from yesteryear is F.B. Meyer. F.B. Meyer once asked D.L. Moody (**pictures**), "What is the secret of your success?" Moody replied, "*For many years I have never given an address without the consciousness that the Lord may come before I have finished.*"

If Jesus were to come back today....November 1, 2020, would YOU be ready? Are you absolutely certain that there's been a time in your life when you have said, "I receive the Lord Jesus as my Savior. I accept the gift of salvation that God has offered. I believe He died for my sins. I believe He rose from the dead and I want to give Him my life."

Because unless you've done this, unless you've made this commitment-then the return of Jesus IS something to be feared...even dreaded.

So, if you've never prayed that prayer then I encourage you to do so today. God may be tapping you on the shoulder, drawing you to trust Christ as your personal Savior today. If you don't know Him, you can. He died for you. He loves you. Have you committed your life to Him and trusted Him as your personal Lord and Savior?