

Text: Revelation 7:15-17
Theme: Maybe Tonight, Lord?

November 4, 2018

How many of you have ever been eager, anxious, excited, or just couldn't wait for a particular day or event to arrive? When we were kids, it was our birthday or Christmas. As we got older, it was our driver's license, our first car, or opening day of deer season. Whatever the event, as we observe All Saints' Day this morning, we focus on the return of Christ, on that moment when we can join all the saints in heaven. As our world deteriorates around us, our question becomes our prayer, "Maybe tonight, Lord. Maybe tonight!"

I. Tonight could be the night. A. Yet, sometimes, as His saints, we fail to remain ready. 1. We're not ready because we're too focused on finishing. How many of you have a written or mental "to do" list? Sometimes, we have so many things on our list that we could never get them all done! For many, if Christ returned tonight, we'd say, "Lord, can you give me a bit more time. There are some things I haven't had a chance to do yet." It sounds crazy and ridiculous, but, when we give it some thought, we realize, much to our disliking, that we're too focused on finishing, so focused that being ready to leave isn't at the top of our list.

2. We're not ready because we forget what's coming. How many times a day do you think about eternity, about how different life will be one day? By comparison, how many times a day are you frustrated, disappointed, or exhausted? Living in this hectic world, we're always on the run. Demands. Expectations. School activities. Sporting events. Hurry, hurry, hurry. And while we're doing all that hurrying, we're thinking that someday we will finally catch up, that someday we will get ahead of the rat race. But it never happens. When we're stuck in rat race mode, we forget. We forget that all this is temporary, that the best is just around the corner.

3. We're also not ready because we've stopped expecting. How long do you expect something to occur before you finally say, "I guess that's never going to happen?" How many prayers have you stopped praying because, in your mind, God has stopped listening? We don't want to admit it, but you've been there. I've been there. We wait and wait and wait. We pray and pray and pray and nothing. So we stop waiting; we stop praying. Christ's return often falls into that category. Let's face it. How much worse can this world get? How much longer will He allow all this before He says, "Done"? When answers don't arrive, it's easy to stop expecting.

B. In the midst of all our unreadiness, what prompts us, as His saints, to pray with fervency, "Maybe tonight, Lord?" 1. We're prompted by the assurance of eternal protection. John says, "He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His presence." Fifty years ago, it wasn't uncommon to have winter storms where you needed a rope from the house to the barn so you didn't get lost when you went out to milk the cows. Maybe we don't get those types of storms today, but we can create our own list of life's storms. Yet when Christ returns for His saints, He will say to every storm, "Gone forever. Never will it return again!"

2. We're prompted by the realization that we will never be lacking. John's picture language is beautiful, "They shall hunger no more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat." "Never again" are spectacular words as we anticipate the return of Christ. Never again will you be lacking any daily needs, feel inadequate,

unqualified, or unprepared. Never again will you face exhaustion, fatigue, stress or weariness. Never again will you have questions that have no answers. When we think about all the things that will never occur again, all the worrying that will never occur, it makes us eager to pray with greater fervency, "Maybe tonight, Lord."

3. We're also prompted by the confidence that the battle is over forever. How many battles have you faced? If you could make a complete list, how many health battles, stress battles, fatigue battles, work-related battles, weariness battles have you faced? If we made the list, we'd be exhausted before we finished our list! But there's good news, great news! When Christ returns for His saints, He will stand on every battlefield that we face and say, "The end. No more!" And, in that moment, life will change dramatically as we lay down our weapons forever. "Come, Lord Jesus, come!" What more can we say as we realize how different life will be?

4. We're prompted by the reminder that He will be our eternal Shepherd. "For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd." I haven't actually raised sheep, but I know that there are smart sheep and there are the other sheep. The smart sheep choose to trust their shepherd and, because of that, life is dramatically different for them. As we remember that we have an eternal Shepherd, we, as wise sheep, realize we have nothing to fear. Nothing and no one will harm us. We will never be lacking, never afraid, never worried, and never miss a night of sleep because we believe without any doubt that our perfect Shepherd has it all under control.

5. We're prompted by the assurance that He will guide us. John writes, "He will guide them to springs of living water." What's the purpose of a hunting guide? They scout out the area, locate the trophy bucks, and set you in that perfect spot so that you can be on the front page of the Star News. Our God is our eternal life guide. When He returns, He will take you to that perfect spot where you will enjoy perfect peace, perfect harmony, perfection in every sense of the word. When we know that's where He will lead us and that's what we will enjoy, we're all the more eager to say, "Bring this world to an end, Lord. I'm ready for perfection!"

6. We're prompted by the realization that there will be no more tears in heaven. How many gallons of tears are shed in our country every year? How many spoonfuls of tears have you shed in your lifetime? Imagine, imagine waking up tomorrow morning to no more tears, no more reasons for tears. Imagine what your life would be like right now if all pain, sadness, heartache, disappointment, frustration, fear, and stress suddenly vanished never to return. As God's saints on this side of heaven, we have every reason to say, "Tonight, Lord? Tomorrow, Lord? I can't wait to enjoy no more tears in heaven!"

7. Anticipation - we know all about it because we've been there, done that. Yet, as we eagerly anticipate the return of Christ, we pray and keep on praying with great fervency, "Maybe tonight, Lord? Maybe tonight?" Amen.