

I Will Come Again!

by Carl Armerding

The Lord promises to come again and receive us unto himself, and we will be with him where he is, in his father's house.

Duration: 39:09

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 14:1-6, John 17:24

Topics: "Second Coming"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by expressing gratitude for the fellowship and appreciation from the audience. He then shifts the focus to the topic of the coming of the Lord, referencing John 14:1-6. The speaker shares a personal anecdote about a sunset and relates it to the anticipation of Christ's return. He emphasizes that God not only saved our souls but also gave us a standard of living through the Ten Commandments. The speaker concludes by highlighting the importance of following Jesus as the truth and the example for our daily lives.

Transcript

I would like to thank the choir for this very wonderful number and for the thought that it brings into my mind. Inasmuch as we are not able to continue and finish this Book of the Acts, I was just wondering how well this has fitted in to the picture, because you know, so much of the later chapters of the Book of the Acts are taken up with Paul's journey on the sea, on the Mediterranean, and the storm that they had there, and how graciously God brought them all through. I wish also to thank the assembly here for bringing me here, especially Mr. Willie, for it was he who wrote me to begin with.

I don't know who initiated it, whether it was my telephone call or whether it was his letter, but anyhow, we got together on this matter of coming over here for a couple of weeks. We thank God for the strength that he's given us to do this. I'm very frank to tell you that I don't think I would have lasted two weeks with two meetings a day, but I'm very thankful that the Lord has given strength.

There were one or two times when I felt like it might not work out till the last night, but it has. We thank God for that. We thank God for your sweet fellowship and for your remarks and your words of appreciation, all of which we lay at the feet of the Lord Jesus, who alone is worthy.

Now, for our last subject, I'm going to do something different tonight. I never like to have a series of two weeks without speaking at least once about the coming of our Lord. So tonight I'm going to ask you to turn

to the well-known fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel.

John's Gospel, chapter fourteen. The first six verses. Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there you may be also. And whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know.

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way? And Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. I take it that most, if not all, of you are aware of the fact that these chapter divisions which we have in the Bible were made merely for our convenience, and they're not by divine inspiration.

Sometimes the division comes at a point where you can say, well, this is really a break in the subject. Now, this is for our convenience, and it's very nice when we want to look up a passage, and especially in the concordance, to have the chapter and verse. But sometimes I think this robs us of some of the background of the chapter with which we're dealing, and I believe that's particularly true of this chapter.

I know there have been various explanations as to why the Lord Jesus said on this occasion, Let not your heart be troubled. Many people think he's thinking of the future and preparing his disciples for his absence. But I rather think that you find a reason back in the previous chapter, because in the latter part of that chapter you have two very sad revelations.

One is that Judas Iscariot, who had been with the Lord all those years as an apostle, was going to betray the Lord. And Peter, who claimed to love him better than any of the others, was going to deny him. These are the subjects of the latter part of John 13.

And I'm persuaded that this was the reason why, when this was made known to this apostolic company, this is the reason why the Lord said, Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, you trust God. You can't trust men, but you can trust God, and I want you to trust me.

I believe that's the real force of this. And you will notice, too, beloved, that it's his concern here is for our hearts. And this is true of so much of our Christian faith.

I have frequently said it doesn't take brains to be a Christian. Now, that doesn't mean that it isn't a good thing to have brains. But I'm pointing out to you that it doesn't take brains to be a Christian, but it does take heart.

And again and again, both in the Old and New Testaments, we have this very thought. The Old Testament, God says, My son, give me thy heart. Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

And when we come to the New Testament, with the heart man believeth, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. And so the Lord is concerned with our hearts. He's concerned with the center of our emotions and our affections, our love.

And he's speaking about that here. And he wants that heart to be at perfect peace when he says, Let not your heart be troubled. You trust God, and I want you to trust me.

And incidentally, our Lord is here claiming equality with God. I couldn't stand up here tonight and say, Do you believe in God? You say, Why, of course I do. That's why I'm in this service.

Suppose I were to add, which, of course, I would not. But suppose I were to say, Well, then, trust in me, too. You can see that anyone who makes a statement like this is putting himself on a level with God, and he is God.

And that's exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ is doing here. He's claiming equality with God when he says, Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me.

And this is not a word to the unsaved. This is a word to those who have already trusted the Lord. You know the mischief of it is, we claim to trust the Lord for the salvation of our souls, but sometimes we can't trust him for tomorrow morning's breakfast.

And I think this is indicated by the way in which we go after our social security in one thing and another. Now I mustn't say too much against this, because I receive my social security checked every month, and thankful for it. But I'm thankful I'm not dependent upon the United States government, because it could fail.

Other countries have failed. Other countries have gone up to the top, and they go down to the bottom. One has only to read history to see how true that is.

And we are not going to be any exception to the rule. We Americans, some of us, may live long enough with the Lord Charities to see our country go down, down, down. Already we have seen three little nations--Cuba, North Vietnam, the Viet Cong, and North Koreans--are able to do things to this great country that you never would have thought of.

All these are indications to me that we have already--we're on the descent. We're down. And how much longer we can depend on a government that now is talking about taking away the gold reserve back of the American dollar? And what have you got left? Nothing but the say-so of the government.

If you have in your purse tonight a silver certificate which still says, this certifies that there is on deposit in the treasury of the United States one silver dollar, you've got a rare article, because they've called them in. And what you and I have now, if we have paper money in our pockets, is a Federal Reserve note which has just the say-so of the government. But here is something which we really can depend on.

And I remember, my dear father, when I was leaving for the first time to go to the mission field. I was a very young man at the time, and my father said to me, Well, son, I wish I had a large sum of money, or a sum of money, he put it that way, so that you would be relieved of all financial anxieties, say, for the next year. But he says, I can tell you one thing.

I have been trusting the Lord, and he named the number of years, and he's never failed me yet. He never will. And my dear father's words came back to me again and again, especially when there were times of trial on the mission field.

This wonderful faith and trust in this blessed one. Now he also gives us further reason to trust him, because he tells us there's a future in store for us. And he immediately calls this by the most heartwarming name that you can think of, when he refers here to his father's house.

You know, we have such vague ways of referring to such things as this. Even those of us who consider ourselves somewhat instructed Christians, we talk about the beautiful isle of somewhere, and the sweet by-and-by. Yes? But the Lord doesn't use that term here.

He doesn't say, and the sweet by-and-by. He says, in my father's house. And as our Scotch friends would say, this warms the cockle.

You know, there's something about this. In my father's house. In my father's house are many mansions, or abiding places.

We get the idea from our English word, mansions, that this is--that the Lord is speaking here of some palatial residence. I do not doubt it will be palatial. But that's not the real meaning of the word.

The first syllable of this word, mansion, M-A-N, is the same as the second syllable in the word remain. It has the idea of an abiding place, where you'll never have to change your address. Yes? We thank God for that.

Never have to move again, once we get there. And this is what he's holding up to. As you said, there are many of these there.

There's lots of room there. I'm certainly going--not going to share the opinion of a preacher to whom I listened down in New Zealand some years ago. We came home from our morning meeting, and while my wife was getting the dinner ready, I switched on the radio to see what was going on in Australia.

Australia twelve hundred miles west of where we were living in Wellington. And I happened to tune in on a man who evidently had been educated either at Oxford or Cambridge, and his English was faultless. It was a pleasure to listen to him speak.

He was dealing with this portion of scripture. And when he came to these many mansions, he said, Of course there shall have to be many mansions in the Father's house, because some of us are poets, and some of us are preachers, and some of us are painters, and he might have gone on and said some of us are plumbers, just to keep up the alliteration. And of course we shall have to have a mansion suited to our daily avocations.

And about that time I let go with a great big guffaw. What's so funny about that? Well I said, My dear, it really isn't funny, because I don't think I would enjoy living all through eternity with all the preachers I've known, all boxed up in one box. No, I don't think that's the meaning of it.

The Lord is telling us that there's plenty of room there, many mansions. And then he goes on to say, And if it weren't so I would have told you. I wouldn't have allowed you to indulge the false hope.

And then makes this tremendous statement, for I believe that this is the very heart of this thing tonight, when he says, I go to prepare a place for you. Now I don't think that this place is outside of the Father's house. But I look upon it as a place of special affection and love that the Lord is speaking of here in that Father's house.

And the preparation, I have no doubt in my own mind, refers to that which was immediately before him, his death upon the cross. I can think of no other thing that could fit into this picture tonight like the cross of Christ, which is all the preparation you and I need to go and dwell in these wonderful places, in this

wonderful place that the Lord has prepared for us. You don't need any other preparation than that.

If I'm speaking to someone tonight who is not yet prepared for that prepared place, I beg of you, my friend, don't put it off. Because this might be the last opportunity you have for this. And how true, how important are those lines that I've quoted so many, many times in the connection with this, Tomorrow's sun may never rise to bless thy long-deluded sight.

This is the time. Oh, then be wise, thou wouldst be saved. Why not tonight? Why not tonight? To say that the Lord has been preparing it all these hundreds of years since he went home to glory means, of course, that those who have been going up there to his presence are going up to an unfinished residence, and I can't accept that.

So I come back to what I've just now suggested to you, that when our Lord said, I go to prepare a place for you, he's talking about the work that he was about to accomplish upon the cross of Calvary. And this is all that he had between him and his coming again, because he says, if I go and prepare a place for you, I'll come again. You notice he doesn't put anything else in here.

He doesn't say until a certain chain of events have taken place, but if I go and prepare, I will come again. Just like that. So that it becomes an immediate hope, even from the beginning of our Christian era, this becomes an immediate hope of the Church, and it is such tonight.

We're not looking for the fulfillment of any prophecies. We're glad to see certain things taking shape, because they indicate to us that the end of our pilgrimage is near. But this is not what we're looking for tonight.

We're waiting for the Lord to come. And this is more important than waiting for a certain event to take place. If we go to an airport and we see people sitting there, and you say, are you waiting for a certain plane? Or are you waiting for a certain time to come? No, I'm waiting for somebody.

I'm waiting for some person. This is it. What does it matter whether it's a DC-8 or whether it's a DC-3? You're looking for the person that's coming.

And so it is with us, dear friends, we're waiting for God's Son from heaven. And it's put in just those words in the Epistle of Thessalonians, isn't it? They turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven. And so this is it.

He says, I go to prepare, I'm coming again. And I'm so glad that in some translations they have kept this idea of the present. You notice in our English translation the Lord says, I will come again, future tense.

But as a matter of fact, in the original language, this is what we call a present participle. That is, I am coming again. I remember discussing this one morning with my teacher of Greek.

It was a snowy morning, and I was the only student that showed up in that class. It was a rather small class, but I was the only one that managed to make it through. Usually we recited about five minutes, but this morning he had me recite twenty-five minutes in classical Greek.

And I tell you, I was really worn out by that time. And he began to take pity on me. He said, Well, I think that's about enough for this morning, unless you have something that you would like to discuss.

Well, I said, it so happened that in my devotions this morning I was reading the fourteenth chapter of John in English, and I came across something which interests me. I said, I've discovered that in that third verse the Lord says, I am coming again, present tense. I said, why do we translate that with a future here? Oh, well, he said, you know how we use the present tense again and again to express a future idea? We say, I return.

That's present tense. I return tomorrow. That makes it future.

He said, you don't seem to be satisfied with that. I said, well, Dr. Mitchell, I certainly wouldn't attempt to teach you anything, but I said, I have reasons why I like this. He said, what's your reason? I said, because this with me is a present hope right now.

You know, here's one thing I can agree with a now generation on. I'm waiting for God's Son from heaven. He says, I am coming again.

And you know, dear friends, what follows here is wonderful. You know, if the Lord had only saved our souls and said, now I've given you a fresh start, go on and do the best you can. But he didn't stop there.

He says, I'm coming again to receive you unto myself, that where I am there you may be also. I was greatly struck with this one night at the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. It was my privilege and as well as responsibility to go into the inquiry room with some of the men who had responded to the invitation.

I happened to get a man who hadn't had a bath in a long time, and I suspected he was covered with what some of them facetiously called mechanized dandruff. And anyhow, he was in a very filthy shape. And I was very happy when the interview came to an end.

But I was listening to another one of my brothers who was dealing with another soul there, and he said, hey, buddy, how about coming home with me tonight? Well, you know, that never occurred to me to ask this man to come home with me. It would have been twenty-five miles, of course, but that would have been no object with a car. But the idea of taking a man home in this condition, well, of course, the Lord doesn't take you and me home in our sins, but I never cease to wonder that he wants us where he is, that where I am, there ye may be also.

And you turn to the seventeenth chapter of this same gospel, and you find that there again he gives expression to the same idea when he says, I will, Father, that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. Oh, beloved, this is the thing that grips one, to think that we're going to not only be saved, but we're going to spend eternity with a Savior. If you've lost the thrill of that, I hope that looking at this simple and well-known passion scripture again tonight, that you'll thrill again to the thought of spending eternity with the Lord Jesus, to see him face to face.

You know, in some sense, we're the most illogical people that ever were, because we believe in one whom we've never seen, and we work for one whom we've never seen, and we're moving on to a home we've never seen, and some people think we're just fools. But you know, there's something about this that convinces us this is true. And the more I look at it, after all these years of reading the Word of God, the more I'm convinced this is it.

He's coming back to receive me unto himself where he is. There we may be also. And he says, And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know, he credits them with this knowledge.

But Thomas, you notice, isn't satisfied with this. And he contradicts the Lord. You know, I've thought about this, and I fancy this man Thomas contradicting the Lord Jesus.

He says, We know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way? Sounds almost like an insult, doesn't it? If it weren't for the answer which our Lord here gives, I would have said, Yes, it is an insult. But perhaps it's after the manner of some of our children and our grandchildren, when we tell them something that's almost too good to be true. It may be that Thomas says, Lord, I don't know about that.

Or it may be that he was daydreaming and he missed something. That's quite possible too, isn't it? As one who's been in the classroom a good deal and studied faces when you deliver a lecture, you can pretty nearly tell who's there and who isn't, you know? Especially if they've been to the post office on the way to class, and they got a letter from him or her, as the case may be. Yes, or if there was an important event the night before, and that spark was just clamoring for everybody to look at and say, You haven't got her attention.

She's just miles away from there. Maybe Thomas was too. But in any case, the Lord does not rebuke Thomas.

Our Lord's reply here is very gracious and very lovely. And I'm thanking God for this verse. I thank God because it has been used so many times in dealing with unsaved souls.

But primarily this is a verse for you and me. You know that this verse, this sixth verse, were primarily for the unsaved. I think the order of the words would have been changed.

I believe our Lord would have spoken first of the very primary need that a sinner has, and that is life. But you notice he puts that last here. And I'm inclined to believe that we find the divine explanation and illustration of this in the Old Testament.

You know, after God redeemed his people in the land of Egypt, or at least sheltered them when they were sheltered from his judgment by the blood of the Passover lamb, now God leads his people out. He goes before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He was the way.

He didn't give them a road map. He didn't even give them a set of directions, but he said, I am the way. You follow me.

You follow me. Yes, and just like that, the Lord Jesus would have you and me follow him. That's why he says, I am the way.

You know, this is so simple that we wonder sometimes why we haven't made more of it, especially when we're looking for guidance in certain things. The Lord says, I'm the way. I think it's not so long ago, since on our daily calendar we had a little story about a little girl who was lost.

I think it was in the city of London, and she was inquiring of one of the passers-by as to how to get to a certain point, and this person was directing her, telling her to go this way, that way, and around. And another standing by listening took the little child by the hand and says, Come with me, dear. I'm going right over there.

How simple it becomes, doesn't it? Yes. I had a good illustration of it myself some years ago out on the West Coast, before they built the bridge over the Golden Gate. My friend Jimmy McDonald said to me, I'd

like you to see the sunset in the Golden Gate.

It's one of those rare nights when there was no fog or no cloud over the Golden Gate, and he thought this would be a wonderful time for me to see the sunset in the Golden Gate, a sight that I've never forgotten. But on our way there, we had to climb one of the hills up at Berkeley, east of the Bay, and then suddenly the car stopped in a place where there wasn't anything to see except trees and rocks. I said, What are we stopping here for, Jimmy? He says, We're stopping here to see who drives this car.

I said, Why, Jim, you're driving this car. Well, he says, If I'm driving this car, please don't push the footboard out every time we go around a curve. I said, You're not enjoying this sunset.

He said, Now we're about to turn the corner again, and the sunset will come into full view, and I want you to forget all about the car, the road, everything else, and enjoy the sunset. Jimmy McDonald was for me that night the way. But you know, God did something more for his people Israel.

He also gave them a standard of living. The Ten Commandments, that was their standard. That was the truth for them.

Now, of course, when we look at the Ten Commandments, we find that nine of them are negative. As I believe I told you on a previous occasion, you can keep nine of the Ten Commandments without doing anything. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

If thou don't have them, you've kept it. Thou shalt not make thyself any graven image. You don't make it, you've kept it.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Don't swear, don't curse, you've kept it. And so on.

There's only one positive commandment in the Ten. That's the one that says, Honor thy father and thy mother. But in the New Testament we get the positive of all of this when the Lord Jesus Christ says, I am the truth.

No longer a set of commandments to keep, but a person to watch, and a person to follow. He's our standard. The thing that if God would have us learn, I believe, from the life of our Lord when he says we should walk even as he walked, and to please God.

This is it. How wonderful this is, isn't it? To have an example rather than a set of commandments. And this is something we learn, especially as we go through the Gospels.

And I believe it is this that St. Paul refers to in his epistle to the Ephesians when he talks about the truth as it is in Jesus. The truth as it is in Jesus you find in the four Gospels. See? There you have the person walking among men, and he's the truth, the standard that God expects us to have before us in our daily living.

What a standard. And how necessary for us to compare our lives day by day with this standard. Day to walk in his footsteps.

And then finally he says, I am the life. And you remember that back in the desert, God not only guided his people in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, he not only gave them that standard on the top of Mount Sinai, but he also gave them bread from heaven. But it had its limitations.

The Lord Jesus in the sixth chapter of John, he speaks of it, he says, your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and they're dead. I am the bread of life, he the yield of me, even he shall live by me. He's the life.

Oh beloved, to feed upon Christ. We have a saying in German, I'm sorry that it comes from a man who certainly does not rate as a believer, I'm referring to Feuerbach. But he coined this expression which I think is good and some of you who know German will appreciate this.

That man ist was er ist. Man is what he eats. And you know that's true in the intellectual as well as in the physical.

You can pretty nearly tell what people are feeding on in their reading habits. What kind of books do they read? What do they talk about? Dr. Ironside used to, of course, bear down on those leeks and garlicks and onions that they were longing for from Egypt. He says you might eat them in private, but everybody will know it in public.

That's true too. But you'll never, never have an offensive breath. There'll be no such thing as bad odor when you and I are feeding on Christ.

How complete all of this is, isn't it? You see, the Lord is giving us all the provision we need for the way home. When he says, I am the way, the truth and the life. And then, as a great climax to this section, he tells us that he's going to bring us to the Father.

No man cometh to the Father. Ah, you're not going to the Father's house and not see the Father. You see? Yes, but you say the Father never became incarnate.

Well, we had nothing else. We had the words of our Lord in the fourteenth of John where he says in the same chapter, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. But I believe our vision will become adjusted when we get our glorified bodies and we'll see things we've never seen before.

We get a few illustrations of that. We get one in the case of the prophet. You remember when the young man saw all the host of the enemy around and he says, Alas, Master, what shall we do? And the prophet says, Lord, open this young man's eyes.

And he sees the host of God on the hillsides. I believe our vision will be adjusted. Yes, I expect to see the Father.

What a wonderful thing to be able to come to the Father now. No man cometh to the Father but by me. Here we have the one mediator speaking to us and telling us that he's here not only to bring us to God but to bring us to God who is our Father.

Beloved, I trust as we think of these things in connection with the coming of our Lord that it will enhance the value of it to us, that we shall appreciate as never before what it means to have what we refer to as the blessed hope. It is that, the blessed hope. I believe it was Dr. Ironside.

In fact, I know it was he, for I heard him say it. He was asked one time why he preached so often on the second coming of Christ. He says, to make up for you fellows that don't.

And so we have to make up for them. And let's talk about it. Let's talk about it to people who are waiting for the Lord to come.

Let them laugh at us if they will. One of these days, as dear old Dr. Pettengill said, when we go up, we'll look around and say, I told you so. And so it will be.

May the Lord keep us then like unto men that wait for their Lord. In closing, I know I should be, it's only a minute from the time to close, but I'd like to join with us, let's join together in singing hymn number 356. 356 is a hymn of devotion to our Lord Jesus to close this series of meetings, which I say to you have been a blessing to my own soul, and if there has been any blessing spilled out, it is simply because God has filled me to overflowing myself.

And these, these are my own sentiments with regard to the Lord Jesus himself. And hymn number 356, Satisfied with thee, Lord Jesus, I am blessed. Peace which passeth understanding on thy breast.

No more doubting, no more trembling. Oh, what rest. Number 356.

We have not seen in whom though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable self in our heart. Even so, I do work here for thee who carry on this testimony for thee. We thank you, Lord, for the progress that has already been made in so short a time.

Looking forward, shouldst thou tarry, Lord, to increase the influence of this spot.

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