

How to be Ready for the Lord's Return

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being prepared for the return of the Lord, drawing parallels between the days of Noah and the present times, highlighting the need for reverence, forgiveness, and building a family that honors God. It stresses the significance of living a life of love, truth, and grace, being vigilant against deception, and ensuring a genuine relationship with God that reflects in our actions and relationships.

Scripture: Matthew 24:37, Hebrews 11:7, Matthew 6:15, 1 John 1:9, Proverbs 22:6, Genesis 6:5, John 1:14, Isaiah 1:19

Topics: "Preparation for Christ's Return", "Living a Godly Life"

Description

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Transcript

Some of these hymns that were written by godly people have been a tremendous help to me in my Christian life, all the 62 years that I've been a Christian, born again Christian. And I know them by heart, in memory, in my memory, and it helps me at different times. Many, many wonderful songs, which are written by godly people, and very often I find Christians in churches, they are taken up with the music and the melody more than the words.

I want to encourage you, dear brothers and sisters, to try and memorize some of these, just like we memorize portions of scripture, some really good hymns. We cannot memorize everything, but sometimes I memorize just a few verses or half a verse sometimes of a hymn, which keeps on ringing in my mind and helps me at different times, particularly in times of pressure. There's a word from a hymn that can come to our heart and bless us.

You know, the Bible says that before Jesus went to the cross, the last thing he did after breaking bread with his disciples was to sing a hymn. You read that in the Gospels. Just before he said, now let's go to Gethsemane, he sang a hymn just before going to the cross.

Why was that? Is that an example that is worthy of following? Certainly. Jesus is our example. And before going to the cross, the thing that strengthened him was singing a hymn.

It's a very good example for us. I tell you, it has helped me too in different situations of trial and pressure. A hymn, which is in my memory, has come to my mind.

The Holy Spirit reminds us not only of verses of Scripture, but hymns written by godly people. You know, the Psalms, for example, they are like the hymn book of the Old Testament. And many of them were sung by the people in Old Testament times.

But the New Testament hymns written by godly people are sometimes far more inspiring than even the Psalms. For they never knew the New Covenant. I would encourage you to do that.

Develop the habit of memorizing particularly challenging words of hymns that remind us not only of our Savior going to take care of us, but comforting us, strengthening us in times of trouble, and reminding us that this world is passing away. For example, here is something that you could remember. Dead to the world and its applause, to all the customs, fashions, laws of those who hate the humbling cross.

So dead that no desire may arise to appear good or great or wise in any but my Savior's eyes. Those words have challenged me tremendously, many a time. And many others like that.

I could tell you a whole lot of them. But coming to our theme for today, how to be ready for the return of the Lord. Very, very important.

For many years, people have been talking about the signs that indicate the coming of the Lord. There have been famines and earthquakes. There have been famines and earthquakes on Earth for 2,000 years.

It's not particularly new. But there have been many more, Jesus said, in the last days. That's true.

Wars and rumors of wars. There have always been wars for 2,000 years. But there's a lot more terrorism in the world today than there ever was in these 2,000 years.

Nowadays, it's not safe for a head of state to walk without security. I remember the days when I was living in Delhi as a young boy, 15 years old. And I would see the head of state, you know, walking past, right in front of me.

No security, nothing. And that was just 1955. How the world has changed.

So, there's a lot more terrorism today. So, things are getting worse in that area. But more than anything else, if we come to what Jesus spoke about himself, which is the primary thing that we've got to be careful about, or indicates the coming of the Lord, it's something quite different, which I'll come to in a moment.

But another thing that we find in the book of Revelation particularly, in one place it says in Revelation, that there was such a sickness poured out upon the Earth, that one third of the people died to the plagues. You read that in Revelation chapter 16 about plagues that came upon the world. I want to tell you the present pandemic that the world is covered with.

In the history of the world, as far as I know, there's never, never been a pandemic like this. Like this COVID-19 one that's covered the whole world, every single country. And where people have died left, right and center.

Is this an indication that we are approaching the end? We don't rejoice in sickness, we don't rejoice in a pandemic. Just like we don't rejoice in famines or earthquakes or wars. But Jesus said these things will happen.

And if you take the word of God seriously, though we don't rejoice in these things, we look beyond these things to our Savior who's coming back. And when we think of that, the most important thing if you're a Christian, is to be ready. And there are numerous things that, numerous places where Jesus said, in the Gospels and other places of Scripture where the writers of the Epistles remind us, that not everyone is going to be ready.

Some are going to be shut out when Christ comes. Let me begin with that. In Matthew 25, Jesus said, read carefully.

Matthew 25, verse 1. The kingdom of heaven can be compared to 10 virgins. Now the end of the story, 5 virgins could not go in with the bridegroom for the wedding. The door was shut, we read in verse 10.

So remember that. So remembering that, we ask ourselves, are these 5 virgins and 5 prostitutes? No. They are 10 virgins.

In Revelation 17 and 21, you read about the great harlot or the great prostitute. That is a spiritual prostitute. It's called Babylon.

It's a false Christianity or a false church. Claiming to be engaged to the bridegroom Christ, but fooling around with another man called the world. That is essentially Babylon.

Now if you don't claim to be engaged to Christ, you don't say you're born again, you cannot be a prostitute. See, it's only if a woman is engaged to a man, and then fools around with other men that she's a prostitute. But if she's not engaged to that man, he's just a single girl, then she's not unfaithful to that man, if she goes around with somebody else.

You can become unfaithful to Christ only if you're a Christian. So people in non-Christian religions can never be part of Babylon, part of this religious prostitute, because they're not engaged to Christ. They don't even claim that Christ is their Lord.

So that passage in Revelation 17 about the great prostitute refers particularly to those who say they are born again. Even nominal Christians are not included there. Because nominal Christians, just for namesake, they are pretending to be engaged to Christ.

They aren't really. But those who sometime in their life gave their life to Christ and said, Lord Jesus, you are my Lord. That was an engagement.

It's not a marriage. You read in Revelation 19, the marriage will take place only when Christ returns. But it was an engagement.

What would you think of a girl who carelessly gets engaged to a man and has no interest to marry him? Well, she would be a prostitute. We take engagement seriously. When a girl says, I want to marry this man, she's looking forward to the wedding.

And when you gave your life to Christ, it's like an engagement. You said, I want to be married to this man and I want to be faithful. What do people do? What does a woman do between the time of the

engagement and the wedding? They keep in touch with each other.

Regularly. Because they're looking forward to getting married. I mean, you don't find that girl most of the time talking to other men.

She'd be talking most of the time to the one she's engaged to. So does that characterize you as a Christian? That you're more taken up every day with talking to the Lord than all the other attractive things that other men, that is the world, offers to you. That would be one indication where you are spiritually.

So here are 10 virgins. None of them is a prostitute. But, they were foolish virgins and wise virgins.

And what was it that made the difference? Very important to understand. Because we read finally that five of the foolish virgins could not enter. door was shut and they cried out, knocking there, Lord, Lord, open to us, Matthew 25, 11.

And the Lord said to them, I do not know you. That means I don't have this personal relationship with you. Now that's different from what Jesus said in Matthew 7, 23 where he said, I never knew you.

Jesus said in the last days, many will come to me and say, Lord, we did miracles in your name. We did this in your name. We preached in your name and we passed out demons in your name.

And he says to them, he doesn't say, I do not know you. He says, I never knew you. You must read Scripture carefully.

I never knew you means you guys never had a relationship with me. You were just going around preaching, making money perhaps and doing all types of things with my mighty power in the name of Jesus. But you didn't have a personal relationship with me, Jesus said.

But here, he does not say, I never knew you. I don't know you. There is a difference.

It's a backslidden person who was once born again. And why did he backslide? Because he took the Christian life lightly. He said, I've accepted the Lord.

I'm ready to go to heaven now. I don't have to do anything else. 25 years ago, I gave my life to Christ.

I signed a decision card or I go to church regularly. A lot of people have done all that who could be the biggest backsliders on earth today. It says here that there was one big difference.

You need to understand it. What was it that made one group ready and the other not ready? I want to say one more thing before I proceed. One of the things I find in Scripture is that some truths are repeated again and again and again.

That's because those truths are very important. See, why are there four Gospels? Wouldn't one have been enough? And why is a letter to the Colossians very similar in many places to the letter to the Ephesians? Why are some things repeated again and again in Scripture? Why does it say twice, once in James and once in 1 Peter, God gives grace only to the humble. God resists the proud.

I mean, that's true. Why do you need to repeat it twice in Scripture? People read the Bible. They read it many times.

Why should you repeat something? Even a book that people read many times, God has felt it necessary to repeat something. The parable of repeating of the 5,000. It's repeated four times.

Why? Isn't once enough? So, don't despise repetition. The prophets in the Old Testament repeated their message. Jesus repeated his message many times.

And I have repeated my message many times. I don't apologize for it. That's what the prophets did.

That's what Jesus did. That's what I do. But there are many preachers who are afraid to preach the same sermon a second time because they love their reputation more than the people they are serving.

They want people to think, oh, this man is a great preacher. He's always preaching a new sermon. I don't have the slightest desire to get that type of reputation.

I'm more interested in people becoming godly. And if I have to excuse me, say the same thing 10 times, I'll say it 10 times. If I have to say it 20 times, I'll say it 20 times because my aim is not to get a reputation as a preacher who's always preaching something new.

My aim in life as a servant of God is to get people to live a godly life and be ready for the coming of Christ. That's more important. So I mention that here because there are many things about the for example, about the second coming that's repeated in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

There are two passages in Luke where it's mentioned. There's Luke 17 and Luke 21. And in Matthew in chapter 24, 25.

In Mark in chapter 13. Many similar things repeated again and again because the Lord wants us to hear it again and again and again. So what we see here is these five virgins did not take extra oil with them.

They did not plan for the future. They did not realize that the bridegroom may not come for a long time. So what we see here is that all ten virgins had a lamp that was burning.

All of them. And what does that indicate? Let your light shine before men that they may see your life, your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven. All ten had that.

We know all ten had that because even though when the bridegroom came the foolish said in verse 8 Our lamps are going out. It was burning right until then. And just before the bridegroom came the lamps died out.

There was no more oil in the lamp. But that's when the wise virgins took out that extra flask of oil which is in their pockets. Which nobody saw.

It was hidden. Poured it into the lamps and the lamps continued to burn. So there are two things we see here.

A lamp and a flask of oil. The lamp is what is visible. The flask of oil is hidden in the pocket.

It refers to an external life and our hidden life. Our inner life which is not seen by people. The flask of oil.

The wise virgins are those who have a flask of oil. A hidden life Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit. A hidden life of obedience to the Holy Spirit which nobody sees.

A flask of oil hidden in the pockets of their dress. The visible lamp everybody can see. My dear brother, sister, you and I have got a visible life.

And if that listen carefully if that is purer than your inner life there is one word to describe you. Hypocrite. I don't want to insult any of you.

But I want to be true to my calling as a servant of God who proclaims the truth. I'll be answerable to God if I don't tell you the truth. If your hidden life does not correspond with your external life with the reputation you have got before other Christians as a wonderful Christian or a godly person and your inner life is very different because nobody can see it not even your wife can see it you are a hypocrite.

And the word hypocrite is from a Greek word meaning actor. One who is acting a part. There are these movies where famous Hollywood actors will act as Moses in real life he may be a drunkard and divorced 3-4 times and living a very immoral life but when he comes on this on the place where they are filming him he is Moses holy man of God talks holy acts holy but that's just for the few hours of the film shooting and then he goes back to his home for the night back to his old drunk and immoral life and the next day when the shooting starts again at the film back again he is home Moses again this is called acting you know that and when a Christian puts on his best performance when he goes to church when he meets with other believers and is quite a different person the way he speaks to his wife at home or the way he relates to other women whom he meets whom his wife does not see him hanging around with and is all hidden and more than that what he watches in secret on his phone or his computer when he is alone pornography or something like that which nobody sees except God and the devil and the angels and the devil and the demons mock this man this man claims to be a believer look what he is watching God can you see this this fellow claims to be a believer you see what he is watching on the computer right now you know how much shame believers bring to God's name when the devil mocks them before God when they are watching pornography in secret when they are fooling around with other women or lusting after other women in secret and the devil points them out to them points them out to God because the Bible says in Revelation 12 he is the accuser of the brethren Revelation 12 10 who accuses people to God day and night have you heard the word full time worker there are many Christians who call themselves full time workers I will tell you the real full time worker is the devil Revelation 12 10 day and night he is in full time business of accusing people to God and he cannot tell a lie to God when human beings accuse people to each other they may tell a lie oh this brother did this or this sister did this and it may not be true but when God the devil cannot tell a lie to God when he says this child of yours did this he is speaking the truth or he says God can you see this person what he is doing right now right now right now just see what he is watching on his computer or his phone what can God say when God says oh he is my child he can do that rubbish God will never say that God is a righteous holy God and if there is unrighteousness in your life I want to tell you that God is not going to ignore it and if there is not a deep repentance in your life even if you slip up believers may slip up but when they do slip up there is a deep repentance if that deep repentance is not there I want to say to you my dear brother sister you are not really born again you probably never heard that from anybody else but you are hearing it from me now if you have not if there has not been a deep repentance in your life for the sin you have fallen into or that you keep falling into you are playing the fool with sin you are playing the fool with God and you get a tremendous surprise when Christ comes again you will not be there now you need to tell you and don't tell me in that day that I did not warn you I have said this to many people in the churches I preach in for the last 45 years we have had churches in different countries and I preach to them this and I say listen if you listen to me regularly I can guarantee one thing and you take seriously what I say I can guarantee you will be ready for the coming of

the Lord there are 2000 sermons of mine on YouTube and you listen to them you will be ready for the coming of the Lord but if you take it lightly and play the fool with it you will not be ready and you cannot say in that day oh I used to go to CFC I used to go to Brother Zach's church that will count for nothing you know what John the Baptist told the Pharisees you used to say that Abraham is your father so what if you don't repent you will all perish so that's what I say too so dear brothers and sisters I'm not trying to condemn anyone God is not God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world and I don't go around condemning anybody because I'm not God only God has got the right to judge he said God is the only judge but it is my duty to proclaim the truth and the Holy Spirit's job to convict and the Holy Spirit is convicting you you better respond to it and if the Holy Spirit is not convicting you well perhaps you become so insensitive that even a strong word of rebuke does not correct you maybe you've been playing the fool with sin so much in your life that the words of word of God doesn't convict you anymore you know this is how people discover that they've got leprosy one day one day when some hot water falls on their boiling hot water falls on their hand and they don't feel it boiling hot water falls on their hand they don't feel it and they say why is that they go and get tested and they discover they've got leprosy sensitivity has died in that area of the skin that's why leprosy in the Bible is a picture of sin and when I can do something wrong which you know is wrong your conscience tells you it's wrong while you're doing it you know it's wrong while you're watching that thing you know it's wrong while you're saying those words to your wife you know it's wrong but he doesn't disturb you leprosy has set in and if you don't sort it out soon it can get worse it has to be treated immediately and like every other sickness the sooner you treat it greater the possibility of healing so what was wrong with these foolish virgins they did not have a hidden walk with God so when you think of being ready for the coming of Christ that is the number one thing I would say watch your hidden life what is your hidden life your external life are your actions your words which people can hear your hidden life has got two parts one is away from most of the people you meet in your home the way you behave in your home a true disciple of Jesus will talk in the same gracious way to his wife or to her husband as he does to a stranger or to another believer if he lacks that graciousness at home there is something wrong with his Christianity he is a hypocrite he is trying to present one front before other believers to show that he is a great saint and then at home where he doesn't bother about what his wife thinks about him or her husband thinks about him he is quite another person this is the foolish virgin let me tell you that or in his place of work but there are no believers in his place of work and he doesn't care what people think about him there because maybe people don't even know that he is a disciple of Jesus so he doesn't care how he behaves there but the people in the church very very careful so this is one area that we can seriously judge ourselves and say you want to be ready for the coming of the Lord think of this first of all hypocrite being an actor acting in one way before people and you're actually a very different guy so what happened when the bridegroom came there was no extra oil for these people and the bridegroom came in the lamps were dead and the door was shut and he said Lord Lord open to us and he said I don't know you and therefore Jesus said be on the alert then verse 13 of Matthew 25 because you don't know the day or the hour so let me say one more thing in this connection if you're going to live a holy life just because you feel Jesus may come anytime that's not a right motive for holiness it's like if a girl is engaged to a man who's gone to a distant country and said I'll come one day and marry you and the only reason she's keeping faithful is because she doesn't know when he'll come and when he comes she doesn't want to be seen with another boyfriend that's not a really faithful bride a really faithful bride will not be bothered whether he sees or hears or not she says I'm going to be faithful to my absent bridegroom I'll never go out with another boy and a true disciple of Jesus will always seek to be faithful whether Christ comes even soon you knew that Christ is coming after a hundred years how would you live the next hundred years I would say for myself exactly the same way as if I knew that Christ is coming this afternoon or this evening

or tonight there'd be no difference in my life I can say that before God if I knew that Jesus is coming tonight or if I knew for certain he's coming a hundred years from now absolutely no difference because my holiness has got nothing to do with oh I don't want Jesus to catch me in sin it's got to do with a desire for purity for example when you see sin for what it is my description of sin is jumping into the sewer you know what the sewer is when you flush your toilet where all that God where all that stuff goes it's called the sewer and there are five pipes that go under the road which carry all this into all that rubbish somewhere where they dump it now would you ever think of jumping into that sewer and not just jumping in I mean accidentally people may fall falling into sin it's like accidentally falling into an open sewer but man is seeing it's a sewer and jumping in and not just jumping in but living there is that a normal human being or some crazy person but that's exactly how people are they're not sewer they're not worldly people are but they don't have understanding that this is a sewer but what shall we say when Christians live like that think nobody sees me imagine a man in the sewer and says nobody sees me so it's okay if I'm in the sewer something's wrong with that person so I want to say this first of all being ready for the Lord's coming if this thought is in your mind nobody's seeing me doing this nobody's seeing me talking like this you are in the sewer because you're only concerned whether people see you you fear man more than you fear God and I'm sorry to say that most Christians I have met they fear man more than they fear God and that's why God is not able to speak to them and that's why God is not able to use them it should be your great desire you may not be called to be a teacher or a prophet or an apostle it was a special calling God gives to some people not because they are more holy it's God's sovereign choice He decides to make Paul an apostle I mean there could be some widow in Jerusalem who could be just as holy as Paul but she's not called to be an apostle that's God's sovereign choice you may not be called to be a prophet or a preacher or a teacher or an apostle but every one of us is called to be holy and our desire must be Lord I want to please you all the time all the time I see you you're watching me all the time I want to live in your presence I'll tell you one mark of living in God's presence from this has been the test I've used for myself I only preach what is true in myself and I want to tell you also a confession that for the first 16 years of my Christian life the time I was born again a lot of the time I was a hypocrite I was an actor I was born again when I was 19 and I was born again and for the first 16 years I had up and down experiences and most of the time in the early part of my Christian life I was very serious I'd just been born again in the first five or six years I was really serious and then I quit my job and I was serving the Lord and I sort of became famous as a preacher and then the hypocrisy began pretending living one life before people not in serious sin I wasn't fooling around with women or stealing money or any such thing but my thought life my private life my anger at home I didn't take those things seriously but I'd say oh I can come to Jesus He forgives me because I did not know what true godliness was I wanted to put up a front I was an actor but that's gone from my life it's gone from my life for 45 years I'm not perfect I'm not yet completely like Christ but there's no acting what you see is what I am all the time that's what you should be able to say you don't have to be perfect a 3 year old child does not have to pretend he's very mature or can run the 100 meters in 10 seconds or any such thing no no no no no pretense but there's no pretending that's the main thing no boasting of something which is not true I'll tell you for the last 45 years or nearly that time from the time God filled me with the Holy Spirit that's what changed my life I got so desperate of my defeated life and I said Lord do something I ask you for one thing fill me with the Holy Spirit and I will know I'm filled with the Holy Spirit not when I'm perfect because perfection comes when Christ comes but when my outer life is exactly the same as my inner life that I preach what I practice and my inner thought life I can open up to anybody come and see my bank account and my finances I can open up to anybody come and see what I do I pay all my taxes righteously 100% come and see examine it I'm a Christian I'm not a cheater or come and see live at home and see how I talk to my wife every day no no pretense and what do you see if I slip up immediate

apology that's the point not perfection but immediately setting right I tell people if you you can never say even however strong and old you are you can never say I'll never slip and fall you can slip on a banana skin on the road and fall but what do you do when you fall you get up that's how a true Christian is they fall they get up there is no hypocrisy so here is a a very good word to remember to know whether we are in the presence of the Lord all the time for me anyway this is the best Psalm 16 and verse 11 in your presence there is fullness of joy that's a great verse Lord in your presence there is fullness of joy so I say to myself I know I am in the Lord's presence when there is joy in my heart if the joy has gone out of my life I am not in the Lord's presence because in God's presence there is fullness of joy anyone who is complaining grumbling murmuring is not in the Lord's presence so that's a little test coming back to what Jesus said in Matthew and chapter 25 chapter 24 sorry when people ask Jesus about what is the sign of your coming Matthew 24 and verse 3 the first sign Jesus said this is the one thing I want to warn you about see to it that nobody deceives you he didn't speak about famines and wars and earthquakes and all that then that he says later on yeah there will be wars and rumors and wars and there will be famines and earthquakes verse 7 that's there but before all that what's the first thing he said not wars famines and earthquakes which is what people think of I mean you ask the average Christian what is the thing that Jesus said would characterize the last days most people would immediately say famines and wars and earthquakes but that's not what Jesus said first he said in Matthew 24 and verse 4 see to it that nobody deceives you deception is going to be the number one characteristic of the days immediately before the coming of Christ and he repeated that again in verse 11 many false prophets will arise and deceive you and again in verse 24 and 25 the whole false prophets the false prophets will arise and deceive people three times he speaks about deception how many times did he speak about famines and earthquakes and wars once why is it the main thing Jesus mentioned is escape the minds of people the devil doesn't want to know that he's going to deceive you especially in the last days or turn to what the apostles say in 1 Timothy and chapter 4 the spirit explicitly says that in the last days 1 Timothy 4.1 some believers will fall away from the faith fall away from the faith means they are born again believers they're not unbelievers they're not nominal Christians they've come to the faith and they'll fall away from the faith and I say hey Paul what did the Holy Spirit say explicitly how will they fall away from the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits so Paul is 100% in line with Jesus that one of the characteristics of the last days will be deception and deception is called the doctrines of demons here is a doctrine of a demon listen carefully if you have accepted Christ once it doesn't matter how you live you'll still enter the kingdom of God you'll still be with the Lord for all eternity okay let's compare it with scripture here's what scripture says in Hebrews chapter 3 verse 14 Hebrews 3.14 here it says the Holy Spirit says Hebrews 3.14 we have become partakers of Christ when how do you become a partaker of Christ part of his body if there's a big capital I capital F if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance that means the time from the time we were born again we hold fast firm until the end then we are partakers of Christ what about a man who accepted it first and then lived a careless life thereafter according to that verse he's not a partaker of Christ well let's look at what Jesus said in Matthew 24 he said in relation to deception let's read Matthew 24 again verse 11 to 13 being ready for the Lord's coming that's our subject many false prophets will arise not one or two false prophets and will deceive many not one or two many and because sin is increased and look around the world today sin has increased tremendously most people there's most believers love will grow cold he's not talking about unbelievers an unbeliever has never had any love for the Lord at all whose love can become cold something can become cold only if it was warm or hot once only that which was hot once can become cold an unbeliever is always cold ice cold he's not talking about them he's talking about someone who was accepted the Lord on fire and they became cold he's talking about believers and he said most people's love will grow cold now if you heard a report that most people in your town are getting this COVID

sickness and pandemic would you be careful if the report was only one or two people getting it okay you can ignore it but if the report is 90% of people in this town are likely to get COVID would you be careful or not that's what I want to ask you when Jesus says most people love will grow cold their love is warm in other words most I let me paraphrase it most believers will be backsliders if I read the Word of God which says most believers will be backsliders I'm going to be very careful I don't want to be a backslider but the one who endures to the end verse 13 will be saved so what does that mean in the context the one who endures in love he's talking about love in verse 12 love will grow cold he doesn't say the activity will decrease there are a lot of people who are very active witnessing and going to church and engaging in Christian work and giving money who don't have a fervent love for Jesus Christ do you know that fervent love for Christ is far more important than any amount of work you do for him how do we how are we already going to be ready for the Lord's coming not with a lot of activity alone activity that comes out of love I've been serving the Lord for 55 years and I'm delighted to be able to serve the Lord for another 55 years as the Lord gives me life because I'll never get tired I'm just delighted happy to sacrifice anything to serve the Lord I'll never get tired never I'm not tired today I'm willing to sit up at night and any number of days so I never never get tired of serving the Lord but my service comes out of love for him I don't do it for money I don't take money for my service I don't take money for the books I write it's out of love for the Lord and when you do something out of the love for the Lord that has value love will grow cold it's like in many marriages you see a newly married couple who are so fervently in love with one another and you know the she's waiting at the door when he's coming back from work opens the door and they express their love for one another and she's made the dinner already but watch that same couple 10 years later the husband comes back from work she's not at the door anymore he has to open it to himself and she says well I got hungry and I ate if you want to eat the dinners on the table go and eat this is not the way it was when they first got married love has grown cold oh they she still prepared the dinner sure but she didn't have time to wait for him this time love has grown cold it has happened in so many marriages and it has happened in the relationship of so many people of the Lord I want to ask all of you my dear brothers and sisters I really believe most of you have really had a born-again experience otherwise you would not be sitting here listening to me you'd be doing something else right now I believe most of you really had a born-again experience my question is this do you love the Lord today as you did then can you think of the sacrifices you were willing to make then which you're not willing to make today can you think of the devotion with which you study the scriptures to know the mind of God not to prepare a sermon no but to know the mind of God for yourself to read the Word of God in the early days how it was how is it now you go to the internet more than the Bible nowadays ask yourself you go to the internet more than to the Bible which is more attractive to you Jesus Christ or some worldly thing or person which is more Don't fool yourself that you still love Jesus like you did in the early days.

Your love has grown cold, and the Lord's trying to wake you up today. He allowed you to be in this meeting today to wake you up, to prepare you for His coming. The one who endures in love, read Matthew 24, 12 and 13, the love of many people will grow cold, but the one who endures in love until the end will be saved.

You know, we live in such a busy world, and many of us live in very cramped situations in our homes that we don't have time like Jesus to go into the wilderness to pray. Jesus would often go into the wilderness to pray to be undisturbed. I think we live in cities, where is the nearest wilderness? The nearest wilderness may be 10,000 miles away.

Where can we go and pray? Life is so busy. The streets are so busy. The houses are so cramped.

I'll tell you where. I'll tell you where my wilderness is. I live in a very cramped little house, early in the morning, when my wife is asleep, and I wake up.

I don't get out of bed. I say, I have a time with the Lord. It's my wilderness time.

The whole world is asleep around me, no disturbance, and I'm talking to the Lord, before I open my phone to see if there are any messages, before I even open the Bible. Once you get up, there are many distractions, and I've discovered, when you're in bed, sometimes in the middle of the night, don't we all wake up sometimes in the middle of the night? Those are very precious times for me. I don't think at that time, oh, what do I have to do tomorrow? I can all wait till tomorrow, or how to deal with that fellow who troubled me yesterday.

I'm not interested. I want to say, Lord, what are you trying to say to me? Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, let me recommend to all of you to come to this wilderness with me every morning, or in the middle of the night, when the whole world is asleep around you. Get alone with God, even if it's five minutes.

You know, five minutes with Jesus can change your life. Yes. Sometimes I've got amazing revelations from God in five minutes.

I'll tell you something I got just a couple of days ago. I was reading in the Gospel of Mark, it happened to be my daily portion, Mark's Gospel, and I was reading in Mark chapter 10, this is just what the Lord spoke to me a couple of days ago. James and John, verse 35, the two sons of Zebedee came to Jesus and Jesus said, what do you want me to do? They asked him, we want you to do something for us.

In another place, it says their mother also said the same thing, we want you to do something for us. And Jesus said, what do you want me to do for you? Here's the question. Verse 36, the question the Lord asked you, that's the way it came to me.

What do you want me to do for you? Right? Wonderful question. Did Jesus ask you that? What do you want me to do for you? And they said, Lord, give us seats at your right hand and left hand in glory. We don't want any honor on this earth, but up there in heaven, make sure we are number one and number two.

And Jesus said, I'm sorry, I can't give that to you because that's reserved by my father, whomever he has prepared. Right now, what you need to do is pick up the cross and die, drink the cup which I drink and baptize you with the baptism I baptize you with. They said, yeah, yeah, we'll do that.

I mean, they said that without even realizing Jesus is very gracious to them. So the question was, what do you want me to do for you? I want a place of honor. Not here on earth, but in heaven.

You know, it's wrong to seek for a place of honor, even in heaven. Are you willing to be a servant in heaven or you want to be a servant on earth and a king in heaven? I want to be a servant on earth and a servant in heaven. I hope that's your desire.

Are you going to change your nature when you go to heaven? If your nature is wanting to be a servant, you'll be that for all eternity. But if you're only acting for a short period, then you're a hypocrite. Okay, question was, what do you want me to do for you? Okay, now here's another person to whom the Lord asked the same question, same chapter.

Jesus came to blind Bartimaeus and he said, what do you want me to do for you? He doesn't say, Lord, give me a place of your right hand and left hand in glory. No, he says, Lord, just give me my sight so that I can see you. And the Lord spoke to my heart.

He says, what do you want me to do for you? I said, Lord, I don't want any position of honor on this earth. I don't want to be a great preacher. I don't want to be respected.

I don't want money. I want to see you. Give me sight so that I can see you clearly.

And the things of this world become strangely dim in the light of your glory and grace. I'll tell you this, dear brothers and sisters, many of us, our vision of Christ is very dim. And we don't see him clearly.

Learn a lesson from blind Bartimaeus. Lord, give me sight. I don't want honor in this earth or in eternity.

I don't want to be known as an elder or a great preacher or any such thing. I want sight. I want to see you clearly more and more.

And when I get into eternity, I shall spend all eternity just trying to see you more clearly. To know more of your love, to partake more of your love. I want to tell you this, brothers.

You want to be ready for the coming of the Lord? Pray that prayer. Pray it every day. You'll be all right.

Jesus said the last days will be like the days of Noah. Let me just say one more, a few more things. Matthew 24 and verse 30.

The last days, verse 37. Matthew 24, verse 37. The coming of the Son of Man will be like the days of Noah.

Turn back to the days of Noah. Genesis chapter 6. Because it's good to read it because Jesus said the last days will be like that. How to be ready for the Lord's coming.

In the days of Noah, the first thing mentioned there is verse 2. Genesis 6-2. The days of Noah. The sons of God.

These are referring to the angels. The direct creation of God is always called the Son of God. Adam was called the Son of God.

We are sons of God when we are directly created by being born again. But those who are not directly created and who are born through other parents are not called sons of God. So in the Bible, you read in the book of Job, the angels being called sons of God.

The angels, Genesis 6-2, saw the daughters of men. Now Jesus said very clearly that angels cannot get married. Angels don't have a sexual function.

But it's amazing. They could look at pretty women and lust after them without having a sexual function. Yeah, it says there.

And it says they took wives. How could they do that? I meditated on it. The only way an angel could possess a pretty woman whom he lusted after would be to get into a man.

You know, angels can possess. They become demons and get into human beings. And through that man, as that man has sex, this angel can enjoy it.

Not directly because he can't have it himself. And to me, this is a picture of pornography. Genesis 6-2 is a picture of pornography.

In pornography, a man cannot enjoy any sex himself. But he's watching somebody else doing it, and he's getting some abstract satisfaction. This is exactly what these angels went through.

Characteristic of the last days. They had no ability to enjoy it themselves. They possessed a man, and as that man enjoyed sex with somebody else, this angel sort of gets a distracted delight from it.

Exactly like people who are pornography today. In the last days, that will be characteristic. The last days will be like the days of Noah.

But in the midst of this ungodly generation, there was a man called Noah. It says in Genesis 6-8, who found favor in the eyes of the Lord. And I do pray, my dear brothers and sisters, that will be true of you.

That in these days of pornography and evil, the other thing which is characteristic of the last days was Genesis 6-5, wickedness. They were killing each other, hurting each other. Murder, terrorism.

In the midst of all this, if it can be said about you, that you found favor in the eyes of the Lord. What a wonderful thing that is. Do you know what that means? I'll tell you.

One of the prayers I prayed for myself many times. I said, Lord Jesus, Heavenly Father. I talked to God, my father.

I call him Dad in my private prayer. I said, Dad, when Jesus was baptized, you said, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Can you say that about me? So often I say it with tears in my eyes.

Dad, can you say that about me? This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. That's what I want more than anything else. I don't want money.

I don't want honor. I don't want people to respect me. I don't want Christians to respect me.

I don't even want a ministry. I want to please you. Every day and every moment of my life, I want you to be able to look at me and say, this is my beloved son.

In whom I am well pleased. I have no interest in worldwide fame or to be famous among Christians or to do miracles or to be a great preacher or anything that so many Christians hanker after. I want to hear Jesus say, my father say, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

That's what Noah was. He found favor in the eyes of the Lord. My dear brother, sister, let me ask you, are you a wise virgin or a foolish one? A wise virgin is very keen to please the father.

That's all. Not interested in impressing others. My father must be happy with my life.

And if the whole world misunderstands me, it's perfectly okay. A lot of people misunderstand me because they don't know the motives with which I do things. I read in the Bible, you know, I have a responsibility as an elder for many churches and over many brothers who are elders of churches.

And I have to be like God towards them. That is kind and severe. The Bible says in Romans 11, 22, that God is kind and is severe.

So I have to be kind and severe to those I have responsibility for. When I'm kind, I can be appreciated. They'll appreciate me.

Oh, what a kind brother, Brother Zach is. But when I have to be strict with them, they may not appreciate me. So what? It is my responsibility as an elder to be like God, kind and severe.

To show grace and truth. John 1, 14 says the glory of God was seen in Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth. Not only full of grace.

Those who seek only to be gracious to others and don't stand up for truth are actually seeking their own honor. If you seek the honor of God, you will seek to be gracious and stand up for truth. Even if truth makes you unpopular, even if truth may offend people, it doesn't make a difference.

Be like that. Let the glory of God be seen in your life, full of grace and truth. Find the balance between kindness and severity with your children at home.

And if you're an elder in the church, with people in the church, never seek for popularity by always being kind. That's a false God who's not severe. Remember, Jesus, the same hands, I never forget this, the same hands with which he washed people's feet.

He took a whip and chased out those who tried to make money in the name of God in the house of God. And I say, Lord, make me like that. That I will be ready to the end of my life to wash the youngest believer's feet.

And also to take the whip and chase out anyone who's trying to make money in the name of God, in the name of Christ. Both are equally important for me. And I'm not going to do one any less or any more than the other.

Be a man of God like that. Be a woman of God who's upright with your children. And God is committed to you.

Do you know a sister can be as much a servant of God? Your church is your children. Bring them up in the fear of God. Where two or three are gathered together, there are mine in the midst of them.

Two or three children. Jesus is there. One child.

Never mind. You and one child. That's two people.

Jesus is there in the midst. That can be your church. Build that church.

Strong. With grace and truth. Noah.

Here's another thing about Noah. Jesus reminded us the last days will be like the days of Noah. And we must be like Noah.

It says in Hebrews 11. There's a lot that I can say, but I'm not going to go beyond this now. Hebrews 11.

It says something about Noah in verse 7. By faith Noah, when he warned by God about things not yet seen. We have also been warned by God in the scriptures about things that are coming when Christ returns. In reverence.

Oh, that's so important. To have a reverence for God. I find a lack of reverence among many believers.

They hurt people with jokes. They crack dirty jokes. They laugh at dirty jokes.

And there's a lack of reverence in the church. They're sort of flippant in the way they behave. Even in the way they sing.

There's a flippancy in the way a lot of Christians sing. There's no reverence. In reverence he prepared the ark.

Reverence is a very important characteristic of Christianity. The fear of God. He prepared the ark, which is a picture of our building, the church.

For the salvation of his family. He brought every one of his family members into the ark. Have you done that with your children? Have you brought every one of your children into the church? Don't give the excuse, oh, Brother Zach, children are so different.

They are not different. Train up a child in the way he should go. Psalm, Proverbs 22.6. When he's old, he will not depart from it.

There are two parts to that verse. The condition and the promise. The condition is what you're going to do.

The promise is what God will do. Don't make an excuse if your children go astray. Proverbs 22, verse 6. Here's what you have to do.

Train up a child in the way he should go. That's your job. Father, Mother, here is God's promise.

When that child is old, he will not depart from that way. What more do you want? A condition and a promise. If the government of your country were to say to you in these difficult financial times, if you come and fill up this application and give it here, we will give you \$50,000 every month.

Would you go? You'd be running. The condition is you must fill up this application. It's very easy to do.

And give it. Or even if it's difficult to do. Maybe there's 25 pages in that application.

You'll fill it up. Because you're going to get \$50,000 in a month. Here is a condition.

Train up a child in the way he should go. You'll get more than \$50,000 in a month. You'll get children who are going to follow the Lord and be a witness for the Lord in their generation.

But you've got to be strict. I have four sons, and I was very strict with them. And gracious.

And I trusted the Lord that if I do my part, he would do his part. I can't make them go the right way, but God can. But my condition, my part is to train up in the way he should go.

Noah did that. It says in Hebrews 11, for the salvation of his family. The last days will be like the days of Noah.

Pornography. Violence. But also, there will be a few people like Noah.

Upright. Righteous. Who brought up their family well.

And by that action, Hebrews 11, 7, he condemned the world. The way he lived and the way he brought up his children was a testimony to the world saying, I don't agree with you fellows, the way you're going. How can you be ready for the coming of the Lord? Be a man like Noah.

I'm sure his wife cooperated with him. Be a sister like Mrs. Noah. Without her cooperation, it may have been difficult for him to bring up his family like that.

Mr. and Mrs. Noah. Tremendous example for the last days. And you see how they obeyed.

120 years, you read in Genesis 6, it took to build that ark. And who do you think helped them? His three sons. If you're building the church, are your sons helping you to build the church? Very important.

Train up your sons and daughters to help you like Noah. He had three sons and three daughters-in-law. And the daughters-in-law also helped in building the church, building the ark.

If you have sons and daughters-in-law, they must all be building the church with you. That's what it means to be ready for the last days. Concentrate on that.

Don't just say, I go to church and I sing the song and I give a little money in the offering. That's not the way to be ready for the coming of the Lord. Prepare your family to be a witness for Christ in these last days.

And if they go astray, don't blame them. Blame yourself. How can God's promise fail? When he's old, he will not depart from it.

How can that promise fail? Impossible. Maybe you failed. You did not bring them up in the proper way.

Is there hope for you then? Yes. If you confess your sin and don't blame somebody else. Don't blame your wife and say she was not faithful.

Nothing to do with her. You can single-handedly bring up your children in the fear of God. Even if Mrs. Noah doesn't cooperate, Noah would have brought them up in the fear of God because he feared God himself.

One man with God is a majority. Have you heard that statement? It's true. One man with God is always a majority.

No matter how many people are on the other side. So we read, for the salvation of the soul, and by that action, it says in Hebrews 11, condemn the world. How do I show that I don't belong to the world? By living in a way that is different from them and by bringing up my children also to be different from them.

The last days will be like the days of Noah. Wickedness, pornography, evil, terrorism, but in the midst of it, there will be people like Noah and families like Noah's family. And I pray, my dear brothers and sisters, with all my heart, I pray that every one of you who are here will be ready like that.

Our whole purpose in having these global Zoom meetings is to spread the word, and I pray that you will also spread this message to many others to be ready for the coming of Christ. Avoid hypocrisy. I'll mention one last thing, which I always mention in my messages, what Jesus said, Matthew 6, verse 13 to 15.

If you do not forgive others, you will not be forgiven. It's not enough to confess your sins to be forgiven. 1 John 1 line, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But if you confess your sin, and Matthew 6, verse 15, you don't forgive somebody in the world of what that person did to you or to your husband or to your wife or to your children. You don't forgive that person. I want to say to you in Jesus' name, you are not forgiven.

No matter how much you quote 1 John 1 line, the blood of Jesus has not cleansed you because you don't come under 1 John 1 line category, you come under Matthew 6, verse 15, where you are not forgiven by your father. Many people quote 1 John 1 line to have their sins forgiven. I say, I quote 1 John 1 line.

You cannot be cleansed without the blood of Christ. But I also quote Matthew 6, verse 15. There's a condition.

If you do not forgive others, your father will not forgive you, no matter how many times you confess your sin. Very, very important because I know there are believers who are not forgiven. Somebody who did something against them 20 years ago, they still remember it.

They don't forgive what their wife did last year. Their relatives cheated them of some property. Have you forgiven them? No? I'm sorry to say, no matter how much you ask for the blood of Christ, it will not cleanse you.

You will not be forgiven. But you say, that guy was unrighteous. So what? You were unrighteous before God, and he forgave you.

But you say you repented. The people who crucified Jesus, did they repent before Jesus forgave them? Did he wait for them to repent? He hung on the cross. They had whipped him, beaten him, cursed him, called him the devil, and nailed him to the cross.

None of them repented. He said, Father, forgive them. That is our example.

As Christ forgave, we must forgive even people who do not repent. Repentance is necessary for fellowship. That I agree.

Matthew 18, verse 14 onwards, it says, if a brother sins, talk to him. Take to others and talk to them. Fellowship is restored.

Fellowship is different from forgiveness. You can't have fellowship with a person who doesn't think things right. I agree.

But forgiveness is for everybody. In that, Jesus is our example on the cross. He forgave everyone.

Forgive them. They don't know what they do. That is our attitude.

Very, very important, brothers. You want to be prepared, ready for the coming of the Lord? Just make sure that if the Lord comes suddenly, that you're not found with an unforgiving spirit towards somebody else. If you don't do that out of fear for the Lord, fear of the Lord, at least do it out of fear that Christ may catch you when he comes again in that condition.

The best is because I love the Lord and he's forgiven me so much. I want to forgive everybody who's ever harmed me. I say that before God.

I'm a servant of the Lord. I've been a target of the devil for 50 years. So, obviously, the devil's troubled me through many, many, many people.

They've taken me to court and they've done all types of things to me. But God is my witness. I have forgiven every single one of them.

I don't have a grudge against any of them. I wish good for them. I pray God bless them and their families.

I don't wish any evil to them, every single one of them. Because my Savior walked that way. Father, forgive them.

They don't know what they're doing. Go this way, my brothers and sisters. And even if you don't understand many other things, you will be ready for the coming of Christ.

Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we bow before you.

Dear brothers and sisters, if there is one thing, more than other things that the Lord spoke to you today, wherever you are, think of that one thing, the main thing, and say to the Lord in your heart right now, Lord, I want to set that right. I want to change my way of life in that area, this moment. Thank you, Lord.

God will hear you. Your life can be changed from today. Help us, Lord, each one, to take seriously.

Help us to be ready for your coming. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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