

Aughnacloy, Ballymagrane, Clogherney & Sixmilecross Presbyterian Churches

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Matthew 24:42-44 Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So, you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Dear Friends

As your minister, it is a great privilege that I have in bringing this weekly devotion to you. Our theme today, is the 'The Day of the Lord', as we anticipate the return of the Lord.

I trust that you are all keeping safe and well. As we wait with expectant hope of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as we reflect on the next portion: **1 Thessalonians 5:1-11** *Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

Prayer - *Lord of the changing year, patterns and colours bright; all that we see and hear, sunrise and starlit night; the seasons, Lord, in splendour shine, your never-failing wise design.*

Loving Lord, as we look to you in our future in your word today, and reflect on your day that is to come, we ask that in our hearts and minds we would embrace that day with renewed hope in the joy of your return.

For in these days of social distance and lock-down, may we know the reassurance of your presence all around us in our homes, and equip us for the relaxation of restrictions in the future, filling us with the necessary confidence to begin to take the tentative steps permitted towards resuming the more regular patterns of life.

O God of the future, as we live in these uncertain times, we pray that your return would be the day that is anticipated with joy in our hearts, encourage O Lord, those who feel they have little to look forward to, that they may look to You and know the assurance of your unfailing love.

Lord you have filled our days with journeys and discoveries; with striving and succeeding; with energy and stillness; with solitude and togetherness; with silence and celebration. You have offered us hope and a new beginning; cleansing and renewal; comfort and deep satisfaction; forgiveness and mercy, Yourself, your love and your son as our saviour. We come to offer our heartfelt thanks, and the adoration that comes from lives made new by the power of your spirit within us.

Wonderful God, we praise you, that you are beyond our imagining, you are almighty, all knowing and all loving. Sovereign Lord, there are no words too high, no thoughts too extravagant. We bring you our praise, not because we must, not because we are able, not even because we want to, but because you are worthy of all praise glory and honour. Lord hear us today as we praise and worship you in the name of Jesus your son our saviour. **Amen.**

Today as we focus on those first two verses of chapter 5, we note that the 'The Day of the Lord', will be like a thief in the night. How do we live out our life day by day? In light of **5:2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.** Possibly, we should all be living as if Jesus was crucified yesterday; raised from the dead this morning and is coming back this afternoon. Are you ready? Paul refers to the return of Jesus that we look forward to as 'The Day of the Lord' here in verse 2. You well ask, what is the day of the Lord'?

The phrase 'The Day of the Lord' is an expression used throughout scripture that refers to God's Judgement and the defeat of His adversaries, as well as the salvation of his people.

Judgement - In the Old Testament this expression is used a number of times, referring to the coming destruction of an enemy and also giving the Israelites an opportunity to return to God again in order to avoid the coming destruction. E.g. The Prophecy against Babylon Isaiah 13: **6 Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. ... 9 See, the day of the Lord is coming —a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger— to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.**

The day of the Lord can be an event in the Old Testament like the judgement of Babylon, but we can also know from our passage in 1 Thess 5, that the day of the Lord is a day of great judgment coming on the whole world. As Isaiah says; **to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.**

However, the judgments pronounced in the Old Testament, are only a foreshadowing of the judgment God will bring on the great day of the Lord when He judges the whole world.

Salvation - The Old Testament prophet Joel speaks clearly about the coming Day of the Lord. Joel begins by describing an invasion of locusts, then speaks about the Day of the Lord. As Joel's prophecy unfolds, in spite of the terrible day of judgement there is an element of hope. Chapter 2 blows the trumpet, followed by a call to return to the Lord; and seek His mercy and grace.

Joel 2:12 "Even now," ... "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."

When we go through difficult trials and tribulations, those events produce one of two responses. We either grow in thankfulness to the Lord, or we become bitter and angry. Either we trust God to see us through the trial and we grow with Him, or we turn away from God in unbelief, getting bitter frustrated and angry at God.

The day of the Lord brings with it, judgement, but also Salvation for all who are trusting in the finished work of Calvary. This is where we see Jesus in the Day of the Lord.

Jesus - In the life of Jesus Christ, we see that great and terrible Day of the Lord. The cross is that day. Judgement; On the cross Jesus takes our judgement and provides our Salvation. For those today who look to Christ, there is Salvation. For those who continue to turn away from the cross there is judgement. The Day of the Lord will be a day of judgement and fire, a remaking of the heavens and the earth, but those who believe will be saved.

v. 9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We do not have to fear that Day, for it is the day of our salvation, saved from the final tribulations.

The Lord comes to us on the Lord's Day, the day of worship, and we draw near to Him in confession and receive forgiveness. The Lord comes to us through the week, and He draws us near to Him. The Lord comes to us as we face death, in order to see us through that valley. He is with us.

These are wonderful words of encouragement to us all. On the Day of the Lord', 1. ...there will be the wrath of fire and judgement, 2. ...there is hope, there is Salvation. If we believe on Christ, He will see us safely through that day. 3. ...If you have not yet come to Christ as your Saviour, don't turn away from this warning. Trust Christ now. Confess your sins now. Receive forgiveness now.

Prayer - Loving Lord we thank you today for the love, comfort and encouragement you are to us all in these present times as we look forward to Your Day. When the fear of the unknown surrounds us we are reminded that there is a day ahead which we are sure of, 'The Day of the Lord'. As we look to you, may your love for us be real in each of our lives, equipping us for that day, when You return and receive your own into your presence.

So, amid the conflict, whether great or small, do not be discouraged, God is over all. Count your many blessings! Angels will attend, help and comfort give you to your journey's end. Count your blessings name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest remain and abide with us all, this day and forevermore. Amen.