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SERMON TITLE Redemption is Near

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE Luke 21:28-36

SYNOPSIS Jesus is coming soon. We must be ready.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ Redemption is Near

We've been talking about an Eternal Perspective. Too often we are overly focused on the here and now rather than all of eternity ahead. Jesus said there's an eternal reward for those who believe, but he also warned about eternal punishment for those who reject him. This is true for every person everywhere. We can suffer God's wrath or we can be saved. Eternity is at stake and **you can affect someone's eternal destiny**. So, I've been thinking about eternity. When Jesus talked about the Last Days he said that we should look up because our redemption is drawing near...

☞ Luke 21:28-36

28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. 29 He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. 31 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. 34 "**Be careful**, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. 35 For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 **Be always on the watch**, and **pray** that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

v. 28 these things = starting at v. 8... false Christs, war, ethnic conflict, earthquakes, famine, plagues, fearful events, persecution of believers, Jerusalem surrounded by armies, signs in the sun, moon and stars, great apprehension and anxiety.

Many of these things have been going on for decades, even centuries, but elsewhere Jesus explained that all these things will be more intense and occurring more and more often, such as we see in the world today. Nonetheless, Jesus said that when these things **begin** to take place we should pay attention.

"Stand up and lift up your heads." Some translations simply say "look up" while others say "straighten up." In essence, he's saying that these things, while horrible, are indicators of something good coming soon for believers. Our anticipation of the return of Christ should be exhilarating and exciting. While others are down and discouraged by what's happening in the world, we are looking upward to something fantastic.

☞ The signs of the times should inspire hope in the believer.

Colossians 3:1-4


Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.



2 Timothy 4:8

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Our **“redemption is drawing near.”** We will be delivered from this sin-fallen world and released from the bondage of sin and temptation. In a sense, we have been held hostage while the enemy continues his tyranny and destruction, but our ransom has been paid and we will be set free very soon. It is drawing near; that is, it is getting closer and closer.

Yes, believers have already been redeemed in the sense that the price has been paid, but we are still stuck in this corrupt world, struggling with sin. But one day very soon our redemption will be  complete when **Jesus returns** and ultimately sets us free. As Colossians says, we will appear with him in glory.


Romans 8:23 talks about the redemption of our bodies, which we discussed last week. Our **spiritual bodies** will be like the resurrected body of Jesus – immortal, incorruptible, without pain, with supernatural abilities.

Ephesians 1:14 and Hebrews 9:15 both link redemption with the **inheritance** we will receive in God’s eternal kingdom. Last week we talked about rewards we will receive and the mansion he has prepared for us. Not only that, but he will give us positions of authority to assist in governing his **kingdom**. These are all wonderful! Our redemption is drawing near. It’s getting close.


Then, starting in **v. 29** Jesus illustrates the immanence of these things with the image of a fig tree beginning to bud. When trees begin to sprout leaves in the spring, we know that summer is just around the corner. And so, when we see all the things that Jesus predicted, we know that our redemption (i.e., the kingdom of God, and his return in glory) is just around the corner.

Now, some scholars think the fig tree represents Israel being restored as a nation after centuries of being scattered. That happened on May 14, 1948, in Tel Aviv, when David Ben-Gurion established the first Jewish state in 2,000 years. That is an unparalleled historical event, and some suggest that people who were living during that time will still be living at Christ’s return. If so, that means that the time is very, very close.

Whether that symbolism is accurate or not doesn’t really matter. Jesus said that when we see his predictions being fulfilled, we know that the time is very short.

 So, in any case, we know **he is coming soon!**

Then, in **verse 34** and following, Jesus tells us how to respond to all this. He starts with, **“be careful; take heed; pay attention; be on guard.”**

 The idea is that we should **be constantly ready, devoting our thoughts and efforts to Christ**. And, he contrasts this concept with the alternatives of carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life which can weigh us down.



Here, we have the connection to my last few sermons – we need to have an eternal perspective and not be so focused on the here and now. When we focus on achieving our best life now, piling up prosperity and possessions here, we get sidetracked and overwhelmed. All the cares and concerns of this temporary life can be a heavy burden that keeps us down and depressed.

Carousing can mean a headache, and anxieties can mean distractions. How many of us deal with daily distractions and difficulties from various kinds of troubles? Jesus is saying that being overly focused on the here and now only leads to difficulties and distractions. He goes on to say that we can be *so* focused on the here and now that his sudden return will be like a trap. By this, he is saying that you might get stuck in all the trouble that is coming on the world and miss the ultimate redemption that comes with Jesus.

-- Bible Knowledge Commentary... Though a believer will be able to anticipate the coming of the kingdom by the signs, it is possible to get so entangled with the affairs of life that some will not be ready for the kingdom when it comes - unexpectedly (v. 34) and universally (v. 35) - and therefore will not enter the kingdom.

This concept is strengthened by the Lord's teaching in Luke 12 about the servant who wasn't keeping busy with his master's work and ended up in the same place as unbelievers. As well, in Matthew 25, Jesus warns about being shut out of the kingdom with his story of the foolish virgins whose lamps ran out of oil. These are stern warnings!

Too often, today's Christians think that because they believe in God and in Jesus they are ready for eternity. But that's only the first step toward eternity. We need to be busy about the Lord's work, serving him and preparing for his eternal kingdom.

☞ If not, we **risk missing out on his ultimate redemption**. That's a scary thought. If you're overly focused on the here and now; if you're apathetic about serving the Lord, you're in danger! Get your priorities straight and go after the Lord with all your heart!

Jesus says, "be careful!" And then in verse 36, he says, "**be always on the watch.**" In other words, "wake up; stay alert!" Here it is again: **pay attention; be always ready**. You can't be so focused on the here and now. You've got to be ready.

--Bible Exposition Commentary... "Watch!" does not mean to stand around looking for signs. It means, "Be awake! Be alert! Don't get caught unprepared!" This admonition carries a warning for us today, because it is so easy for us to "get weighted down" with the cares of this life and the temptations of the world and the flesh.

In the original language, the meaning here is contrasted with that of being sleepy and lethargic.

☞ As I've been saying, **lethargy and apathy** in your relationship with Jesus is actually viewed by the Lord as **rejection**. Don't reject the Lord by your lack of interest and lack of enthusiasm for him. Simply-believing is short-sighted. Even demons believe (James 2:19). James elaborates that our faith must be combined with action. If you believe, but your walk with God is "ho-hum," watch out! You may be in danger of missing your redemption!



You've got to keep your focus on God. When you are overly focused on the here and now, you can easily become lazy and bored in your walk with God, and that is dangerous.

Romans 12:11

Never be lacking in zeal, but **keep your spiritual fervor**, serving the Lord.

Zeal = earnestness (intense conviction) and diligence (careful & persistent effort)

Fervor = to be hot; to boil – this is very similar to the meaning of zeal, so Romans 12:11 is doubly emphasizing how we should be in our relationship with God... “on fire;” with intense conviction and persistent effort.

A variation of the original word for fervor is found in Revelation 3:16, which says, “So, because you are lukewarm—neither **hot** nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” Here's yet another warning about our attitude and passion for the Lord. Lukewarm, apathetic attitudes and behaviors are viewed very negatively by the Lord. If left unaddressed, that mentality can lead to missing out on our ultimate redemption.

☞ Don't lose your passion, **keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.**

☞ Then, Jesus concludes with an admonition to **pray**. And, we can pray specifically that we might be spared all the troubles he is predicting. That is not just escapism. It's wanting to make sure we are ready to stand before the Lord. And, this standing before the Lord is not just to make it into heaven.

☞ It also includes the idea of **persevering** to the end as well as serving him as a personal attendant. So, here it is yet again. Pray so that you will be able to keep on serving the Lord. Pray so that you may be able to escape all the turmoil and trouble coming upon the world. Pray so that you don't miss your redemption.

Eternity is at stake. Don't miss it! Redemption is drawing near. Jesus is coming soon! Be careful; be ready; be serving him; pray. Keep the fire burning! Look up, your redemption is near!