"When the Kingdom Comes"
By Pastor David Nygard
Isaiah 26:1-4 & Matthew 25:1-13
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All Bible Passages Come From the New International Version (NIV)

Isaiah 26:1-4 In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; God makes salvation its walls and ramparts. 2 Open the gates that the righteous nation may enter, the nation that keeps faith. 3 **You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. 4 Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is the Rock eternal.**

Matthew 25:1-13 Jesus said, "**At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise.** 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. 5 **The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. 6 "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' 7 "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 9 "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' 10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.** 11 "Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!' 12 "**But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.' 13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.**

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen. I am glad that we can talk together. To our friends watching at home, why not join us next Sunday? We have a pew with your name on it. Come early. The padded pews go first.

My sermon is called "When the Kingdom Comes". Do you ever wake in the morning and say, "Oh man. Just more of the same?" Do you ever think you know exactly what will happen? Get up. Go to work or school. Come home. Eat Supper. Go to bed. Next day, the same.

Of course, our lives can get into ruts. We get predictable in our habits. We become lazy in our relationships. We think that we have everything under control. But then the unexpected comes knocking on our door. The doctor gives us bad news. A job comes to an end. A relationship falls apart. We never see it coming. Something good might also be

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unexpected. We could fall in love. A long-lost friend might call us. An answer to prayer might change everything.

Only God knows. We never know what tomorrow holds for us. We only know who holds tomorrow in the palms of his hands; Jesus Christ our Lord. Even if this is the worst possible time for us, we don't know the rest of the story. Only God knows. Do you trust Jesus?

Jesus teaches us to keep our eyes open; our hearts ready for whatever the day brings. One event coming our way, that seems unexpected is the return of Jesus Christ. The same Jesus who died on the cross and rose from the grave, he promised to come back to earth one day. Jesus keeps his promises.

He calls it the coming of God's kingdom. In the Lord's Prayer Jesus teaches us to pray **"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done."** We can't pray the Lord's Prayer without bringing his kingdom's return one day closer.

The Bible writers tell us that one day a bright light will come shining from the east coast to the west. The sky will break open. The angels will shout. A trumpet will sound. Every eye will look up. King Jesus will return in a twinkling of an eye. Amazing!

Those who believe in Jesus and are baptized will shout his praise. What a friend we have in Jesus! Those who have rejected him and lived sinful, selfish lives will moan and groan, knowing that they will stand before God without a savior.

According to the Bible when the kingdom comes, God will dry the tear in every eye. There will be no more sickness, suffering or death. We will hear Jesus speak, and we will say "I know your voice. It is your voice that spoke so often to my heart."

When the kingdom comes there will be justice for everyone who was a victim in this life. Every bully, drug dealer, abuser, hypocrite and corrupt politician, who never got caught, will answer to God for their crimes. God is not mocked.

When the kingdom comes, we will see Jesus. Standing with him will be our family and friends. Everyone who believed in Jesus Christ. What a

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day that will be. Even though we die, we will alive again. Thanks to Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Jesus taught a parable about when the kingdom comes. He compared that event to the excitement of friends and family waiting for a wonderful wedding to begin. Do you like weddings?

In Bible times a wedding took place over many days or weeks. There were reunions and dinners. The bride did everything to get herself ready for the day. The real celebration didn't happen until the groom arrived on the scene. It could happen anytime day or night. The bridesmaids would wait all night by the road with lamps filled with oil and light to welcome him.

In the parable the bridesmaids hear that the groom is coming soon. So, they get oil for their lamps to give him light for the path. Half of the bridesmaids run out of oil. They won't be able to welcome the groom properly. The other bridesmaids tell them to buy more oil in town. While they are in town, the groom comes, and the doors to the wedding are locked. They were too late. They were locked out.

In the story Jesus is the groom. The Christian believer is the bride. The oil is the Holy Spirit or a symbol for faith. How sad to miss the joy of Jesus' return because we have run out of faith or pushed the Holy Spirit away. Jesus tells us, **"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."** Be ready.

What might cause us to run out of faith? Why do we push God away? Maybe we have lost our first love for Jesus. We take him for granted. Church doesn't seem important. Maybe our lives have been difficult. We're tired of being tired. It could be that we say, "Jesus hasn't come back in two thousand years, he probably changed his mind."

It's funny how time can change our lives. We had a time change last week. We had to set our clocks back. It can really mess us up. Years ago, I came to church one Sunday. Put on robes and waited for people to show up. I waited and waited. I thought "It finally happened. No one is coming. Not even Rose Ann." (And Rose Ann has been here 50 years.) Only then did I realize "time change!" I told my children last week, "Everyone is turning their clocks back. Don't be a follower. Be a leader. Turn your clocks

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ahead and see what happens." You never know until you try. I'm just saying.

Here are three simple ways that Jesus comes back to us every day. His kingdom is very close. If Jesus can come back in little ways and bless us, then he will return dramatically at the end of time and bless us more.

#1) Jesus comes back to us every time his will is done. A kingdom is wherever the king is honored and his will is done. We might be driving in traffic, or be talking to a neighbor, or eating fast food. There might be tension in the air or anger in the moment. But then we or someone says a prayer, or shows us kindness, or welcomes us. Suddenly we feel peace or hope. King Jesus has rushed into that moment. Every time we are kind to a clerk or help a child, God's will is done. Every time we visit the sick, or bring someone a meal, or stop to listen, God's kingdom has come. Listen to your heart.

#2) Jesus comes back to us every time we take the Lord's Supper. It's just bread, wine and some promises, we tell ourselves. I asked my Confirmation students, "When do you feel closest to God?" I asked them one at a time, no one else in the room. 90% of them answered, "When I take Communion." I was shocked. Young teenagers are nice people, but they aren't overly spiritual. Even so, they felt the kingdom come to them. I think that they heard **Jesus say, "This is my body given for you. This is my blood shed for you."** They heard the voice of their king. Listen for that voice.

#3) Jesus comes back for us when our place in heaven is ready. Jesus said**, "In my Father's house are many rooms. I am going there to prepare a place for you. When that place is ready, I will come back so that you may be where I am." John 14:2-3**. Years ago, I sat with my brother Joe in Hospice. I said "Joe, we're tired. Let's sleep. If Jesus comes for you, go with him." Ten minutes later I woke up. Joe was gone. There was such peace in that room. My cousin John died that same week. He sat with his wife in the hospital. He looked up and said "Jesus". He died that same day. God's kingdom had come. Jesus might not come back to earth for another thousand years. But he will come back for you and me, much sooner than that. Listen for your king.

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Here are four simple things that we can do to make sure that our hearts are ready to meet Jesus. Here's how we put oil in our lamps. We do each one by God's grace.

#1) We can make sure who lives in our heart. We recently celebrated Reformation Sunday. Martin Luther said, "Should anyone knock at my heart and say, 'Who lives there?', I should reply, 'Not Martin Luther, but the Lord Jesus Christ.'" Our baptism, a repentant prayer, a prayer of invitation opens the door. If you aren't sure that Jesus lives in your heart, talk to Pastor Hoover or to me.

#**2) We can trust in what Jesus did for us on the cross.** We can't add anything to it. Jesus paid the price. Luther wrote "Faith is a living daring confidence in God's grace." **Grace** is **G**od's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense."

3) We need to live our faith every day. Martin Luther said, "We need to hear the Gospel every day because we forget it every day." Our minds fill with many other things. Luther taught "We need to confess our sins daily because we sin daily." Something good happens when we pray often. Luther wrote, "Pray and let God worry." Give God your problems and let God worry.

#4) We can read the Bible a few verses or chapters per day. Luther said, "The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me." You can find a version of the Bible that is understandable. Start with John's Gospel. Follow with Matthew, Mark, Luke and the Psalms. Fill your lamp with oil. Let God's thoughts become your thoughts.

Do you think that Jesus is coming back one day? Are you expecting his return? Probably three fourths of the world would say "No". Maybe half of us would say "No."

Here's what Jesus tells us **Matthew 24:44, "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you least expect him."** That sounds clear to me.

We don't have to be afraid. The best is yet to be. Learn the power of this prayer, **"Thy kingdom come; thy will be done."** God bless you. Amen. I preach again on December 13th. Be there.

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