

Dear Christians open wide your heart, a place for the Christ-child set apart. Amen.

Watch for Christ's Coming!

- I. Know the signs**
- II. Remain focused**

INTRODUCTION

It has become a common understanding that at this time of the year you can just expect that you will have more people visiting your house and in turn you will probably also be invited to visit in the homes of relatives and friends. What do you do when you know that people are coming to visit? Aren't there preparations to be made? If it is somebody whom you haven't seen in a while, isn't there that feeling to keep looking out the window and see when they arrive?

We are in a time in our society and, I pray, also in our church life when we know that someone or something is coming. The question is what is it that we are getting ready for? The answer to that question will determine a lot of things. Hopefully we remember and realize that Advent and the weeks before Christmas mean that it is time to again get ready to celebrate Jesus' coming and also a reminder to constantly be ready for his second coming. Today we turn our attention to the words of Jesus in Luke 21:25-36. There our Savior reminds us **Watch for Christ's Coming!** His words show us two things that are a part of that watching: 1) Know the signs and 2) Remain focused. I invite you to hear those words of our Savior.

I. Know the signs

When people think about the end of the world, they think of it in one of two ways. Either they listen to those words of our Savior which speak about Jesus' coming like a thief in the night and they say that there is no way that we can know when Jesus will return. Or else, they hear the words we just read and they talk about the fact that there will be signs which will tell us that Jesus' return is not far away.

Jesus tells us that when he comes again at the end – it will not be without warning. *"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken."* Perhaps you are more familiar with the list our Savior gives in Matthew's Gospel which speaks about wars and rumors of wars, nations rising against one another and family members hating one another. No matter which list you read, is there anything that you notice? It is pretty hard to read those lists and not notice whether it is on the evening news or when you pick up the newspaper or in your own life that these things are taking place on a daily basis.

But did you ever notice that when people see these signs, they often get all up in arms and wonder what has gone wrong. Jesus tells us that these signs tell us one thing – Jesus is coming. When we see these signs, we should pay attention and make sure we are watching for Christ's coming.

APPLICATION: It is obvious that these signs are happening in the world all around us – but do we also have signs in our own lives? Do we maybe see the increase of wickedness or the trouble in society and wonder what it means? Sadly, even Christians sometimes don't understand what the signs mean. We hear all the things our Savior tells us, but we forget that he concludes by saying that before the end comes things will get worse and not better.

Transition: Not only does Jesus tell us to be ready by watching for the signs.

II. Remain focused

We have come to understand that when you see signs of something, you should pay attention to the signs. We have all heard the signs which tell you that you are very likely having a heart attack and should get medical attention. Haven't we also been reminded that if your bad cholesterol number gets too high, you probably need to change your eating habits. Likewise, when we see the signs which mean that Christ is coming again, we shouldn't just stand there. *"Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap."*

Notice the first words Jesus speaks. Jesus warns us of all sorts of things which could distract us. The devil will use all the distractions and things which vie for our attention in the coming weeks to try to get our focus away from the real watching and preparation which needs to be made. It is as if our Savior spoke these words in 2006. The bottle, drugs, depression and the like will try to take our hearts away from watching for Christ's return.

That is why Jesus concludes by telling us how to remain focused. *"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."* Perhaps the coming weeks will call for us to have more conversations with our Savior in prayer asking him to help us keep our hearts looking toward the manger and his second coming. These words also remind us of the additional worship opportunities we have in the coming weeks to gather around God's Word and listen to what his two comings are all about.

CONCLUSION

As is often the case when a dignitary visits an area, they like to visit in the homes or businesses of people in the area – we have come to know these as photo ops. You know, the situations which are preceded either by a secret service detail or a media blitz. On one particular occasion, a dignitary made an unannounced visit to the home of an older couple. The couple was embarrassed because they felt their home was not clean enough to welcome this special guest and they did not have anything to feed him.

Is that the way we are going to be found about 3 weeks from now? Are we going to get to December 24 or 25 and not have that joy which we know should be filling our hearts? Might that be because we were not watching and preparing for the right thing in the right way. Brothers and sisters in Christ, may prayer for each one of you in the coming weeks is that you see the signs which tell us that Christ is coming. As you see the signs, may God give you the grace to remain focused and therefore each and every day to **Watch for Christ's Coming!** Amen.