

God with Us: Emmanuel Will Come

Matthew 24:24-44 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. ²⁹ "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. ³² "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁴ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³⁶ "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ³⁷ As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 "O come, o come, Emmanuel," is not a prayer for the hastening of Christmas. It's not a prayer for Jesus to be born. That already happened. Yes, certainly, the hymn calls to mind this historical event: the birth of God in the flesh to dwell with us and die for us. But we're not praying for Christmas to come. Quite the opposite. This hymn is a prayer for Christmas not to come. In fact, that's what Advent is all about, hoping that Christmas will never come again.

2 Sure, Christmas is nice when it happens. We celebrate the Nativity of our Lord who took on our human flesh, was born to die in our place, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried, who descended into hell, rose from the dead,

ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father. All that happened. The Creed is an historical statement of fact. But the final part of the second article of the Creed has yet to happen. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. He will return. Emmanuel, Jesus Christ, God-in-the-flesh, will return. The Wisdom from on high, the Lord of might, the Branch of Jesse, the Key of David, the Dayspring from on high, the Desire of nations will come.

3 His coming will be the end, not only of Christmas, but of all that we do as His Church. At His return, no longer will we read His word or hear it preached; He will speak it directly to us as He dwells with us. No longer will we receive His Body and Blood in a foretaste of the feast to come; the wedding feast will happen. No longer will we celebrate seasons in the church year; each day with the Lamb who was crucified will tell the story of our salvation. No longer will we gather to receive the Lord's gifts in His Divine Service; we will be gathered in his continual Divine Service, the constant outpouring of His gifts in His presence. Emmanuel will come.

4 Until he does, though, these are days of tribulation. The world greatly prefers its holiday celebration to hoping for the second advent of Emmanuel. Presents pacify and distract from the imminent darkening of the sun, the final waning of the moon, and the falling of stars from the heavens. If shopping, dining, drinking, indulging in festivities keep you from noticing the fig tree ripe with buds, the signs all around of the coming Day of the Lord, repent of these things. If the world's jeering and taunting because you hope for a day that has not yet come cause you to doubt its imminence, repent. If the progression of days toward that one day causes you to become sleepy, weary of waiting, and doubtful of its coming, repent. "If the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

5 Do not fall into the sleep of disbelief, the sleep of sin, the sleep of satisfaction with things the way they are, beloved. The Lord is coming for His elect. He has chosen them, He has placed His name upon them, He has given them His word of promise. When the heavens and earth pass away, this word, this promise, this name placed upon them remains. That's you. He placed His name upon you. He elected you; he chose you; He died for you. He has promised that He will not long delay in coming to gather you with all the rest of the elect, His captive Israel, His holy Church.

6 Rejoice! Emmanuel will come to you, O Israel. You are a part of His chosen people, His holy Israel. He grafts you into this people through the gift of faith. He forgives your sins. He feeds you with His Body and Blood. And He shall come to you once and for all, to gather you with all the elect. This day is not far away. Emmanuel will come. Rejoice! Rejoice!

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
Pastor Jeff Hemmer
Hope, Jerseyville
Third Wednesday of Advent, A✠D 2007