
SERMON – 1ST ADVENT**MATTHEW 24:36-44****DECEMBER 1, 2019****“KENNY...MOM AND DAD ARE HOME”**

In the summer after my high school graduation, my mom and dad took a trip. My dad’s brother had a lake place in Western Wisconsin and invited the folks up for a few days. Now my parents rarely did this, and it was the summer I turned 18! When momma and papa cat were away, in other words, little mouse decided to play. When the coast was clear I made a few calls and one thing led to another and soon a few buddies over for a summer evening became the social event of the season. It was quite a party! I’m not sure when I went to bed, but I sure remember when I got up. It was the moment my older sister Gayle, who’d surveyed the situation in the house before she went to bed, came into my room and said “*Kenny, Mom and Dad are home.*”

For a moment I imagined it was April 1st. But it wasn’t and she wasn’t foolin. I won’t get into why mom and dad’s anticipated 3-day trip lasted less than 24 hours – nor attempt to describe the sadistic pleasure my sisso took in all this. All I figured is if they saw the basement, I’d be in deep doo doo. Divine intervention led them to first lie down for a while from the trip – long enough for ol Kenny boy to bolt out of bed and tiptoe downstairs with any plastic garbage bag I could lay my hands on. Never has a room been gone over as quickly or surgically nor appreciation expressed for the apartment complex two doors down that had a dumpster!

You can clean up a house quickly if you have to. But it’s quite a bit more of a task to clean up a life. That’s the gist of our lesson from Matthew today. Our lesson picks up mid-conversation. Jesus had been asked about a comment he’d made that the Temple in Jerusalem was not long for this world. The disciples asked; “*tell us when this will happen.*”

What followed was a monologue about all sorts of cosmic upheaval – wars, famines, falling stars, that sort of thing. If we assume Jesus is talking about the end times, he initially says things would be anything but normal – quite extraordinary in fact. But then Jesus says when the end comes things may seem quite normal. Men will be out in their fields, women at the grindstone, tired homeowners will go to bed and opportunistic thieves will get up for work. The point is whether conditions in the world are stunningly abnormal or quite run of the mill, there will be an end. And people need to be ready for it. It will divide people – those who long and live for it, and those who ignore and scoff at it.

It will come...like a set of parents at 6:22 AM! The lesson quite deliberately asks – how would you like to be “found?” This story warns us not to have too long of an account with God – timed to the season of Advent when some of us might be running up a big account with Visa! As though on cue, our lesson from

Romans chimes in by saying Christians ought to avoid owing anything except a debt of love – till the end time that is how the meantime should be spent.

Picture yourselves in the office or at school, or when you were left with a room to clean or phoned home that you had to work late, when somebody in authority to whom you made these promises or with whom you live found you doing anything but your job or that your “overtime” was spent at a bar with a friend instead of home with the family. Is this how you would want to be “found?” When Jesus comes, what will he find you up to?

We could say this is “*he’s making a list, checkin it twice, gonna find out whose naughty or nice*” message – and leave you with a picture of a Lord whose manner is to swoop in unexpectedly, take notes and names, and reward (or punish) accordingly. I could ascribe to our Lord the same tone my sister employed when, with a bit too much satisfaction in her voice said “*Kenny...Mom and Dad are home.*” Jesus did after all liken his return to that of a “*thief in the night.*”

We must be prepared for “an end” and having such in mind is not necessarily a bad thing. Deadlines can tire and torment, but they can also focus our thinking and hasten activity. The rabbis of Jesus’ day simply taught that one should repent a day before one’s death- which of course means daily – just as Luther taught.

But in thinking of “the end”, which is what the church does on this first day of Advent, we do well to think of it in gracious not ominous terms. Don’t think of it like we often do Christmas, where “*unless we get everything bought and baked*” it won’t be Christmas. Every year I’m asked by someone “so, pastor, you ready for Christmas.” Ready, how can one be ready for unmerited grace, peace and joy? Eager, yes - but ready?

One day our personal end will come. It may be chaotic, or it may be we’re just going about things the usual way. Our meantime is not meant not to be, as I discovered one summer morning, a frantic attempt to clean up my mess. It should rather be spent recalling what I should have recalled – a sober admission that my parents probably saw the backyard on their way in the house and knew full well what Kenny boy was up to the previous night – followed by the recollection that they were decent and kind parents to whom honesty would go a long way.

If my sister had just gone to work that morning, I suspect I would have awakened hours later and heard mom say; “*looks like you had some friends over.*” Then she’d have handed me the plastic bags while she grabbed the vacuum. And how much more might you expect from a Savior, Christ the Lord? Let your meantime be a confident celebration of that. AMEN