

Matthew 24v29-51

What does it look like to trust someone? It's not enough to say you trust someone is it? Trust isn't words it's seen in actions. Have you ever had to do that icebreaker activity. You know the one, where you pair off and you're asked to simply let yourself fall backwards trusting that the person behind you will catch you. That feels a bit false.

But we actually exercise active trust in other people all the time. Think about this morning and your breakfast. You trusted that the cereal company or bread factory follows good hygiene standards so that the food was safe to eat. When you got in the car you trusted that the designers engineered it to get you safely from A to B, and that the mechanic when you had it serviced and MOT'd did what they should do and so it is safe to drive or ride in, and you trusted the person driving to get you there safely.

We live by trust all the time. That's also true as disciple's of Jesus. When we repent and trust Jesus we're saying we trust in his death at the cross and his resurrection to save us and we trust in his words to make is wise for everything else in life. Discipleship is seen in not just in our words but in our lives, our actions, we do what Jesus calls us to do. In fact you aren't a disciple if you aren't actively trusting Jesus words and following him you're just an observer watching Jesus from a distance.

Imagine for a minute that this afternoon I need to go somewhere but I'm reluctant to get in my car. In fact I'd rather walk ten miles than get in my car. You'd be right to assume I don't trust my car, I don't think it's safe, that it will get me from A to B. No matter how much I told you it was safe my actions would say otherwise.

What does it look like to trust Jesus words about his return?

The disciples are shaken by Jesus prophecy that the temple will be destroyed, that **(2)“not one stone will be left on another”**. And they ask him **(3)“when will this happen, and what will be he sign of your coming and if the end of the age?”** And Jesus has taught them that it isn't one event, or a closely connected set of dominoes that falls one after another; the fall of Jerusalem, followed immediately by his coming and the end of the age. Rather he teaches them how to live in the period between his resurrection and ascension and his coming again. Life won't be easy, there will be wars and earthquakes and famines. They'll experience persecution and people abandoning the faith and turning on them. Jerusalem will fall and it will be brutal. And there will be false teachers and false Messiah's who claim all sorts. But Jesus prophesies all this in advance so the disciples know how to live, so they trust his words and put them into action by **(6)**not being alarmed, standing firm in their trust in Jesus even if it leads to persecution**(13)**, fleeing when Jerusalem**(16)** falls and praying in the meantime for God to be merciful**(20)**, and ignoring those who claim the Messiah has come in some little hidden away secret place**(23-28)**.

Now Jesus turns to his second coming and how they should live, what it looks like to trust him and take him at his word.

Set your life by Jesus words

(29)Immediately after the distress of living in the days of wars, famine, earthquakes, persecution, betrayal and false teaching and false Messiah's the end will come. The end of the world won't be with a whimper, it won't be possible to miss it because it will be like creation itself is coming undone: **“the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”** And Jesus will appear coming with all the glory and power and authority of the Father with his angels and gather his chosen people – all of them, from all over the earth.

Jesus coming won't be hidden away, it won't be secret, it won't go unnoticed. It won't be like his first coming, this will be international news, this will be the end. And those who aren't his people, who haven't trusted him **(30)** will mourn when they see him because they'll know what it means – the one they've rejected, ignored and opposed is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and it's too late for them to repent and turn to him.

Jesus wants his disciples to know that he will come again, he tells them not so they tuck it away for a general knowledge quiz night, but so it transforms the way they live. **(32)** He gives them an illustration from nature that they'd see every year as they walked around. **Just as the fig tree produces sap in spring and leaves begin to grow and you know summer is coming soon** so when you see all the things Jesus prophesied **(4-25)** coming true you know you can trust in Jesus return. **(34)** The disciples will see the events Jesus prophesied about wars, earthquakes, persecution, the Fall of Jerusalem and the gospel going to the ends of the earth come true in their lifetime, it's what we read of in Acts. It's a pattern that continues after their lifetime and until Jesus returns.

And what's the implication of that? **(35)** **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”** Jesus words are eternal and eternally true. The world around us is temporary, one day it will end but Jesus words can be trusted even beyond that. The world is temporary Jesus word is eternal. So live by the eternal word. Live your life trusting Jesus words.

What does that mean for them and for us? It means when we hear the news stories we don't lose heart and conclude the world is out of control, that God has lost interest, instead we read the world in light of Jesus's word. It means when persecution comes we don't despair and lose heart we encourage each other to stand firm together on the gospel. It means when some introduce false teaching, and twist what Jesus says so wickedness flourishes we fight them and trust in Jesus eternal unchangeable word. It means we take seriously the words of Jesus and live as if he will return.

We set our lives by Jesus words not our own imaginings or our own opinions. How foolishly arrogant to think our word and our opinion carries as much weight as Jesus'. It means we listen to Jesus words above those of our society – he alone has words that will outlast the heavens and the earth so they will certainly outlast our current on trend ideas about right or wrong, morality or ethics.

Whose word are we setting our lives by?

But secondly it's a reminder that everything is temporary. Our homes, our possessions, our careers, our marriages, nations, governments, even the sun, moon and stars. It all has a **'use by'** date. It doesn't mean none of it matters, it does and Jesus wants us to live for him in relation to each one of those things, what we do with them matters in eternity. But it does mean that none of those things are ultimate, none of them are worth worshipping, none of them ought to be things we set our lives by or to pursue.

Are Jesus words setting our lives? Do his words about eternity shape how we view our circumstances, our relationships, our possessions, our actions?

Keep watch and be ready for Jesus' return**(36-51)**

Jesus tells them he will return, he's shown them that it's not all one event or even a series of closely connected dominoes, but he won't tell them when because only the Father knows **(36)**. And life will go on as normal until he returns. Just like it did in the days of Noah. Even though Noah was building the ark and preaching of a day coming and calling people to repent, everyone else carried on as normal, they ignored him, they were eating and drinking **(37-39)** and marrying as if nothing would change, carrying on the normal and everyday even as they walked past the construction and the banging and hammering.

That's exactly how it will be when Jesus comes again(39-40) people will be going about their ordinary life, working with their workmates, and suddenly Jesus will come and people will be separated. They, and we, mustn't let the mundane sameness of everyday life lull us into thinking it will always be like this.

How should the ordinariness and suddenness of Jesus coming impact the disciples? How do they live in light of it?

“Keep watch” is the first instruction, be on your guard, be aware, be looking for it. He gives the illustration of a homeowner who if he knew the thief was coming would wait up all night baseball bat in hand ready to stop the thief. Be like the homeowner, you know that Jesus is coming back so live ready. **“So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”** That doesn't mean we give up our jobs, sell all our possessions and go and wait on a hillside where we'll have a better view.

But it does mean we live everyday life actively in light of the reality that Jesus is coming back. Jesus return colours everything we do – it affects how we work – we know it is temporary but good. It is an arena to serve God not something to be worshipped or that will provide satisfaction. It impacts how we use our money – we don't pour all our money into the here and now and comfort and the latest we invest in eternity in the gospel, in Jesus kingdom and making the gospel known, because we know that will echo into eternity whereas our new whatever won't. Don't put off to tomorrow what a disciple who trusts Jesus words about his return should do today.

Are we living watchfully or are we immersing ourselves in the things of this world because actually we don't believe Jesus will come again? Or we think we have longer to prepare for it?

If you haven't trusted in Jesus yet will you trust him and be ready? There are only two reactions to his coming – mourning or rejoicing depending on whether you have repented and trusted in him. Maybe you're putting it off, delaying looking seriously at who Jesus is because you want to live life first, but what if it's too late? You don't know when he will come. Life will be going on as normal, it will be a normal morning, with people have Cheerios and getting dressed for work and doing last minute homework, and fraught parents trying to rush children out of the house. There will be scheduled operations and appointments and meals and holiday plans which will never be fulfilled, because Jesus comes. Repent and trust Jesus, be ready?

But what does keeping watch look like? What does it involve? Jesus shows his disciples and us with a 'like this' 'not like' this story about a servant. The master goes away and leaves the servant in charge of the other servants in his household and there are two possible outcomes.

If the servant is faithful and wise(45-51) he takes the masters words seriously and lives in light of his return, feeding and caring for the other servants as his master gave him the responsibility to do. But if he's wicked or evil, he doubts the masters return and doesn't provide for the household but beats servants and indulges himself. When the master returns each servant gets what they deserve, the one who obeys his master and lived in light of his return will be rewarded. The one who abused his responsibilities and doubted the masters return and lived selfishly is surprised and condemned to hell.

Jesus teaches the disciples that being ready, being prepared, living in light of his coming, trusting his word means taking care of the household. Notice that, it's not that the wise faithful servant makes sure he is ready, but that he takes care of those the master has given responsibility for. The wicked servant doesn't do that, he indulges himself as if he has no responsibility to care for others and is just out for himself. For the disciples Jesus return means they will build others up in their faith, they will teach the gospel even when under pressure and facing persecution. They will proclaim the gospel and apply the gospel to nourish disciples to keep following Jesus.

In our age of individualism the danger is we hear this as I better keep watch and make sure I'm ready for Jesus coming again. But Jesus parable challenges that picture. We live in light of his certain return as we help others be ready. As we take seriously our responsibility to those in our church family, who are impoverished when we don't use our gifts to serve them, who are placed in danger when we won't commit to nourishing their faith, but indulge ourselves and live as if Jesus words about his return aren't true, or if we just shrink it down to an individual command.

Do you believe Jesus is coming back? Not in theory, not as a theological point of truth but in practice? Does it cause you to commit to your church family and using your God given gifts to spur others on? To encourage them to keep on trusting him even when the time in between is hard? To helping them discern the difference between false teaching and true teaching? To help their love for Jesus to grow not grow cold?

Jesus will come again. That is a certain and the events of AD 70 and Jerusalem's fall, will we live trusting Jesus words and commit to and encourage his people to keep going, keep trusting, keep watch, and be ready?