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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Well, let's turn together in our Bibles to Luke in chapter 17, and we're going to pick up from verse 20.

So Luke and chapter 17, beginning at verse 20 and reading through to the end of the chapter. Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed. Nor will people say, here it is, or there it is, because the kingdom of God is in your midst. Then he said to his disciples, the time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it.

People will tell you, there he is, or here he is. Do not go running after them. The Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first, he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

[1 : 12] People were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage. Up to the day Noah entered the ark, then the flood came and destroyed them all.

It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the housetop with possessions inside should go down to get them.

Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it. And whoever loses their life will preserve it.

I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding corn together.

[2 : 15] One will be taken and the other left. Where, Lord? They ask. He replied, Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.

There's really just one question that is on everybody's mind at the moment in the UK and in Whitby. When? When will life return to normal? When will this lockdown be removed?

When can we go and see our loved ones? When can we get back to work? There's a growing impatience for our restrictions to be removed. There's a restlessness within us to throw off the present constraints of life under coronavirus.

There's also that feeling as well. That even when this present crisis is over. Will life ever be quite the same again?

[3 : 20] Will we still long for those days before we ever heard of coronavirus? In a few months time? Will they be viewed with rose-tinted glasses and nostalgia for years to come?

We're told here that some Pharisees came to Jesus with a question. They had rose-tinted glasses about the past, about nostalgic days that were.

They looked back to the days of King David and King Solomon as the high days, the best days of the Kingdom of Israel. And they longed to return to those sort of days.

They hoped that something similar might happen once more. They were impatient. They were impatient. Impatient because their present situation needed to change.

They were in lockdown. Lockdown under the Roman Empire. Wherever they went, in every town, in every street, their Roman soldiers stood guard.

[4 : 22] When will we see such days of freedom again? It's something of the question that they're really getting to with Jesus. When will those happy days come when the Messiah will liberate us?

Jesus' response leads him to teach his disciples the vital truth that the world is not all that it seems. He tells the Pharisees that the Kingdom of God is not all as they imagine it.

The Kingdom of God is not about political freedom, wealth and prosperity for the nation of Israel. Instead, as he says to them there in verse 21, the Kingdom of God is already here, in their midst. It's right under their noses. Earlier, Jesus had made this very clear to his disciples and to the crowds who listened to him. He says in Luke 11, verse 20, If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has come to you.

Where Jesus is, the Kingdom of God is. So the very first sermon that Jesus preached, as soon as he'd come from the wilderness being tempted, is this, repent, for the Kingdom of God is near.

[5 : 46] Jesus, at his first coming into the world, at his birth, came to inaugurate a new era for the Kingdom of God. Although until then, God's Kingdom had been located almost exclusively within the family of Abraham, the Israelite nation, now it was going to spread out over the whole world and embrace all people.

Everyone who puts their trust in Jesus becomes a member of God's Kingdom, enters into God's Kingdom. It's the place where Jesus rules as Lord and King of our lives.

Just across the page there in Luke 16 and verse 16, Jesus said, The Kingdom of God is being preached and everyone is forcing their way into it.

Even those that the Pharisees looked down upon. Even those people that the Pharisees thought unworthy of God's Kingdom. were entering into God's Kingdom.

There and then, as they encountered and met with Jesus and put their faith and trust in Him.

Matthew tells us that Jesus says this in chapter 21 and verse 31.

[7 : 03] I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God ahead of you. Head of the religious leaders, the Pharisees, and teachers of the law.

People were entering in. And people have been entering into the Kingdom of God ever since. The Church of the Lord Jesus is the Kingdom of God in the world at this time. It's a Kingdom into which all of us must enter while we have the opportunity.

While we can. Later on in the New Testament, writing to the Christians in the letter to the Hebrews, the writer says very much the same thing.

Let us therefore make every effort to enter so that no one will perish. Jesus was preaching the Kingdom.

His disciples preaching the Kingdom. The Gospel of the Kingdom. But why? Why must men and women enter the Kingdom of God now, at this time?

[8 : 08] Why is it so important? Why is it so vital? Because there is one more final phase of the Kingdom of God yet to come. That's what Jesus goes on to talk about in this next passage with his disciples.

Jesus is coming again. And when he comes again, it will be the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. He talks about it as being the days of the Son of Man.

Do you notice that in verse 22? The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man. And he goes on to talk about the Son of Man in his day will be like lightning and so on. Jesus took this title, Son of Man, to refer to himself from the prophecy of Daniel in the Old Testament. In Daniel in chapter 7, he is given, Daniel that is, an incredible vision of somebody, somebody special who's coming.

and he's described in this way. One like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power.

[9 : 15] All peoples, all nations, all men, of every language, worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away.

His Kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. It's then that the Kingdom of God will find its perfect, complete fulfilment. When the King of the Kingdom, Jesus returns, to bring everything in heaven and on earth under his rule.

It's the time that Christians all long for. As the disciples would indeed, Jesus says, you'll be longing to see one of those days of the Son of Man.

We especially long for that day, when Jesus comes again, when life is tough. The disciples, they would be persecuted. Nearly all of them would be martyred and put to death for their faith.

And ever since then, Christians have suffered for their faith. They still are. We must remember them often in prayer. But every Christian longs for the day of Jesus' return.

[10:21] Longs for the Kingdom of God in its perfect fullness. Because here in this world is a day of sorrow and trial. Here in this life, in this world, are griefs and heartbreaks of every kind.

Because we are living in a fallen, a damaged, and a broken world. We are, as Christians, amongst those that Paul describes in 2 Timothy chapter 4, as all who've longed for his appearing.

You see, when Jesus comes again, the days of the Son of Man, when the Kingdom of God is established in its perfect rule, it'll be the end of all that's evil. The end of all that's wicked.

The end of all that's painful. Life-destroying. And joy-robbing. And it will be the beginning of all that God has promised. All that God has promised that's lovely and beautiful.

All that's good and joyful. For then nothing will come between us and the eternal enjoyment of the God who made us and rescued us.

[11:26] Here's what John has to say in Revelation 21, as he looks in head to that day. And he sees in heaven this incredible event. He says, I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Look, God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.

They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There'll be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

And he who is seated on the throne, that's God himself, said, I'm making everything new. Since this is something that we look forward to, Jesus coming again, we have to ask, how will we know when he's arrived?

How will we know when this has taken place? And Jesus warns his disciple, that there will be some people who jump the gun. Some people who will be spreading fake news, saying, Jesus has already arrived in the world.

There in verse 23, there he is, here he is. Do not go running up after them, Jesus says. There's going to be no mistake, when Jesus comes again.

[12:51] No confusion, no news, as it were, that will need to be leaked, as it were, to the press. When the day arrives, when it truly arrives, and Jesus comes again, he says it's going to be so obvious, as obvious as lightning, a lightning storm in the sky, that fills, the whole, of the scenery.

Son of man, in his day, will be a lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky. Disciples must have, felt very excited, about the prospect of that. Perhaps, in their thinking, they were hoping, that it might even be, very soon.

While Jesus is here, these days, of the kingdom of God, these days of great blessing, may come. But Jesus warns them, and reminds them, that first of all, something else, has to happen.

Verse 25, first, he must suffer many things, and be rejected, by this generation. before the bringing, of the kingdom, in all of its fullness, and glory, Jesus would have to suffer, and die, to make the way possible, for men and women, to enter the kingdom.

For men and women, to be made right, with God. And there's two things, two very important, extremely important things, that Jesus, wants his disciples, to be aware of, concerning the coming, of the kingdom, of God.

[14:13] And they're here, in these verses 26, and following. The first is this, the coming of the kingdom, of God, will take everybody, by surprise. Everybody, by surprise.

For he says, in verse 26, just as it was, in the days of Noah, so also will it be, in the days of the son of man. People were eating, drinking, marrying, getting given in marriage, up to the day, Noah entered the ark.

The flood came, and destroyed them all. There's a number of things, in life, that give us, plenty of warning, before they arrive. The birth of a child, gives plenty of warning, as the mum, begins to, swell, that's not a very nice word, is it?

Bloom, and the child, is on the way. The arrival, of course, of rain, we have the clouds, getting dark, and the sky, we know rain, is on the way.

There are things, that give us a warning, that they're coming. There's some things, of course, that happen so regularly, in life, that we don't need, a warning, to say they're coming, we know they're coming.

[15:18] The seasons of the year, as they rotate, our birthdays, or anniversaries, or special occasions, Christmas and Easter, we know they're coming, we don't need a warning, they've

happened every year.

But the return of Jesus Christ, will catch the world out. He refers to two seismic events, in history. Seismic events, for those who were there, at the time, and who were unprepared, for their arrival. First, as we've already read, was in the days of Noah, when the flood, that worldwide flood, of God's judgment, came to destroy, came to destroy, the wicked men, and women of the world.

The second, was the destruction, of Sodom, often linked, with the other wicked city, Gomorrah, in the days of Lot's. You can read about, these historic events, in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, chapter 6, and then chapters 19, respectively.

On both occasions, the people of that day, were going about, their everyday, busyness. Going around, doing the things, that they usually did, on any other day, of the year.

[16:27] But they were unaware, that God was about, to visit them, with judgment. Verse 27, people were eating, drinking, marrying, being given marriage.

Verse 28, as well, people were eating, and drinking, buying, and selling, planting, and building. They gave no thought, to God.

They had no desire, for God. No, was there anything, that was of any concern, to them, apart from, what they were involved in. In their own, little worlds, their own little lives, their own, their own, daily activities.

Even today, it's the same, isn't it? Society, by and large, is really only interested, in what we can see, or hear, or smell, or touch, or taste.

We go about, our daily lives, without any interest, in the things, of the kingdom of God. We only have eyes, on the kingdom, of me, the kingdom of mine, the kingdom of ours, the kingdom of now.

[17:34] But just as Noah, and in Lot's time, God will without, God will visit the world again, when Jesus returns. Without warning, without putting up, a great sign.

On that day, says Jesus, everything that we love, in the way of possessions, everything that we love, in the way of money, everything that fills, our attention now, all that is physical, all that is material, will be utterly lost.

It will be of no help, to us whatsoever. For he says there, in verse 31, no one on that day, no one who is on the house, top with possessions inside, should go down, and get them. They won't be of any help to you, they aren't, they aren't going to satisfy, you can't take them with them, the same with the person, who's working in the field.

Everything in this world, that we live for now, everything that makes up life, everything that we, we set our hope upon, and our joy upon, and our happiness upon, and our contentment upon, all those things, when Jesus comes again, will not help us, will not benefit us, will do us no good, but they'll be lost.

There's something even more valuable, at stake, than these things. If we've lived for, the things of this world, if we lived for the things, that we love, which are temporary, and physical, and material, that we can see, and touch, and taste, and smell, and hear, but we have not sought, God's kingdom, we have not given him time, if we've not prepared, for his coming, then we shall be like Lot's wife, who lost her life.

[19:14] Verse 32, that three simple words, remember Lot's wife, she was a woman, who as they ran away, from the destruction, of Sodom, wanted to go back, hesitated, put off, listening to God's warning, and when she turned back, we're told, she was engulfed, in that same destruction.

Jesus says this, whoever tries to keep their life, will lose it, and whoever loses their life, will preserve it. It's a theme, that he's returned to, again and again, in his preaching, back in chapter 9, and verse 24, and 25, he says the same thing, whoever wants to save their life, will lose it, but whoever loses their life, for me, will save it.

And then he makes this, very strong question, what good is it, for someone to gain, the whole world, yet lose, or forfeit, their very life. Again, in chapter 12, and verse 23, as he's giving encouragement, to the disciples, not to worry, he reminds them, life is more than food, and the body, more than clothes.

And then, later in that same passage, do not set your heart, on what you will eat, or drink, do not run about, after it. For the pagan world, runs after all these things, and your father knows, that you need them, but seek his kingdom, and all these things, will be given to you as well.

And then just in this, chapter previous, to Luke 17, Luke in chapter 16, and verse 13, he says, no one can serve, two masters, either you will hate the one, and love the other, or you'll be devoted to

the one, and despise the other, you cannot serve, both God and money.

[21 : 07] When Jesus comes again, all the things of this world, that we have set our hearts upon, will be lost, but what about your life? That's the most precious, possession that you have.

Jesus is coming, he's going to catch us by surprise, and we've got to make ready now. But there's another thing as well, that Jesus says, he says that we are to seek first, the kingdom of God.

Not to seek after pleasures, and things that pass, because those who seek, the kingdom of God, and enter the kingdom of God, realise that it alone, is worthy, of our love.

It alone deserves, our seeking after, it alone is something, worth working for, because the kingdom of God, is the overflow, of God's great delight.

It's his gift to us. For Jesus says there, in Luke 12, for your father, has been pleased, to give you, the kingdom. His kingdom, for us to share, and enjoy.

[22 : 16] Second thing that Jesus, makes clear, as he speaks to the disciples, not only that the whole world, will be taken by surprise, when Jesus comes, and the kingdom of God, finds fulfilment. But he says this as well, when Jesus comes again, the whole world, will be divided.

Everyone in the world, will be divided. Notice how he, speaks about that, in verses 34 and 35. I tell you on that night, two people will be in one bed, one will be taken, and the other left.

Two women will be grinding, corn together, one will be taken, and the other left. At Jesus' return, all humanity, will be divided, into one of two groups. Be no fence sitting, no one in the middle, be no third, fourth or fifth, there be two groups.

We'll be divided, not according to our race, or our colour, not according to our age, or our height, or our nationality, or anything else, that humans judge, and divide one another from.

But we will be divided, and notice how closely, we shall be divided, from those who are so close to us. Husband and wife, are in bed, at night, sleeping.

[23 : 26] One of them is taken, and one is left. Two people are working, grinding corn together, next to each other. Friends, who've chatted, and socialised, maybe for many years, maybe even sisters, who knows, they're grinding and working, one is taken, and one is left.

There's going to be a separation, between those that, we love. A separation, between parents, and children, and neighbours, and friends, and lovers. When Jesus comes again, there will be, a division, just as it was, in the days of Noah, just as it was, in the days of Lot.

There will be those, who will be taken away, just as the flood, took away, so many people. Matthew 24, puts it in this way, the people of Noah's day, they knew nothing, about what would happen, until the flood came, and took them all away, took them to death, took them to judgment.

That is how it will be, at the coming, of the Son of Man. Taken away, from all that we love, in this world. Taken away, from all that is good, all that God has given us, all that we enjoy.

Taken away, to judgment, and eternal separation, from those things, and eternal separation, from God. No wonder the disciples, are rightly concerned, about this, and ask this question, as they do there, in verse 37.

[24 : 56] Where is this, going to take place? Is this just going to be, in our country? Is it just going to be, in one particular place, or another? And Jesus answered them, he answered them, with something, which sounds peculiar to us, but it was a well-known proverb, no doubt, at the time.

Where there's a dead body, there the vultures will gather. Perhaps you've watched, films like that, like in cowboy films, or Africa, there's a, there's a dead buffalo, or a bison, or something else, and there's the vultures, in the sky, circling around, and around, they've picked up the scent, and they're about to, descend upon it, and devour it.

It's what Jesus is saying, this, that where there's the smell of death, the rotten stink of sin, there can be sure, that God's judgment, is circling, preparing to fall, upon, the people of this world.

Let me ask you again, what are you looking forward to, doing, when this present crisis is over?

What is it that you're looking forward to doing, when we return to normal, whatever normal may be? Is there really anything more important, than entering the kingdom of God?

[26 : 11] Is there anything really, that you long to do, which has more significance, more effect, more consequences, than making sure, that you are in the kingdom of God now?

So when the kingdom of God, comes in its fullness, when Jesus returns, you will be safe inside, with him, your king. You see, today is the opportunity, now is the only day, that we have certain, opportunity, to be able to enter that kingdom.

We don't know, when Jesus will come, it will be a surprise, and we will be separated, and there will not be another opportunity. Now is the day.

Now is the chance. Before Christ returns, before the door is shut, to the kingdom of God, the door that will be shut, never to open again, a door that is open, for all those, who will enter, by faith in Jesus, putting their trust in him.

For this is what Jesus tells us, about that day, in Luke in chapter 30. Make every effort, says Jesus, to enter through the narrow door, before many, sorry, because many, I tell you, will try to enter, and will not be able.

[27 : 30] Once the owner of the house, gets up, and closes the door, you will stand outside, knocking and pleading, Sir, open the door for us. But he will answer, I don't know you, or where you're from.

Then you will say, we ate and drank with you, you taught in our streets. But he will reply, I don't know you, or where you come from.

Away from me, all you evildoers. Jesus concludes, with these, heartbreaking words. There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth.

When you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves, thrown out. People will come, from the east and west, and north and south, will take their places, at the feast, in the kingdom of God.

Indeed there are those, who are last, who will be first. The first two will be last. Dear friends, let me urge you, urge you, to enter the kingdom now.

[28 : 37] This wonderful kingdom, that Jesus has brought about, which will lead into, an even greater kingdom, when he comes again. The door is open. God's grace, welcomes, calls, invites, urges you, to come in, taste the good things, to bow the knee, to Jesus your king, and welcome him, when he comes, to take you home.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we thank you, that this world, in which we live, has a purpose, has a goal, has an end point.

We thank you, that this world, in which we live, is not out of control, spiraling through, the universe, but this world, which you created, and made, is heading, for that day, that glorious day, the greatest day, in the day, in the history of the world, when Jesus will come again, and everything, that spoils, and ruins, everything that is ugly, and unpleasant, everything that is, putrefying, will be gone, and all things, will be new, a new heavens, and a new earth, a new kingdom.

Thank you Lord, that Jesus you came, to make it, not just possible, but to enable us, to be able to enter, into that kingdom, to enter into a living, life giving, relationship with you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Thank you by your death, Lord Jesus, you took away, the barrier as it were, that separated us from God, you smashed as it were, the lock, that keeps men, and women out, the lock of their sin, that keeps them trapped, in all sorts of, vicious spirals, of self destruction, thank you that you came, and you died, and you rose again, and that now, men and women are, forcing their way, into the kingdom, all around the world, men and women, every tribe, and tongue, and nation, are coming in, we thank you Lord, that we can come in too, and be welcomed in, so that when you come again, Lord, we shall enter into, even greater, and more wonderful blessings, which are not just, for a time, or a moment, but for eternity, please Lord, keep, seeking, us, please Lord, draw our hearts, to you, please Lord, help us see, just how empty, life is, without your love,

[31 : 23] I do pray again, Lord, for our nation, at this time, again pray Lord, for our fellowship, and church, oh Lord, watch over and keep, bless, and encourage, strengthen, and help, for we ask these things, in Jesus name, Amen, Amen, I'm going to close, as we sing, a wonderful hymn, which you may not know, all that well, but it assures us, that if we put our faith, and trust in Jesus, then he will hold us fast, he will keep us safe, until the day, that Jesus comes, to take us home, and the Lord bless you, and keep you, Amen,