

³⁶“But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
³⁷For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴²Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But understand this: if the owner 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. ⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

Back then the name for it was a “pop quiz” - I do not know whether the name has changed or if they even have such things today. But back when I was in school some teachers told us that they might give us a quiz unannounced. No warning – no review to prepare us. It might be over material we had gone over in class, it could be over a reading that had been assigned but never discussed. The one thing that we were promised about a pop quiz - it would count toward the final grade. Should I listen in class? There might be pop quiz tomorrow or even today. Should I watch “Get Smart” or “Alias Smith and Jones” or do my geometry assignment? There might be a pop quiz on it in the morning. The uncertainty of it all helped kept me on track.

“But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels nor the Son, but only the Father.”

Now Jesus was not talking about a “pop quiz” but about the final grade. In an instant everything will stop – we humans will no longer have any say about what happens to us. Jesus will come again and Jesus will decide. Will I be welcomed into a world where F-16s and cruise missiles have been made into amusement park rides or will I be hauled away to a cosmic landfill – trashed for all eternity? Jesus will decide.

Like a thief in the night Jesus said it would be. Like a pop quiz given at 2 a.m. No one would ever guess that is when it would be.

Growing up I used to think a thief was coming at any time. Whenever mom and dad were not home I would focus my hearing on every sound in our old house. Every creak and groan in that house seemed a threat. It is no way to live – worried about a thief. No joy, no peace, no rest - just anxiety.

It is no way to live worried that Jesus will come again and I am not ready. Being afraid of Jesus coming is no way for you to live either. The lessons this morning are like that teacher warning us about a pop quiz. Jesus' words are intended to motivate you and me to get our lives in order – to put first things first. In school it was all about what I knew – but in our life with God what we know is not so important - Jesus will not be quizzing you about the catechism – how well you know the Bible – Jesus is concerned about relationships. Are we estranged from God? Do we live as if God is a stranger to us? Does God seem to be just another nagging voice to be ignored?

Do you love God? Love Jesus? Do you wait for Jesus to come back the way I waited for my parents to get home? Watching, hoping? Sometimes, though, I was not looking forward to their return. As soon as they came into the house my brother would be telling how I had hurt him.

What will our brothers and sisters in this world have to say about us? Will they tell Jesus about your love – how in their hour of need you came through for them? Will they tell about the time you took over food when the woman who lives next door was just home from the hospital? Or the time you called your senator seeking a vote that would mean food for a poor child? Will someone be remembering how you took time to welcome a stranger the first time she came to church? Or will they be testifying against me – making clear that I had no love in my heart for them?

Jesus said the time before he comes will be like the time before the flood came – people eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage. Then and now people just get focused on the everyday things of life. It is good that you would enjoy this precious gift of life God has given you.

And give thanks to God for this gift.

And do what you can to see that others share in the good things of life.

One thing I never understood about those teachers who gave pop quizzes – I thought they were trying to trip me up – to catch me unawares – I thought of them as my enemy.

They were on my side all along. They wanted me to learn for my sake – not for theirs.

Jesus is on your side. His words of warning are spoken this day because he loves you. He wants to spare you all the heartbreak and sorrow that you will know when you do not live in love for God, when you do not live in love for your sisters and brothers in this world. His teaching, his dying, his rising are all for you – given in love for you.

Jesus will decide about you, about me. That is the best news we will ever hear. Amen.