



## Sermon Title: When Christ Returns

### Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

*“Christ’s imminent return compels us to be faithful.”*

As we introduce our 2026 theme “**FAITHFUL**”, we are reminded that our dedication to God in every part of life, from our homes to our ministries, is driven by one truth: God’s faithfulness keeps us faithful. But there is a clear urgency to this call. Just as we rush to tidy a home before an important guest arrives, the Bible reminds us that Jesus Christ will return. In our text, the Apostle Paul points us toward the Second Coming of Christ. This event will not be announced with a calendar invite; it will come like a thief in the night.

If Christ returned today, would you be ready or would you panic? Our goal is not to live in fear but to stay in a state of constant readiness.

Today, we look at how the coming of our King encourages us to live without blame, supported by the God of peace who is faithful to finish the work He started in us.

#### **WILL HE FIND US FAITHFUL, AWAKE, AND WATCHFUL?**

Recent data from Lifeway Research highlights a growing trend of spiritual apathy and misaligned priorities within the global church. This “spiritual lethargy” suggests that many have lost their sense of urgency regarding God’s kingdom. Just as we stay awake to care for a newborn or pull an all-night session to finish a vital report, our alertness reveals what we truly value. If we value Christ, we will not slumber.

To remain faithful in the light of His return, Paul provides four clear instructions in chapter 5:

- **Do not Be Surprised (vv. 4-5):** As “children of the light,” the day of the Lord should not catch us off guard. We live in a state of constant readiness, not darkness.
- **Keep Awake and Be Sober (v. 6):** This is not about physical sleep but avoiding spiritual indifference. To be sober is to be clear-minded and disciplined, staying watchful for His appearing.
- **Be On Guard (v. 8):** We must remain active, not passive. By putting on the “breastplate of faith and love,” we protect our hearts against temptation and endure suffering while we wait.
- **Build Each Other Up (v. 11):** Waiting for Jesus is not an idle activity. We are called to encourage and contribute to the spiritual lives of those around us, ensuring the whole body is ready.

When Christ returns, will He find a church that is distracted and drowsy, or one that is sober, guarded, and busy with the work of the Gospel?

#### **WILL HE FIND US WALKING IN HOLINESS?**

The book of 1 Thessalonians is structured to lead us toward one goal: **Sanctification**. Paul transitions from his personal relationship with the church (Chapters 1–3) to practical instructions on holy living (Chapters 4–5). He bookends this section with a clear mandate: God’s will for your life is your sanctification. Sanctification is the work of God in setting a believer apart for His holy purposes and continually transforming them to become more like Jesus Christ.

Holiness is not just a private endeavor; it is a community commitment.

Paul highlights that our sanctification is proven by how we treat one another:

- **Brotherly Love:** Moving beyond just teaching grace to showing it.
- **Integrity:** Minding our own affairs and working diligently rather than engaging in gossip or idleness.
- **Purity:** Rejecting impurity in favor of a life that honors God in our relationships (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

We cannot manufacture holiness on our own. We grow through God's Word, the support of a Believing Community, and most importantly, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit functions like a refiner's fire, burning away the dross of sin and shaping our character so we reflect the image of Christ.

As we wait for His return, we must ask ourselves: Is the fire of the Spirit currently purifying my heart, or have I become comfortable with the dross?

### **WILL HE FIND US FAITHFUL, HOLDING FAST TO HIS PROMISES?**

Between the internal war of flesh versus spirit, the pressure of a culture that contradicts our faith, and the exhaustion of trying to meet a standard of perfection, it is easy to feel burned out. We often treat faith like a performance, forgetting that we are sustained by grace.


The Thessalonians felt this too. They faced persecution, moral compromise in their city, and deep anxiety about the future. Yet Paul's response to every struggle was the same: Look to God's character.


In v.24, Paul gives us the ultimate anchor: *"He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it."* Our ability to stay on the course does not depend on our willpower, but on His reliability.


EMBRACING A NEW BEGINNING

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History is full of transgressors whom God faithfully restored, from the Apostle Peter to John Newton, the slave trader turned author of *Amazing Grace*. When we humbly surrender to the Lord and recognize that transformation is God's work in us, our perspective shifts. We begin to understand that it is about grace, not performance—trusting Jesus rather than striving for perfection; relationship, not rules—walking with God instead of following a checklist; and marathon, not sprint—embracing faith as a lifelong journey where difficult seasons are part of the process. As we await Christ's return, we do not have to panic about our shortcomings. We simply hold fast to the promise in Philippians 1:6, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.

 **Ponder:** Am I spiritually awake, or have I drifted into a "sleep" of indifference? Am I allowing the Holy Spirit to purify my life and my relationships? Am I resting in God's faithfulness or exhausted by my own efforts? Remember: God's faithfulness keeps us faithful.

 **Practical Application:** Since sanctification is also a community effort, identify one person in your church or family this week who seems "spiritually tired" or discouraged. Reach out with a specific word of encouragement or a prayer, moving from being a passive observer of the faith to an active builder of the body of Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

 **Prayer:** Lord, thank You for being my Shield and my Great Reward. Forgive me for focusing on my limitations rather than Your power. Strengthen my heart to obey You even when the path is unclear and help me rest in the assurance that You are faithful to finish what You started. Amen

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