

## When God Surprises Matthew 24:36-44

### INTRODUCTION

Our granddaughter Allie was just a few months past her second birthday when her Mom and Dad brought her to Springfield to see the Christmas lights at the Clifton Mill. Allie was – and still is – a bit of a chatterbox. And true to form, she chattered the entire trip from our house down State Route 72 to the little village of Clifton.

I drove us past the mill and turned on the road just south of it to wind my way around to the parking lot. Allie did not see the lights when I drove past the mill the first time, but she did see them after I made the turn.

And in mid-sentence Allie suddenly stopped her chatter and simply said “Wow.” And for the rest of the evening, she said nothing. Her eyes were wide with wonder as she took in all the sights. If you asked her a question, she would only nod a response.

This Advent season I invite you to come with me on a journey to a place that is not far away. In fact, it is right at your fingertips, right there in the pages of your Bible. Come with me and ...

Experience the Wonder

Not a wonder of Christmas lights. No, come with me to experience the wonder of the Christmas story. Together this season let us recapture the same feeling of awe and amazement I saw in the eyes of that two-year old. It is, after all, a very common feeling for all those who hear the story. We saw it in the faces of those who met the shepherds after their visit to the manger.

Their experience of wonder is recorded in our theme verse:

All who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. (Luke 2:18-19)

The story of Christmas is filled with many such moments of wonder. Take today's Gospel text for example. I point you to verse 44:

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. (Luke 24:44)

Today we focus on the wonder of Christ's Coming. What a wonder-filled event that was will be!

### #1: THE BIG SURPRISE

When Adam and Eve ate that apple way back in the Garden of Eden, God announced a plan He had established before the first day of creation. Before the

beginning – not in the beginning – but before it, God installed a plan that would require Jesus to come to earth as a redeemer. He revealed this plan in Genesis 3 as He pronounced a curse on the tempter:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. (Genesis 3:15)

A redeemer was coming. But when? The opening verse of our Gospel text talks about the second coming of Christ, but it could easily be describing His first coming.

But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Matthew 24:36)

The only clue about the timing of His coming is found in a cryptic little phrase:

In the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4)

When the time was ripe, but it was a time known only to God. Oh, and two other people to whom God made it known: Mary and Joseph, about nine months before it actually occurred. But who were they going to tell?

Imagine, if you can, the wonder in the eyes of those shepherds on that silent, holy night as they moved slowly to the side of the manger to see the baby. Remember what they had been told by the angels?

Today in the town of David **a Savior** has been born to you; he is the Messiah ... (Luke 2:11)

Surprise, surprise. The Savior is a baby! Oh, the wonder of it all!

## **#2: THE SURPRISE GETS BIGGER**

But the surprise gets bigger. Jesus came, lived, died and was resurrected. That in itself is a wonder to be experienced. But our text today unveils an even bigger surprise.

Jesus is coming again!

And this one will be a really big surprise. On that day ...

- Two farmers will be planting corn in the same field, and suddenly one of them is gone, taken to heaven with the tractor still running
- Two women will be making Christmas cookies with their KitchenAid mixers running at maximum speed, and when one turns around to check on the items in the oven, the other won't be there.

When will this happen? We don't know. It will be a big surprise.

When Ronald Reagan was president, he said this:

The most terrifying words in the English language are: "I'm from the government and I'm here to help." (Ronald Reagan)

And as scary as that one is, I have one that is even more terrifying to me:

Hey, Tom, I have a surprise for you.

Christmas, Birthdays. The Second Coming of Christ. Pick the occasion.

But like everyone else, I don't know. It will be a surprise. I am left with no option but:

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. (Matthew 24:42)

And when it happens, our eyes will grow big in wonder and awe, just like a two-year at Clifton Mill.

### **#3: JESUS COMES TO YOU**

Jesus came as a baby. Yes.

Jesus will come again as King of Kings. Yes.

But every day in everyday situations, Jesus comes to you. Whether those circumstances are ordinary or overwhelming, Jesus comes to you.

There are verses in the Bible where Jesus calls us to come to Him. Verses like Matthew 11:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:30)

There the invitation is for us to go to Him. But consider this as well:

1. Every time you pray, Jesus comes to you
2. Every time you read the Bible, Jesus comes to you
3. Every time you worship, Jesus comes to you
4. Every time you participate in Holy Communion or Baptism, Jesus comes to you.
5. He comes to you through the words of complete strangers and trusted friends.
6. He comes to you in the events of your lives.

Recently I spoke with a man whose wife had died within the previous week. He talked about his grief and then told me the most amazing thing. When he is quiet, God keeps putting songs (hymns) into his head.

- Great is Thy Faithfulness ... There is no shadow of turning with thee
- It is well with my soul
- I will raise you up on eagles' wings

- How Great thou art

And so it goes.

### **APPLICATION**

Jesus comes as a baby.  
Jesus will come again as King of Kings.  
But today Jesus will come to you.

Wow!

Amen.