**The Lord’s Coming is Near**

**The Word**

Read together James 5:7-12

**The Big Idea**

James calls us to live in light of the Lord’s returning, calling us to postures of patience and endurance in the midst of the challenges of this life.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. There are obviously a lot of unknowns associated with Jesus’ return. What is the most burning question you personally have regarding his return?

2. Consider the C.S. Lewis quote from Sunday: “If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next… It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’: aim at earth and you will get neither.” Take some time to honestly assess and discuss how much your expectation for eternity factors into your daily life.

3. On Sunday it was argued that we shouldn’t spend our energy trying to work out the details and timing of the Lord’s return but rather focus on how to be ready for his return. Do you agree? To what extent is there some spiritual value in working hard to discern how the prophecies of Scripture regarding the Lord’s return are possibly being fulfilled in our time?

4. James focuses his comments on our need for patience, endurance, and steadfastness as we await Jesus’ return. Where do you most need those qualities in your own life at this time? How can your small group be praying for you in that?

**Neighboring Question of the Week**

Take a moment to share any neighboring “wins” over the past few weeks. Have you had any meaningful encounters or conversations with a neighbor lately?

**Sermon Outline**

I. The second coming of the Lord

A. Simply put, it refers to the very personal presence of Jesus returning to earth

 B. The one who will return is the Lord Jesus (v. 7)

1. The same carpenter from Nazareth who loved, healed, forgave, touched, redeemed so many will return

2. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy (v. 11). That same compassion and mercy exhibited in the earthly Jesus will be poured out on his faithful people in an ultimate way

C. The one who will return is the Judge (v. 9)

1. He will come and pronounce his definitive judgment on every person, and his judgment will have eternal consequence

2. Out of his mouth comes sharp sword with which to strike down nations (Revelation 19:15)

D. So he comes as the Lion and the Lamb bringing Judgment and Salvation

II. The timing of Lord’s return

A. His return is “near” (v. 8) , he is “standing at the door” (v. 9)

These words convey an imminent event that could break in at any time

 B. Yet his return has been “near” for 2000 years!

2 Peter 3:3-9 reminds us that God’s timing is different than ours. With God a thousand years is like a day.

C. Two mistakes Christians make as we wait for his return

1. We forget about it and we stop living in light of his return, and we get so caught up in all the things of this world.

a. There’s an old saying: “that person is so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good.” But the opposite is far more common today.

b. “If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next… It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’: aim at earth and you will get neither.” - C.S. Lewis

2. We get overly obsessed with the exact timing and events surrounding his return

a. It’s tempting for every generation of Christians to point to specific current events as evidence that Jesus is returning very shortly. But the events keep changing over time and predictions have to be remade.

b. “Scripture rarely promotes the question, when will Christ return? It always promotes the question, will you be ready when he returns?”

- Daniel Doriani

III. How James calls us to live in light of Christ’s return

 A. Patience (v. 7)

 1. James’ first example: farming

 Farming involves lots and lots of waiting

 2. The Christian life involves lots of waiting and it requires great patience

 3. We need a vision of faithful waiting (see Ps 27:14)

B. Stand firm (v. 8)

 1. Literally, “Strengthen your hearts” = keep your resolve and determination

2. James’ second example: the prophets

The call of God thrust the prophets into tremendously challenging circumstances that required resolve, persistence, and determination (see Ezekiel 3:4-9)

C. Endurance (v. 11)

1. This means bearing up under a heavy weight for a long time

2. James’ third example: Job

Job carried such a weight of grief, confusion, isolation, and pain but he endured and never abandoned God and was rewarded in the end

 3. So much in this life before Christ returns requires endurance

 D. James calls us out of sins of speech that are tempting when times are tough

 1. Complaining about one another (v. 9)

 2. Making hasty promises that we don’t intend to fulfill (v. 12)

**Conclusion**

Imagine standing before the Lord on that great day and holding before him your life. What will you be holding that will immediately dissolve and come to nothing, and what will you hold that will last and be met with his “well done, good and faithful servant?”