

August 11, 2019 Luke 12: 32-40 Pat Weatherwax
RUMBLING WITH A TOUGH COMMANDMENT

INTRODUCTION

“You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

Are you ready for whatever comes next? Do you know what comes next in your life? We like to think we do. Or we don't like to think about it at all. “Be ready” is a tough commandment.

I wasn't sure what to preach for week 4 of the 3 part, Rising Strong series, but I saw the challenge - the reckoning, rumble and revolution in Luke 12:40. “You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.” Are you ready for what's coming? Are you seeing the possibilities and the probabilities? That's reckoning. Last week Jeff used the analogy of wrestling. That's the same as author Brene' Brown's rumble. There's no coasting in the Christian life and journey. And being able to answer yes to “are you ready?” may be a true revolution, a turning point in our hearts and minds.

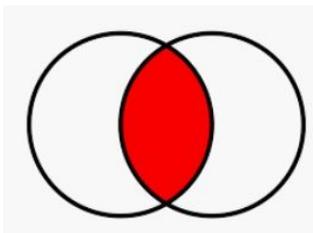
CONTEXT

Some context; we know context matters. If your Bible uses red letters for the words attributed to Jesus, you'll note that there are several chapters worth, here in Luke. There's some phrases in this text that we toss around a lot but rarely define. One is the “son of man”. It's used as a title for the Messiah; and described in the intense vision part of the book called Daniel, 7:13–14.

“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, *One* like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! ... Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* Which shall not be destroyed.”

The ‘son of man’ indicates a human. So when the Old Testament writers describe the Messiah, God's special ambassador, as the “son of man”, they're saying the savior is going to be a human, but be a special human, with a divine kingdom.

Defining the “kingdom of God” is more complicated. My NIV Study Bible Notes tried this way: “In essence the kingdom of God means God's rule over all the earth.” The coming of the messiah ushered in the kingdom- a less earthly/politically focused kingdom, one with a more heavenly/spiritually focus.

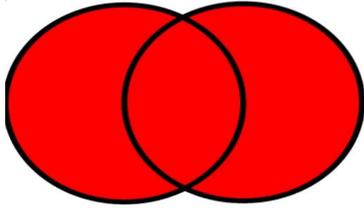


God's full reign begins when Christ returns, that's called the “second coming”. We live in a time described by theology experts as the “already, not yet”. “The theological concept of “already but not yet” holds that believers are actively taking part in the kingdom of God now, although the kingdom will not reach its full expression until

sometime in the future. We are “already” part of God’s kingdom, but we do “not yet” see it in its glory.

The “already” accomplished to the left of me and the “not yet” return of Christ to the right. Here I am “stuck in the middle with you” (Stealers Wheel).

Others might disagree with that. God’s kingdom, God’s authority was complete before the time of Christ! We aren’t in the in-between. We are always part of God’s kingdom.



2 Timothy 1:9 explains it this way: “God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time - to show us his grace through Christ Jesus”. **NLT**

George Eldon Ladd, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, explained that there are two meanings to the kingdom of God: 1) God’s authority and right to rule and 2) the realm in which God exercises His authority. The kingdom, then, is described in Scripture both as one we’ve already entered and as one to be entered in the future. Ladd concluded that the kingdom of God is both present and future.

Some people, including me, prefer the phrase “the REIGN of God”. It’s a little less militaristic and patriarchal, maybe to me it’s a purer focus. This stuff can be very “heady”. Is there a difference between God having a kingdom and God reigning? For me, yes.

It partly comes out of the verse: “so that, just as sin reigned in death, even so, through God’s faithful covenant justice, grace might reign to the life of the age to come, through Jesus the Messiah, our Lord” (Romans 5:21). And the grace of God, God’s reign is from “everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 90:2). Forever. Thanks be to God!

Now, we can’t get too fussy about the concepts. Later in chapter 17 Luke writes: The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ . The kingdom of God is **within** you” (Luke 17:20b-21); that’s from the **NIV**.

OR, the **NRSV** instead says: “The kingdom of God is **among** you.” We’re not able to pin that down- within/among. I think there’s a difference, but how do we decide where God isn’t? The Greek is “*entos*”, a place holder, but with a wide range of possibilities. A wide range of possibilities, like faith and God and the future!

So wherever it is, we know it when we have it: Romans 14:17: “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Let’s have the reign of God within us **and** among us, individually and corporately. Righteousness, peace and joy. And when is that *future* reign going to happen? Well, “be ready all the time. For... the Messiah, will come when least expected.” **TLB**

A quick aside: God’s Irresistible grace. I’ve mentioned some other points in reformed theology. Mull this one over: irresistible grace. Theologian Jonathan Kleis explains it easily: (From WordPress.com/reformissio)

Irresistible grace does not mean that God's grace is incapable of being resisted. Indeed, we are capable of resisting God's grace, and we do resist it. The idea is that God's grace is so powerful that it has the capacity to overcome our natural resistance to it. It is not that the Holy Spirit drags people kicking and screaming to Christ against their wills. The Holy Spirit changes the inclination and disposition of our wills, so that whereas we were previously unwilling to embrace Christ, now we are willing, and more than willing. Indeed, we aren't dragged to Christ, we run to Christ, and we embrace Him joyfully because the Spirit has changed our hearts...Without that work, we would never have any desire to come to Christ.

THE RUMBLE Reckoning, rumble, revolution

Some day, some time, we'll not be able to resist a call from God. We go to be in eternity. The song lyrics say: 'Til He returns or calls me home" The scripture says: "So be ready all the time." (Luke 12:40) How do we "be ready"? Brene' Brown, in her book "Rising Strong" writes:

"It's time to rumble. Time to unleash our curiosity. Time to poke, prod, and explore the ins and outs of our story. The first questions we ask in the rumble are sometimes the simplest: (They are listed on your bulletin bookmarks.)

1. What more do I need to learn and understand about the situation?

What do I know objectively?

What assumptions am I making?

2. What more do I need to learn and understand about the other people in the story?

What additional information do I need?

What questions or clarifications might help?

Now we get to the more difficult questions - the ones that take courage and practice to answer.

3. What more do I need to learn and understand about myself?

What's underneath my response?

What am I really feeling?

What part did I play?

How we rumble with our story and approach these questions depends on who we are and what we've experienced." *Rising Strong*, (2017), Random House, p. 92-3.

So, how do we rumble, wrestle, how do we begin "being ready"? Let's look at our own answers.

1. What more do I need to learn and understand about the situation? *What do I know objectively?* All people die. We will. It makes sense to be ready for that.

What assumptions am I making? That I, and the people I love, will live long + strong lives.

2. What more do I need to learn and understand about the other people in the story?

What additional information do I need? What variables are known or impossible to predict in our lives? Those sneaky variables!

What questions or clarifications might help? Statistics, the great randomness of life and how mystery and grace work, may all influence our “being ready”.

Now we get to the more difficult questions - the ones that take courage and practice to answer.

3. What more do I need to learn and understand about myself? *What’s underneath my response?* Am I ready? Am I afraid or confident, or both? *What am I really feeling?* Hope or fear or what? *What part do I play?* What does God’s will determine? What does it mean to be in God’s care? And where does God’s care and the laws of physiology and physics intersect?

The rumble is the assessment of our thinking, feeling and reacting. You have to do that work on your own, but others can help. The intention was in having this series all be on “being ready” for the second coming or our individual “going to God” time. Trouble is, that was when I was thinking in the abstract, not in the horrendous reality of intense mom grief. Sometimes you just can’t be prepared, but with a mustard seed’s worth of faith we can be ready to cope with anything.

MOVING FORWARD

How can we be ready for what’s coming, whatever it might be: (Pat’s list)

1. Plan ahead for emergencies.
2. Hang onto earthly things loosely.
3. See the big picture around you and time as an earthly concept.
4. Expect surprises, who could have predicted our life story?
5. Trust, you are never alone. Hang on to heavenly things tightly.

Romans 14:7-9 ERV “We don’t live or die just for ourselves. If we live, we are living for the Lord. And if we die, we are dying for the Lord. So living or dying, we belong to the Lord. That is why Christ died and rose from death to live again—so that he could be Lord over those who have died and those who are living”.

Almost 600 years ago, Saint Teresa of Avila wrote:

Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing make you afraid; All things pass;
But God is unchanging. Patience is enough for everything.
You who have God lack nothing. God alone is sufficient.

Similarly, in 2002, Stuart Townend and Keith Getty wrote these lyrics:

No guilt in life, no fear in death, This is the power of Christ in me;
From life’s first cry, to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home, Here in the power of Christ I’ll stand.

Rumble with this:

“You must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

Let's pray: Lord, help me be confident in this life and prepared for whenever you return or call me to the next. Amen