

No One Knows...





No One Knows About That Day or Hour

— Matthew 24:3,36,42-44

Disciples ask Jesus about the end times. Unexpectedly, Jesus replies:

...Keep Watch...for you don't know when the master of the house will come. But about that day or hour no one knows ...

There was a Time

there was a time when sun shone bright for all with brilliant impartiality and universal compassion —is that no longer so?

there was a land where being was joy, pure joy and joy gave birth to beings whose life was celebration —is that no longer so?

there were subtle bonds delicate communion there were fresh and lively winds of fortune, serendipity —is that no longer so?

can you taste a pregnant silence joyful, compassionate, tranquil calm a sacred stillness? —it was always so.

tony macelli

Living in the Unknown

Trusting God beyond certainty

In Matthew 24, the disciples come to Jesus seeking clear signs about the end times. They want knowledge, security, and certainty. But instead of giving them the specifics they're looking for, Jesus invites them into a posture of vigilance. Why does he respond this way, seemingly confounding their expectations? Let's explore this question and, in doing so, touch upon divine wisdom.

Many Christian thinkers, especially contemplatives and mystics, see Jesus' words here as an invitation to live with spiritual humility and detachment. It's a call to stay present, to be humble, open to the unknown, and ready to meet God in every moment.

Humility and Trust

Jesus seems to emphasize the importance of not relying solely on our own understanding, as a core aspect of faith. Consider Proverbs 3:5-6:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Could it be that true faith is really trust—trust in something larger than our own limited selves? If we demand absolute knowledge before committing, we might be reinforcing our small selves, our egos that strive to be in charge, secure and in control. And if the future were laid out plainly before us, might we not become complacent, losing the vigilance that keeps us spiritually awake?

Our egos often strive for control, but this constant grasping can be costly to our souls. Whether it's the need to understand everything or the thirst for power, these tendencies can distract us from fully living each moment in the holy presence of God. Instead of trying to control, we're invited to live with awareness and openness.

When Jesus says, "No one knows, not even the Son, but only the Father," He models humble submission. This mystery reminds us that God's wisdom surpasses human understanding. It's a call to let go of our need for intellectual control and to trust deeply in God's wisdom and timing.

St. Augustine once said, "If you comprehend it, it is not God." His words echo the humility of accepting our limits before the divine mystery. Jesus embodied this humility throughout His life.

Interestingly, a similar insight is found in Taoism:

"Looked at but cannot be seen—it is beyond

form.

Listened to but cannot be heard—it is beyond sound.

Grasped at but cannot be touched—it is beyond substance...

You cannot know it, but you can become it. Be at ease in your own life."

— *Dao De Jing, Chapter 14*

The Alpha and Omega



T.S. Eliot writes in "Little Gidding":

*"And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."*

This reflects the idea that what we're seeking is something we already have but may have forgotten. Perhaps Jesus, by redirecting the disciples from future concerns to the present moment, is inviting them—and us—to recognize that the divine is here and now.

The notion that the "Omega is also the Alpha" resonates with the belief that Christ embodies both the beginning and

the end. By not focusing on end times, Jesus invites us to see God as eternally present, beyond the confines of time, and to find peace in an ongoing relationship with Him.

Meister Eckhart, a Christian mystic, said, "God is at home. It is we who have gone out for a walk." This reminds us that union with God is ever-present and not bound by time or place. St. Catherine of Siena echoes this sentiment: "All the way to heaven is heaven, because Jesus said, 'I am the way.'"

Zen Buddhism poses a profound question: "What is your original face before your parents were born?" It's a way of encouraging us to look beyond our constructed identities and to experience a deeper reality. In Christian terms, it's like asking, "The Kingdom of God is within you and among you, but do you realize it?" Two passages in the Psalms also come to mind that echo the Zen question. Both reflect on the mystery of human existence, identity, and our connection to God:

*"For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's
womb.*

*I praise you because I am fearfully
and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know
that full well.*

*My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,*

*when I was woven together in the depths
of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written
in your book
before one of them came to be."*

Psalm 139:13–16 (NIV)

This passage reflects on the mysterious, divine knowledge of our existence before birth, a reminder of our creation and identity before we came into being in the world.

*"Before the mountains were born or you
brought forth the whole world, from
everlasting to everlasting you are
God." Psalm 90:2 (NIV)*

Though primarily a reflection on God's eternal nature, this verse touches on the timelessness that precedes human life. It mirrors the Zen koan's exploration of identity before we were shaped by worldly existence, suggesting that our true self is rooted in something eternal and beyond our immediate perception.

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Both passages from the Psalms invite a contemplation of identity, origin, and the divine presence that transcends our temporal existence, similar to the philosophical inquiries in Zen teachings.

Watchfulness and Spiritual Detachment



If being present is how we touch the divine mystery, then we need to be attentive to this very moment. Jesus encourages us to stay spiritually vigilant, to be prepared now rather than fixated on future speculations. This watchfulness is about living in openness to God's guidance every day.

Control is often the domain of the ego—the self that Jesus tells us we must let go of to gain a fuller life. By releasing our need to control and know everything, we make room for God to work within us.

Jesus frequently speaks about keeping

watch. This isn't about anxious waiting but about spiritual readiness. It's being open to God at any moment, whether in prayer or in the mundane activities of life. This kind of watchfulness leads to deeper transformation and a more intimate relationship with God.

Consider these passages from the Gospels:

- *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come... So you also must be ready." (Matthew 24:42-44)*
- *"Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come... What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'" (Mark 13:33-37)*
- *"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning... It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes." (Luke 12:35-37)*

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour." (Matthew 25:1-13)

These teachings emphasize the importance of staying spiritually awake and prepared.

Thomas Merton, a modern contemplative, wrote, "True hope lies in the unknown and in the graces hidden within the unknown." This captures the essence

of watchfulness—remaining open to God's surprises rather than clinging to certainties.

Rabindranath Tagore offers a beautiful image: "Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark." Even without seeing what's ahead, faith moves us to trust and rejoice. But with a kind of humble spiritual intuition can "see". Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us, "The present moment is filled with joy and happiness. If you are attentive, you will see it." By being fully present, we become attuned to God's presence.

Finally, Rumi shares wisdom that aligns with Jesus' teachings: "Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself." It's about self-transformation and surrendering to God's work within us.

In embracing humility, trust, and watchfulness, we're invited into a deeper experience of God's eternal presence. Instead of seeking control or certainty, we find peace in the mystery and live each moment in communion with the Divine.

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References

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