What are some things that happen so gradually we might miss it?

- Trees growing
- We might not notice it is happening

What are some things that happen so suddenly we can 't react?

- Car crash
- Once it starts happening, we can 't do anything about it

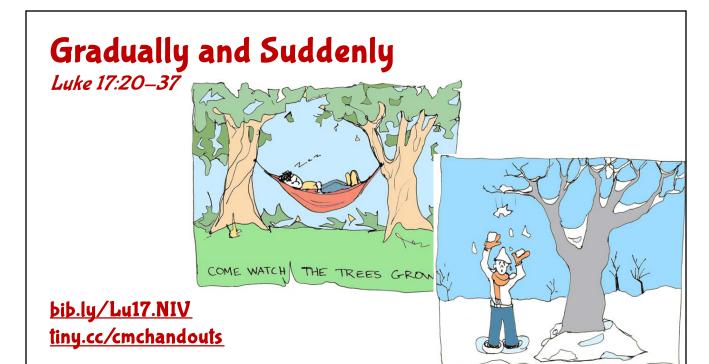
Sometimes God's work is gradual

 \rightarrow Might we be missing it?

Sometimes God's work is sudden!

 \rightarrow Are we ready for it?

Prayer: Help us see God 's work and join in it



WATCH OUT!

1

A Brief History of Time

Creation: a very good world Fall: Kingdom of this world (separate from God, so it is dying) Redemption: Kingdom of God (a perfect and more glorious world)

- Promise & preparation: The Old Testament
- Gradually: Mustard seed, yeast in dough
 - Jesus: obscure, ordinary, suffering & death
 - Church (Jesus 'body): small, ordinary, with trouble
- Suddenly: Radical displacement by Jesus' Kingdom
 - The Son of Man's return (Jesus)
 - Life with God in unhindered beauty and flourishing
 - Or judgment

3

Gradually

Luke 17:20-21 Perhaps an accusation

Once, on being asked by the **Pharisees** when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst."

like a mustard seed buried in the ground

like yeast hidden in the dough

Luke 13:18-21

Luke 17:20-37
20-21: God's Kingdom is already present and growing
• Yet easily overlooked
• Jesus was overlooked
 born as an ordinary infant
 who grew up as an ordinary boy
 in an ordinary family
 in an ordinary town
 died a horrible death, without public victory
 We can overlook the Kingdom of God
• amid the joys and challenges of life
26-29: • a temptation for those who have much to enjoy
30-37: in life is not to even look for it

5

Suddenly

Luke 17:22-25

Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. People will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

Luke 17:20-37
20-21: God's Kingdom is already present and growing
22-25: The Son of Man will come suddenly and boldly
• It won't be possible to miss it when it happens!
• Before then, there will be trouble
• The Son of Man must suffer
 For disciples too—at different times in different
ways (you'll long for His return but won't see it)
Don't be deceived
 You won't need to go someplace or to some special
people or teacher to find it
26-29: • A temptation especially for those
30-37: who have much trouble in life
7

Luke 17:26-29

"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

The Days of Noah

The people were very evil ("every inclination of their thoughts")

• "So the Lord said, 'I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created..." *Genesis 6:5-8*

God called Noah to be rescued

• "So God said to Noah, 'Make yourself an ark ...' Noah did everything just as God commanded him." *Genesis 6:13-22*

Noah told the people to turn to God (for 50-75 years)

• God "protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness" 2 Peter 2:5

The day came when the door was shut and they were judged

• "Then the Lord shut him in the ark.... Every living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind." *Genesis 7:13-21*

9

Luke 17:26-29

"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

Their problem:

- Jesus didn 't speak of their evil
- Rather: They focused on good pleasures and good relationships instead of hearing God's warning to prepare for the radical change that was coming

Luke 17:26-29

"It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

The Days of Lot

The people were very evil

• Then the Lord said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous..." Genesis 18:20-21

God called Lot to be rescued

• "Get them out of here...we are going to destroy this place" Genesis 19:12-13

Lot told the people to be rescued

• "Lot said, 'Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!' But they thought he was joking." Genesis 19:14

Destruction came suddenly, including Lot's wife

• "Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah.... But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." Genesis 19:24-25

Luke 17:26-29

"It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

Their problem:

- Jesus didn 't speak of their evil
- Rather: They focused on good pleasures and good productivity instead of hearing God 's warning to prepare for the radical change that was coming

13

Luke 17:20-37 20-21: God's Kingdom is already present and growing 22-25: The Son of Man will come suddenly and boldly 26-29: Final Judgment will come suddenly • Jesus didn't talk (here) about people's evil • He warned about their **focus on** the normal and good things of life instead of hearing God's warning about the radical change that would come suddenly 30-37: 14

Luke 17:30-37

"It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the housetop, with possessions inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left." [36]

"Where, Lord?" they asked. He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."

15



Luke 17:20-37

20-21: God's Kingdom is already present and growing22-25: The Son of Man will come suddenly and boldly26-29: Final judgment will come suddenly

30-37: The choice we all make: which kingdom is our focus?

- Only the Kingdom of God will continue and thrive
- Because there will be no ruler except God
- What we have chosen will be final in that day

17

Luke 17:20-37

20-21: God's Kingdom is already present and growing22-25: The Son of Man will come suddenly and boldly26-29: Final judgment will come suddenly30-37: The choice we all make: which kingdom is our focus?

The Big Idea

Christ's Kingdom is already here growing gradually hidden in ordinariness and trouble and will come suddenly, completely, and irresistibly with judgment or blessing forever

19

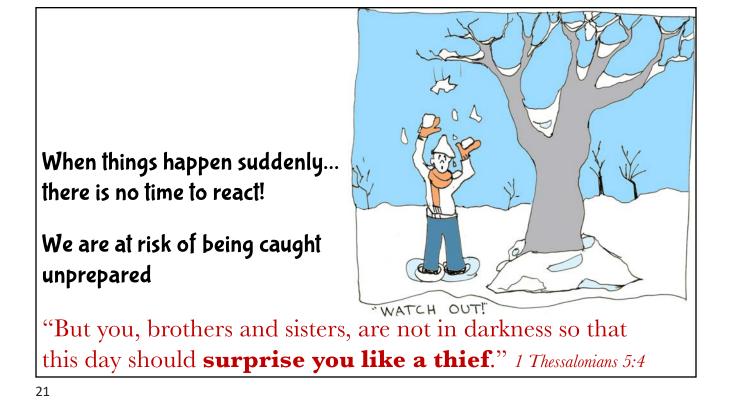
When things grow gradually... we can easily stop paying attention

Especially when we have pleasure, peace, power, and other advantages, ...

"The hour has already come for you to **wake up**



from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed." *Romans 13:11*





Application for the Kingdom of God

How are we to live well during its gradual growth and to be ready for its sudden arrival... Treasure the Kingdom of God every day even while we live well in the kingdom of the world

- Don 't "set your heart" on things in this world
 - from Luke 12:22-31 • Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear.... And do not set your heart on [them]; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

23

Application for the Kingdom of God

How are we to live well during its gradual growth and to be ready for its sudden arrival...

Treasure the Kingdom of God every day even while we live well in the kingdom of the world

- Don 't "set your heart" on things in this world
- It doesn 't mean:
 - Live foolishly, don 't plan, ignore the joys and concerns of this world, ...
- It does mean:
 - Don't let them be the focus of your life

Application for the Kingdom of God

How are we to live well during its gradual growth <u>and</u> to be ready for its sudden arrival... Treasure the Kingdom of God every day even while we live well in the kingdom of the world

- Set your heart on the Kingdom of God
 - Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear.... And do not set your heart on [them]; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

25

Application for the Kingdom of God

How are we to live well during its gradual growth <u>and</u> to be ready for its sudden arrival... Treasure the Kingdom of God every day

even while we live well in the kingdom of the world

- Set your heart on the Kingdom of God
- It doesn 't mean:
 - Ignore things in this world as you focus on heaven
- It does mean:
 - Be most concerned about the things that concern God most
 - Jesus is a perfect model!

How do we know what our heart is set on?

- What do you treasure?
 - What are our biggest worries and fears and cause for anger?
 - What do we put most of our 'disposable' time, money, and attention?
 - This is probably what our heart is set on
- Jesus warned: good things in this life took people away from seeking His Kingdom
 - Life's necessities and pleasures: food and drink
 - Relationships: friendship, family, marriage
 - Career and possessions: buying, selling, farming
 - People's opinion of us
 - Visible success
 - Being treated well or justly or fairly

27

How do we know what our heart is set on?

- WHOM do you treasure? WHO is your King?
 - Whose opinion of you means most?
 - To whom do you turn in trouble or pain or grief or loss?
 - To whom do you turn in joy?
 - Whose guidance and teaching means most to you?
- Other answers we often give...
 - Ourselves: find strength, guidance, comfort, hope within
 - Someone else: parent, spouse, mentor, ...
 - Something else: success, money, philosophy, politics, science, pleasure, work, substance, bitterness, grief, ...

Application for the Kingdom of God

Treasure our new King: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

- Daily follow Him
- While the Kingdom is growing gradually
- So we will be fully prepared when the Kingdom appears suddenly
- Jesus warns us...
 - we can so easily have our hearts focused on the things of this life
 - that we will miss both the gradual growing and the sudden arrival of the Kingdom of God to our great loss
- Jesus invites everyone to enter His Kingdom today through Him

29

And this is the King we worship...

For God the Father

has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13-14

Let us worship and love and follow our King while His Kingdom is growing gradually until the day it appears suddenly and with great joy!