

Are You Ready?

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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November 10, 2024

Text: Luke 12:35-44

Purpose: Christians are called upon to “wait on the Lord.” Good waiting involves preparation, expectation, and faithfulness. For some they have a deep longing within them for Christ’ return – they will be rewarded. Others live as if Christ will never return and they are unprepared. The question still lingers today, “Are You Ready?”

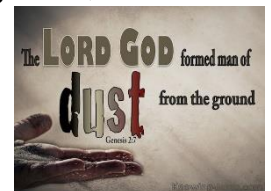


One day a group of scientists got together and decided that man had come a long way and no longer needed God. So, they picked one scientist to go and tell God that they were done with Him.

The scientist walked up to God and said, "God, we've decided that we no longer need you. We're to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so why don't you just go on and get lost."

God listened very patiently and kindly to the man. After the scientist was done talking, God said, "Very well, how about this? Let's say we have a man-making contest."

To which the scientist replied, "Okay, great!"



But God added, "Now, we're going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam."

The scientist said, "Sure, no problem" and bent down and grabbed himself a handful of dirt.

God looked at him and said, "No, no, no. You go get your own dirt!"¹



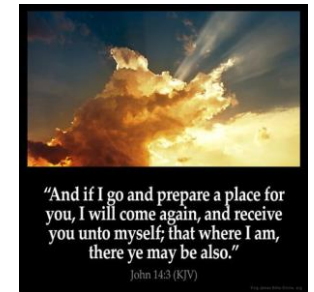
There was a commercial on television several years ago by Ameritrade. This is a company that provides online stock trading advice and services that allow you to bypass a traditional brokerage firm. The commercial opens showing a lazy husband reclining on the couch as his wife tells him to do one thing that day – establish an online investment account. He says, "Sure." The husband then turns his attention again to the television. We see him as he watches television all day until finally, he falls asleep. He awakens quickly when he hears his wife's car pull into the driveway. He then jumps to his feet and rushes to the computer. Fortunately for him is just a matter of a few clicks and he is all signed up. He rushes back to the couch just as she enters the room. Her first question is, 'Did you set up the account?' His indignant reply is, 'Of Course.'

It may be possible to wait till the last possible moment to establish an Ameritrade's account, but there are some things that are far too important to take a chance on. One of these is our relationship to God. You sometimes hear someone make a casual remark such as, "I hope I don't die suddenly. I want to have time to straighten out some things in my life."



The question begs to be asked, "If there are things that need to be done, why don't you do them now." We shouldn't wait until the doctor tells us that we have three weeks to live to straighten out our lives and get our affairs in order. The truth is that none of us know if we have another three weeks to live. You must live as if today were your last day. We need to be ready to move when Christ returns. When He returns, don't think you can make preparations for his coming then.

Jesus spoke often of his return. He told his disciples in John 14:3, "*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*" "R. Kent Hughes notes there are "260 chapters in the New Testament, and Christ's return is mentioned in no less than 318 times in those chapters. Statistically, one verse in twenty-five mentions the Lord's return."²



In Luke's gospel (12:35) we find the first extended teaching on the Second Coming of Jesus and here he warns his followers to be ready. "*Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning.*" The relationship between Jesus' prior words about treasure in heaven and watchfulness is obvious. The one who has his treasure in heaven will be ready and watching for the Lord's return; the one who has his heart set on the treasures of this world will be caught completely unaware at His coming.



John Hamby in his sermon titled “**Are You Ready?**” identifies in this passage of scripture three distinct characteristics of a “good waiter.” Waiting is not the absence of doing anything constructive.

Waiting is not a static state, it is a time when God is working behind the scenes and His primary focus is on us. The modern translation “The Message” paraphrases Romans 8:24 as, “*Waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting.*” We try to wait patiently. The hardest part of waiting is just that waiting. Waiting involves time and we don’t know when our waiting will be over.

I. Waiting is Preparation³

The First Characteristic of a “Good Waiter” is Preparation. (vs. 35-36)



What do we say to someone today when we want them to join us on some outing – We say “Are you dressed and ready to go?” Jesus said “*Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning (v. 35) and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately.*”

During Jesus’ day, wedding banquets did not have certain timetable. A wedding banquet might consist of only a single meal and require only a few hours; but if the host were a person of wealth, the feasting could go on for days. It was impossible then to know exactly when the master of the house would return, so when the master would return was

anyone’s guess. This uncertain return of the master did not stop them from being prepared.



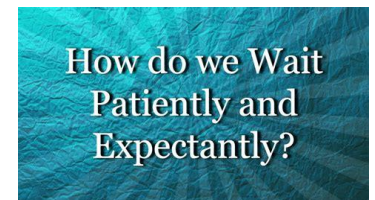
These servants were truly remarkable. They did not give in to fatigue, they didn’t become irritated by the delay, and they didn’t get an “attitude.” Rather they kept the light burning and themselves in a constant state of readiness to spring up at moment’s notice to joyously welcome their master home. In 2 Thess. 3:13, Paul urges Christians “.... *Do not grow weary in well doing.*” We can not give up and stop, or even tire and slow down, there is too much at stake. Whenever we as Christians take our eyes off of Jesus, we will begin to slack off, the church will begin to decline. We can not stop because we are having a spiritual dry moment; we need to be found faithful.

II. Waiting Expectantly

The Second Characteristic of a “Good Waiter” is Expectation. How do we do that?

“*And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants:”* (v. 38)

The second watch was the three hours before midnight (9 p.m. – 12 Midnight) and the third watch was the three hours after midnight (Midnight to 3 a.m.). Though it was late at night these servants were still dressed and ready for service. That is, they were not only fully clothed, they had their “*waist girded,*” which means they had their long robes tucked into their belts, making it possible for them to move



quickly to the door. They had done everything in their power to be ready.

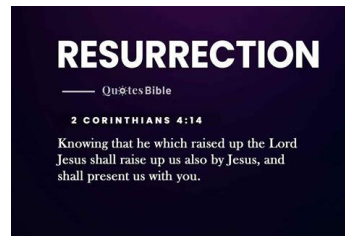


So many people that get caught up in End Time Prophecy get caught up in the daily events and how they “prove” Christ is coming soon. We have been talking about that during our study of

the Book of Revelation on Wednesday nights. We do not know the day or hour when the Lord will return. What this verse of Scripture teaches is the Lord’s return should not be the Christians major concern. What is important is being prepared and living a life of expectancy. Paul describes the way that he tried to live his life in his letter to the Philippians 1:20 when he says *“according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.”*

Many evenings, prior to going to sleep, I will listen to a night time devotion on an app on my phone by Lectio 365. The closing prayer every evening is this: *“God of all seasons, the sun has set, the night has gathered in, my soul sinks slowly into Your rest, trusting now in the resurrection to come, Amen.”* This nighttime prayer has formed and shaped me to look with expectancy to the Lord’s return and our resurrection upon the Lord’s return.

The word translated *“earnest expectation”* describes “straining one’s neck to get a glimpse of something ahead.” It is okay to earnestly expect Christ to return, but not to the point we stop living and serving God. Paul’s life was lived



in constant expectancy of Christ’s imminent return. In the same letter Paul later (3:20) says, *“.... we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Here again with the words “eagerly wait” he describes a time of waiting with intense longing and eager expectation.

III. Waiting is Faithfulness

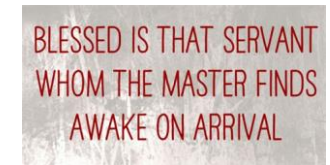
The Third Characteristic of a “Good Waiter” is Faithfulness.



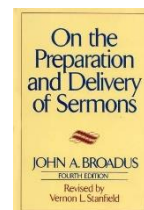
Concerning Faithfulness Jesus has two things to say – a word to the waiting believer and to the unprepared skeptic.

A. For the Faithful the Lord’s Return Holds a Reward (v. 37, 41-44)

Those that are faithful in anticipating the Lord’s return will receive a reward.



“Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat and come and serve them.” The master was so moved by the faithfulness of his servants that instead of sitting down at the table to be served, he dressed himself to wait on them. The master made them to recline at the table and he served them! In a few short weeks, the Disciples would see Jesus wrap a towel around His waist and wash their feet as they sat in the Upper Room (John 13:1-17).



A good example of faithfulness is found in the life of John A. Broadus. “John Broadus, (was) the faithful president of Southern

Baptist Seminary during the (American) Civil War. At the war's end the seminary had four professors and seven students, one of those was blind. Only the blind student took Broadus's course on preaching. Under the circumstances, many teachers would have been tempted to give less than their best. But not Dr. Broadus, who gave painstaking care to every lecture.

Those magnificent lectures became the substance for the most famous and influential of all books on preaching (homiletics) in American history, *The Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*. Broadus's authority was increased because he was a faithful servant. But that is only the beginning of the story. The final story is being written now, as Broadus serves Christ in the final estate.”⁴

The disciple's minds were reeling at the implications of what Jesus has said so in verse forty-one, Peter asks a question that they were all thinking “*Lord, do you speak this parable only to us or to all people?*” And the Lord said, “*Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him master over all that he has.*” (vs. 42-44)

We will be blessed if we are ready. Those who are ready for Christ's return should not be couch potatoes just sitting back lethargically, nor should they be setting dates, simply sitting on the church steps dressed in white. True Disciples of Jesus should be alive and active, serving Christ to best of their ability.

We are
BLESSED

Perhaps you are serving in all kinds of community activities; coaching a ball team, serving in the school, being involved in various civic activities. All of these are good and need to be done. Yet, these are not the things Jesus will ask you about. He will ask you what you are doing for Christ and his church.

B. For Some the Lord's Return Holds Only Terror (v. 39-40, 45-46)



For many people, they are not prepared for the Lord's return. They will only face terror and judgment.

There is a strong contrast between these two groups of people drawn with the word “but,” in verse thirty-nine. In the previous verses the image of the master/servant was intended as an encouragement to faithfulness. The master's return was welcomed and comes with a reward. Now the image shifts to that of the owner/thief and is intended as a warning to those who live without an expectancy of the Lord's eminent return. To these individuals, the Lord's return is not welcomed and His arrival spells disaster.



Verse thirty-nine says, “*But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*” (vs. 39-40)

What makes the difference between whether Jesus is seen as the welcomed Master or the dreaded thief? The difference is relationship. There is a loving bond between

the master and his servants. The servants anxiously await the master's return because of who he is. The home owner does not know the Master and views Him as a thief and does not want to know Him. He hopes the thief never comes because his coming produces loss.

So, when will the Lord return?

I like the way the celebrated Scottish preacher of the last century, Robert Murray McCheyne looked at it. He "used to ask groups of preachers the question, '**Do you think the Lord is coming tonight?**' the preachers would quietly respond, '**No.**' Then McCheyne would counter with a quote from our text, '*The Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*'"

By humbly saying, 'I don't think he will come back tonight,' this could increase the likelihood that it will be tonight. Yet in the end, no one knows when Christ will return."⁵

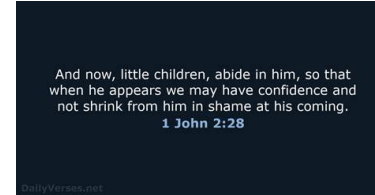


The apostle Peter wrote to the Christian community about some who were mocking the coming of the Lord, saying, "*Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all*

continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." Peter replied, "*The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be*

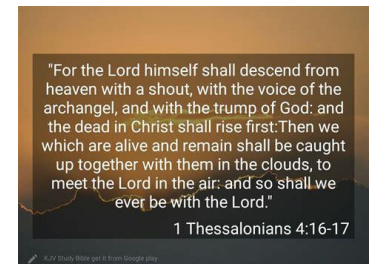


destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up." (2 Peter 3:3-11)



John would write to the same churches after the deaths of Peter and Paul, "*And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.*" (1 John 2:28)

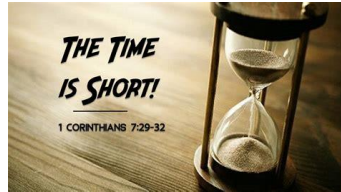
Paul, writing to the Thessalonians some 20 years after these words in 1 John were spoken, said, "*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and thus we shall always be with the Lord.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.)



The thrust of Jesus' message can be summed up in two words: **Get ready!** Are you prepared for Jesus' second coming? Our heavenly Father sent His Son to this earth the first time to offer all of us who were dead in our trespasses and sins the hope of salvation, if we would invite Jesus into our hearts as Lord. The risen Lord is still offering the hope of salvation to all who believe in him as Lord. Once we accept him as our Lord, he places us into his household and gives us spiritual gifts and areas of responsibility to spread the good news.

In the midst of our service to the Lord we are called to remain faithful to our Lord by being dressed in readiness, keeping alert in the midst of our ministry, knowing that the Lord will return, and then he will bring blessing to those servants who are faithful and judgment to those servants who are unfaithful.

Jesus is coming again. The first time he came with the offer of salvation; the second time the world will see Him rule and reign on this earth as the righteous Judge. If we reject his wonderful offer of salvation now, we will have to meet Him as our Judge at the time of our death or in His glorious second coming. Since now is the day of salvation, I beg you, don't put off His offer of salvation today. You may not have another day on this earth to make your decision.



LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Mikey's Funnies, A Scientist Funny, Oct. 2, 2024

² R. Kent Hughes. Preaching the Word Luke: That You May Know the Truth. Vol 2. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998). p. 59

³ Outline by John Hamby from Sermon Central sermon titled "Are You Ready?"

⁴ Hughes. p. 64

⁵ Hughes. p. 63