

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI  
Pastor Mark Gartner  
Sermon for Pentecost 12 – August 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**Luke 12:32-40 (NIV - 1984)**

<sup>32</sup>“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup>Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>35</sup>“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, <sup>36</sup>like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. <sup>37</sup>It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. <sup>38</sup>It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. <sup>39</sup>But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>40</sup>You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

In the name of our returning Savior, dear fellow faithful people of God,

Reminders, we all need them. Just think about all the different devices humankind has come up with to remind ourselves of important things. Whether it is pen and paper or cell phone or computer we need ways to remember things. We depend on calendars (either paper or electronic), clocks, and alarm clocks nearly every day. We have bells and alarms to wake us up, to remind us of upcoming appointments, and to make sure we put our seat belts on when we drive our cars. We so easily become distracted and forgetful. These very same things can be said about our spiritual lives and our readiness for the Lord's return. We need reminders from time to time to keep ourselves awake and alert. Today our Lord serves us by giving us such a needed reminder. He wants to keep his followers focused on his return. So be encouraged today. For the Word of the Lord says to us,

**Theme: Remain Ready For Jesus' Return!**

- 1. Don't be afraid**
- 2. Don't be distracted**

We have a natural inclination to fear when we hear news of the end of time, Judgment Day, and the end of the world. It all seems so focused on punishment. It all frightens the sinful nature, which wants to procrastinate about everything spiritual. So it is quite interesting that when Jesus wants to encourage us to remain ready for his return he starts by telling us not to be afraid. Listen to Jesus starting point in his discussion of readiness for his return: **“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”** We are part of the little flock that Jesus speaks of here. We have been called by the Good Shepherd to be his sheep. We continue to be led by the Good Shepherd as he works on our hearts through Word and sacrament. Yes, the Good Shepherd says, **“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I gave them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”** Our comfort is found not in what we have done, but in what Jesus has accomplished for us. We are the recipients of his gifts of grace. He has secured our forgiveness – so there is nothing to fear, we are covered with Christ's righteousness. He has won eternal life for us. He has given us the kingdom. Judgment Day is nothing to fear as long as you are connected to Christ by his gift of faith! In fact, God's people long for the day when the Savior-King returns to deliver them from this vale of tears!

Wait for Jesus without fear for heaven is yours!

As you wait for Jesus to return to take you to be with him for eternity, keep your focus on heaven. This really is the encouragement we find in Hebrews 11. **“All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.”** People of faith are people focused on a future they know is theirs, even though they cannot see it. Jesus urges us to keep our focus. Jesus implores us to pay attention to things of lasting value. Jesus pleads with us to remain attentive. Jesus warns us about distraction. He says, **“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** Focus on real treasure, Jesus advises. That real treasure is what he provides – the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and eternal life. Worldly treasure serves its purpose as we use it to help others and use it to share the wealth of the gospel. But worldly wealth is not lasting as we were reminded last week.

It is the gospel that leads us to see that Jesus is our true and lasting treasure. It is the gospel that moves us to serve others in love and to use the worldly gifts God has given us for the benefit of others. So let us live without fear as we wait for Christ’s return. Not even fearing that someone God will forget about us and no longer provide for us. Let us continue confident in Christ. For as we remain confident in Christ we remain ready for his return.

I’m bored! Are you parents starting to hear that around home as the summer wears down? Our children say it, mostly because they are waiting for something else to happen. Waiting for things can cause us to become bored. So how do we avoid boredom as we await Christ’s return? Remain ready for Christ’s return with joyful service to your Savior!

There is work to do in God’s kingdom. There is Jesus’ directive to go and make disciples, we have work both as individuals and as a congregation – the joyous work of sharing the gospel. There are the many different roles that God has graciously given us: roles as parents, children, siblings, employers and employees, care givers, friends, counselors, and so on – each of these roles gives us opportunities to help others with the gifts and abilities our God has given us. So people of God – always be ready to serve!

Jesus says, **“Be dressed and ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.”** Waiting for Jesus to return is not meant to be a boring waiting around for Jesus. It is meant to be a life of serving and being served. Our motivation to serve is based on what Jesus has already given us. He has rescued us from sin, death, and the devil. He has shed his holy precious blood for us. He has given us eternal life. These are things that move us to want to serve others in love. In addition, our dear Savior continues to serve us through the Word of his Gospel. He continues to serve us at his table as he gives us his own body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith. We are also moved to serve as we reflect on how Jesus promises to serve us in the life to come. Yes, heaven is our home. We will spend our eternity at the fabulous wedding banquet in heaven, where our Lord and Savior, will serve us as our Shepherd. We have plenty of reason to serve our Savior and plenty of service to keep us from becoming bored.

Yet, we still find boredom setting in. Spiritually speaking we find ourselves nodding off from time to

time. It is too easy for us to become bored with the wait for Jesus! So our Lord says, **“But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”** Jesus urges us to stay awake, to remain alert for his return! Yet, so often we find ourselves indifferent, uninterested, and spiritually lethargic. We find ourselves sleepy as we wait for Jesus to return. How can we combat this and remain ready? We need to find ways to remain awake. We can stay ready for Jesus’ return by engaging the mind with the Word of God. Read your Scriptures, study them, meditate on them, let them influence your thinking. We can stay ready for Jesus’ return by engaging the heart. Listen to what your loving Lord says to you. Take in his forgiveness and let it wash over you and relieve you from your guilt and pain. Understand the deep love Jesus demonstrates to you as he says, “This is my body. This is my blood. Given and shed for you.” That touches the heart and makes us long for an eternity with our Savior. We can stay ready for Jesus’ return as we reflect his loving concern for us to others. There is plenty to keep us busy as we wait for Jesus. The good news is that these things not only keep us busy, they keep us ready. Let us continue reading and studying, listening and being comforted, receiving Jesus’ many gifts and sharing them. This is where we will find joy. This is how we will remain constantly ready.

The end will come. No one knows when. We look forward to it because Jesus has lovingly saved us. We wait for it patiently because we know this is what our Lord wants and we want what he wants. One day, out of the blue, we will hear the trumpets blast and we will welcome the sight of the Savior! In the meantime, keep calm, stay patient for our Lord Jesus promises – I am with you always to the very end of the age! Thank you Jesus for your loving reminder today! Amen.