

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:32-40 Text vs. 35-36 *“Be dressed, ready for service, and keep your lamps burning like servants 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.”*

Our lesson today ties right in with last week’s lesson in that it has to do with the unexpected. And there’s one thing you can count on that’s not unexpected. Jesus is going to return! He is coming back! That’s His promise! And when He does return, will He find you watching for Him? Are you going to be ready for Him? Or will you be caught off guard? The Bible says you better be ready! So, are you making preparations for His return? Or are you putting it off? Our lesson teaches that if you’re found faithful when Jesus returns, you will be invited to sit at His dining table and He will serve you. So, are you ready? Are you going to be happy with His coming again? Or will you shy away? Will you try to hide the truth of your shortcomings? But there’s really no place to hide from God! And there are no excuses for your shortcomings! It’s like in our lesson, if the master of the house returns in the middle of the night, it teaches that the faithful servant is ready when he comes. And when Jesus comes, things will be different! He’s going to put an end to death. There will be no more sorrow. No more crying. No more pain. (Rev. 21:4) They’ll all be taken away! So, are you ready? *“You must be ready. Because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”*

Back in the 60’s, The Dick Van Dyke Show was one of my favorites. The two main characters in the show were Rob and Laura Petrie, played by Dick Van Dyke and Mary Tyler Moore. In one episode, it was awfully close to the time Laura was to deliver their baby. There was a scene where they were going to bed for the night. It opened with Rob already in bed. The bed covers were pulled up to his chin. All you could see was his head. Laura got into bed next to him. Pulled the blankets up over herself and said good night while turning off the light. Then, the TV screen went dark. You could hear Laura say, “Rob?” as though she wanted to ask him something. Suddenly, the light’s back on. Rob sits up. Grabs his hat off the headboard where he had placed it. Jumps out of bed, fully dressed! Sports coat. Tie. Shoes. Everything! He grabs a suitcase and is almost out the bedroom door when Laura calls to him and says, “Rob, it’s not the time yet!” . . . But Rob was ready!

And that’s our lesson today! We need to be aware that He’s coming. But we need to be more than waiting! We need to be ready and alert so much we can’t be taken by surprise. *“Be dressed! Be ready! Keep your lamps lit!”* In Greek, the term *dressed and in readiness* refers to girding the loins. If someone girds their loins, they’re preparing to deal with a difficult situation. In ancient times, the way robes were made, made travel difficult. Even physical labor was extremely difficult. They would reach down between their legs, grab the back hem of their robe, pull it up to the front and tuck it into their belt to free their legs for movement. Then they could bend. They could work. They could walk in a hurry. So, Jesus wasn’t saying *stay dressed* the way Rob Petrie stayed fully dressed in bed ready to take Laura to the hospital. No, Jesus was saying, your state of readiness should be such that when He does return you are ready to receive Him just as you would a Master who returns home and needs his servants ready to serve him. So, the servants in our Scripture lesson would not have known the day or the hour of his coming. That’s what made their watchfulness necessary. It was to be continuous. Not for just a little while! The only thing they knew for certain was, their master was coming home! If they gave up watching for him after only a few days and said to themselves, “Well, robbers must have waylaid him. Or, he must have decided to take his bride and start a new life somewhere else. Or it’s been so long, surely, he won’t expect us to still be watching out the window and waiting at the door.” That kind of attitude would have guaranteed they would be taken by surprise. And their master would have been displeased! They would have suffered for their lack of watchfulness. But there’s a line in our text that’s amazing!

Let’s look at it again. If the bridegroom in our lesson is Jesus, and those who are His church are His servants, how is it then that He says, *“...truly I say to you, He will prepare Himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them”*. (vs. 37) That’s amazing! Jesus is giving a picture of a caring Master. One full of love. One who has appreciation for his poor servants who have been faithful and patient staying alert and keeping watch for him. They were ready for action when He returned. But He said, “Sit down. Take a rest. You’ve worked hard. You have been the good steward and a watchful caretaker. Here, let me bring you your reward.” That’s really moving! Because if you do believe Jesus is coming back, then you are prepared to say, “Jesus is coming back today!” And you repeat it. And you say it every day until He does come. Why? Because you really believe it! And that’s the Biblical requirement for every servant of Christ to remain watchful and alert. Obedient and reliable. Serving others. Reaching the lost. Proclaiming Christ until He comes again. And it’s going to have to be done, by you. You’re the watchful servant! And you know, the need for readiness, or being prepared, is taught in every area of life. Children are taught to be ready and prepared for anything. How to get ready for school each day. Learn how to avoid dangers. How to "stop, look, and listen." Boy scouts are taught to *be prepared*. Soldiers are taught readiness by being properly equipped and trained for battle. Being always "vigilant". Always "alert."

And the question this morning is, are today's Christians around the world really ready? Is the church ready for His return? God's question on the Last Day is not going to be, "How much were you seen?" or "How much did you do?" or "How much did you give?" God's question to each one on that Day will be, "Were you ready? Were you faithful in fulfilling your calling where I placed you? Or were you doing it just occasionally? Whenever you felt like it? Or were you really ready?" Our lesson teaches the servant who is faithful will be blessed. The servant who lives as if time, treasure, and talent are his own, and is living as if he is the master of his own soul will be punished. The idea is you don't own anything. So, you don't have the right to withhold from God, because what you withhold belongs to God. You don't have the right to argue with God, because you belong to God. You're not the Master. He is! You are His servant. Jesus owns your time, your talent, and your treasure. You don't own it. It's His! You manage it for Him. It's all about Jesus!

Say what you want, but a faithful servant lives as if his, or her life is all about Jesus. You can see it in their giving. Their serving. How they use their gifts and talents for the benefit of the Kingdom of God. Think about that. You have an opportunity to use the gifts God has entrusted you with to benefit His Kingdom. And when you do, you devote your time, your treasure, and your talent to the Kingdom of God. You're partnering with Jesus by sharing His love with the world. You're making an eternal difference when you are faithful. You get to see His Kingdom coming to life, all around you. Here in Everglades City. Chokoloskee. Plantation Island. Copeland. Wherever you live. What you do for God really does make a change! Lives are transformed from being sick to being whole by being tended to. The poor are cared for. The hungry are fed. When you live for the Kingdom of God, and you're looking forward to Jesus' coming again, you're not just investing in it. You're building it! You're working in it! You're living it! And you are ready!

So, what you do now is, how Jesus began verse 40; *"Be ready!"* And how do you get ready? Get rid of your indifference. Fear God. Confess Christ. Trust the Holy Spirit. Be rich toward God. Leave the world behind. Seek His spiritual Kingdom. Because He is coming! That's for certain! Its timing is uncertain. But He is coming. So, the message to you today is, be ready! *"Watch therefore, you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."* BE READY! AMEN