

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost – August 7, 2016
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Luke 12:32-40 (NIV)

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 33) Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 35) "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36) 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. 37) It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. 38) It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. 39) 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. 40) **You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."**

Fellow servants of our Lord Jesus Christ:

The Scriptures describe the life of our Lord's disciples as a life of watching. For example, Jesus encouraged his disciples to **watch and pray because their spirit was willing but their flesh was weak** when they accompanied him to the Garden of Gethsemane on the eve of his death. (cf. Matthew 26:41) On another occasion Jesus said, **"Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."** (Luke 21:36) And there's Jesus' warnings: (Matthew 7:15) **"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."** **"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."** (Luke 12:15) The Apostle Paul tells us: **watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.** Hebrews 12:2 encourages us to fix our eyes on Jesus -- **the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** In our text Jesus says: **"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36) like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet."**

Theme: Jesus Encourages Us to Be Watchful Servants

Guided by our text let's

1. Consider the attitude of a watchful servant
2. Consider the circumstances that call for watchfulness
3. Consider the blessings the Lord offers his watchful servants

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 33) Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

With these words, Jesus fills us with confidence as he reminds us not to fear anything that might threaten us in this world. We are the sheep of his fold. Although the world may hate us and

persecute us, although Christians are often regarded as being out of touch with reality and insignificant in the eyes of the world; they are precious to the Lord. They are his flock whom he has purchased with the blood of his Son. He has placed them in the care of his Son, the Good Shepherd.

Such confidence is important because it reminds us that we are really strangers in this world – we're really citizens of the kingdom of God. As we confidently watch for the coming of the Kingdom of Glory, our attitude can reflect our confident hope. Confident of the Father's loving care, we are able to willingly share God's surplus blessings with others. Such a willingness to share what we have in this lifetime is evidence of the fact that we realize the temporary nature of our life in this world and the of the fact that in the life to come we won't need the things of this world.

If your treasure is worldly goods, then your desires, your plans and your actions will center on getting the things of this world. If your treasure is human power – you'll make it priority to rise to the top. On the other hand, if your treasure is in heaven, your heart will seek ways to use your time, abilities and your earthly goods for heavenly purposes – like spreading the good news of forgiveness in Christ Jesus.

Jesus is telling us to watch out so that we don't end up forgetting that the end is coming and that the kingdom of Glory is near. Make the kingdom your first priority -- confidently trusting that God will watch over you and give that kingdom to you.

In verses 35-36 of text Jesus speaks of circumstances that call for watchful servants. **“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36) 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.”**

Here Jesus uses a picture from the Jewish wedding traditions. The bridegroom would travel to the home of his future wife and bring her back to his home after the marriage had taken place. The groom would expect his servants to be ready whether he came between 9 PM and midnight or between midnight and 3 AM in the morning. Whenever he returned, they were to be waiting with the lights burning so they could wash his feet or serve him a meal after his journey.

With this picture, Jesus reminds us that the time of his return is unknown to us but that we are to be busy – letting our lights shine before men so they may see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven. In other words we are to busy serving as the Lord's witnesses and workers right up until the time when he comes to call us to the feast he has prepared for us in heaven.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, he gave his disciples an assignment – to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything he had taught them. There is an urgent need for us to be about this assignment – the souls of men are perishing in sin and unbelief. So long as there is time – it is our privilege to make use of the Scriptures which are able to make us wise for salvation and it is our privilege to use the Scriptures to make others wise for salvation.

The uncertain timing of the end of our lives and the end of this world calls for us to watch our lives carefully so that we are not caught in unbelief by surprise. Jesus uses another example to encourage us to be watchful. **39) 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. 40) You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”** The apostle Paul picked up on this example and warned: **for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.** (1 Thessalonians 5:2 NIV)

The uncertainty of the timing of our Lord's return provides us with reasons for activity as we watch eagerly for that day. The final words of our Lord from the book of Revelation are his promise: **I am coming soon.** By being active in the Lord's work we show that we trusting in that promise. As the Lord's disciples, we will be ready when he comes through faith. Our readiness to serve the Lord here in this life is an expression of our desire for the glorious life in heaven. The blessings Jesus has in store for his watchful disciples will heighten our joyful anticipation of his return. Let us **consider the blessings the Lord offers his watchful servants.**

Jesus uses the example of the servants who are ready and waiting for the return of their master and his bride to describe these blessings. His example has an interesting twist as he describes what he will do for us when he returns. Normally when the master would return the busy servants would become even busier. Although we are servants of the Lord – our relationship with him is far different from the relationship we have with our earthly masters or employers.

Our relationship with Christ is based on his grace and on the fact that he came to serve us by offering his life as a payment for our sins. Because of his grace you and are privileged to be the Lord's servants. But, we're not just plain ordinary servants – we're servants who are members of his household – he has obligated himself to provide for us and to take care of us. Jesus inspires our readiness for his return by saying: **It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. 38) It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak.**

As we hear these words, we are reminded of the many times our Lord reversed the tables and served his followers. Who can forget the scene in that upper room when Jesus put on the towel got out the water basin and washed his disciples' feet? Who can forget the time that Jesus served Mary by feeding her faith with his word when he came to visit with Mary and Martha in their home? Who can forget Jesus explanation of the reason he gave up the glories of heaven and humbled himself to take our place under God's law and wrath? **For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.** (Mark 10:45 NIV)

So when we hear Jesus' talking about the master preparing a meal for his servants – we don't have to be so surprised do we? Our Lord and master has been graciously serving us all our lives: providing everything we need for our body and soul – leading us through the paths of righteousness for his name sake. Why should things be different when he returns? The psalmist David pictured the Lord's blessings to those who are watching for the Lord's return in the beloved 23rd Psalm: **The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. 2) He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3) he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. 4) Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6) Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.** (NIV)

It's no wonder Jesus said, "Fear not little flock." Jesus has taken away every reason for fear – he's provided us with blessings which inspire and encourage our watchfulness. Let us watch for the Lord with attitudes and actions which reflect the fact that even though we don't when it will happen yet we are confident that Lord who has promised that he is coming soon will keep his promises to bless us with a joyous wedding feast in heaven. Amen.