

The Virtue of Watchfulness, Part 2

Luke 12:25-40

We are back in Luke, chapter 12, right in the middle of this amazing chapter, and today we're looking at verses 35 to 40. "Stay dressed for action. And keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds him awake, blessed are those servants!

"But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let him, He would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready. For The Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Watchfulness is the fruit of faith because, those who are watchful people are believing people. They take God's word as truth. Not qualified, not apologized for. It is unmitigated,

unadulterated, pure truth. They believe it deeply. They believe it from the heart. They trust implicitly that what he has said this he will surely do. Every word to them is a promise spoken directly to them. And so, when Jesus says I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you, they incorporate that into their thinking. That becomes his word, becomes part of their worldview, their way of looking at life. And it's shaping, its formative, it's direction setting. So watchfulness is the fruit of faith.

Watchfulness is also the fruit of hope. Because those who are watchful people are hopeful people. Because of what they read and believe in the word, they desire a better country, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city, and they look to that city, they longed to be there.

Hopeful people look beyond what is seen to what is unseen. For the things which are seen are temporal, they're passing away. But the things which are not seen, oh, they're eternal, lasting, unchanging. Any affliction that these hopeful people experience for them is light and momentary. It only serves to

prepare them as hope filled people for an eternal weight of glory that's beyond comparison. Their hearts are set on a future certainty which they are always eager to get to. They are always watchful to enter into.

So, there's faith and hope, and then there's love. Watchfulness is the fruit of love. With godly affections that burn deeply, affections that shine in their life brightly, that they see, and they adore the risen Christ. They longed to see him and even though they don't see him presently, watchful saints do love him and then, so they believe in him and they rejoice in him, with joy and expressible and full of glory.

So, faith, hope and love. These three. Those are the chief virtues of every true Christian. Every true Christian has these virtues coming up because of the spirits work, coming up within their life. You will always find them, even if they're shriveled up little grapes. You're still going to find some element of those fruits in their life. They're the animating principles of godliness that awakened us to Christ at the beginning. We trusted him by believing in his Word. We hope in him by looking for the fulfillment of all the promises of his Word, and we love

him by studying his Word and seeing those promises, seeing their fulfillments, seeing his love for us.

When those virtues are active, fruitful in our lives, they produce yet another virtue. This virtue of watchfulness. You see watchfulness in your life and other people's lives. You see, watchfulness practiced in faithful prayer. People praying fervently for all things godly, all things the scripture speaks of, they pray for. Watchfulness is practiced in a devotion to good works. Getting busy with your life, not sitting around, but giving yourself to other people and their needs. Giving yourself, paying attention to their concerns and their problems, praying for them, ministering the word to them.

Watchfulness is practicing evangelism. It's a love for lost sinners, lost souls. See them, freed from sin, freed from guilt, to know, to know the blessing of a clear conscience before God. Watchfulness is practiced in discipleship. A love for teaching and training younger Christians, so that they mature and grow up in the faith and grow strong.

And all this watchfulness is practiced in the context of the local church. There are no mavericks out there doing their own thing for God, own private ministries doing whatever they want to do, whatever seems best in their own eyes. All this, Christian ministries con, conducted in the way that Christ prescribes. There's only one institution that he said he will build, and it's called the church. So, we do our ministry in the local church, under the watchful care of the shepherds that he's given us as gifts to the church.

Now those who are, not watchful, those who feel like they're succumbing to sleep, there's a simple and immediate application. Fertilize the soul of your heart's affections with the Word of God. Don't go it alone. Fertilize your soul with your, and your heart's affections, with the Word of God, but don't do that alone. Take advantage of the teachers that Christ has given to his church. Ephesians 4:11.

So they can help you better understand what you read, learn in the company of others saints, so that their example of diligence and study, and their example of obedience and joy, sets an example for you. Provokes you to love and good works

when you watch their lives, when you're around them. When they ask you, hey how you doing, how's your marriage? How's your family going? I'm praying for you.

The more you see and understand the meaning of God's Word, the more you will see these virtues, faith, hope and love awaken in your life, strengthen in your life, grow into maturity, and those virtues will produce other virtues, such as this one, called the virtue of watchfulness. So that's the parable. Picture of readiness.

Before we come into the next parable, there in verse 39, Jesus wants to encourage his disciples. I love this, with his short beatitude. Look at verse 37, "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes." Blessed, the word *makarios* means privileged, happy, greatly favored. And what is the blessedness of these watchful servants?

Well, first, it's the very arrival of their master, whom they so dearly love. Christ coming, is its own reward. Who does not want to see him now? So, fulfillment of our heart's desire to see him as he is. Watchfulness is the godly virtue of being

ready, staying ready, waiting patiently, and it's a virtue that comes with great reward.

It's a joyful union to, to be sure there's reuniting reunion of loving master with affection and servants coming together. All of, all that eating and sharing stories around the hearth in this warmth of a well cared for, well taken care of home. Enjoying each other's company around the table. The hospitality. But, but there is more to see. Look at it. "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly." Listen to this, "truly I say to you." Jesus had to get their attention. "Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service. Have them recline a table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or the third, finds them awake, blessed are those servants."

But for any first century reader of Luke's Gospel, this is just too much. No master that they ever knew had ever seen or that they had even heard of. No master would come home late at night, tired from a journey, exhausted from several days of attending a wedding celebration, and do the unthinkable, namely, switch roles with his servant. Just didn't happen.

The master taking the role of a servant. That would be considered the height of impropriety or even worse, a foolishness. It represented the rejection of centuries, held, expectation of proper roles and casts and structures in society. So, to thwart this expected role and behavior of service in the master slave relationship, would've shocked the sensibilities in this crowd and perhaps even offended some of them, with this reckless fantasy. Risk destabilizing all of society.

Jesus never worried about offending human sensibilities. He never, he never worried about crossing over traditions based on inaccurate, incomplete, or incorrect information. He was never cavalier about it, but he also never apologized for telling the truth, for setting the record straight. That said, Jesus does recognize how hard it is going to be for them to hear this image, he's going to give them, which is why he affirms it with this Amen.

Translated in the ESV is truly, what our Lord wanted his disciples to know and understand. What the Holy Spirit, the divine author of Luke's inspired Gospel, what he wants us to

know and understand. Is that this, Jesus, the Son of Man, he is a master who rejoices to be with his servants. He's a returning master who rejoices when he finds us reciprocating back his eagerness to be with us. Anticipating, when we anticipate like he does, anticipate the reunion, when we're ready to receive him, when we're excited to be with him again.

So, make no mistake as difficult as this is to imagine for us, when our Lord returns to find his servants awake, ready for service, having, having patiently waited for him, been active. Truly, I say to you, Jesus says, he'll dress himself for service, he'll gird up his own loins. He'll tuck in his own flowing robes, bound, bind them with a belt. Same picture as the one in verse 35. And he will have them recline at the dinner table coming to them, he will serve them.

It's his joy to do so, but he's the same one who told us it is more blessed to give than to receive. He's the one who said the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom, for many, he did that when he humbled himself, as we learned over the past few weeks from Philippians.

"Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even to death on the cross."

So, if he did that greater thing in humility, serving his people by dying on the cross for their sins. If he did that greater thing by dawning the servant's towel, and washing his disciples' feet which is a picture of their ongoing continued forgiveness. What's a little table service compared to that? It's not something he counts as hard duty. It's not something he sees as drudgery. Obligated is perform this service, or it's not even a, a reward that he's reluctant to bestow. Not at all. This is pure, unmitigated joy to him.

The blessedness of his love for us, pronounces is a benediction. And his watchful, waiting servants, because he himself is filled with blessedness and joy in serving them. So, when Jesus says at the beginning of this short beatitudes, verse 37, blessed are those servants, and then again at the end of this beatitudes, verse 38, blessed are those servants, he has bookended his own service to his watchful servant, servants with blessedness.

His service, all of it, is his own blessing and it's their blessing. He's wrapped end to end in blessing and sealed with his promise. So, when the master comes home to discover his servants have been as eager for his arrival as he has been to, to return to their company, his heart leaps for joy. He didn't even think about tucking up his robes and making him recline and serving him. He's just excited. They're excited.

Sit back, relax, let me serve you. He regales them with stories from the wedding feast, or you should have seen this guy. You should have seen the beauty of the bride. You should have seen the, the groom's face when you walked down. It was awesome. Maybe even came home, some of the gifts from the festivities. Share some, spread them around among his servants. He comes home with a doggy bag, you know filled with food. Hey guys, check this out. Try this. Try this. Doesn't matter the lateness of the hour. Time stands still as loving master and affection and servants rejoice in one another's company.

So always be ready. Be watchful and be eager to cultivate faith, hope, and love, so you have a watchful attitude, one that is eager and excited to see him when he comes. So, if you lack

enthusiasm, as we said, attend to those virtues. Faith, hope, and love. Apply yourself prayerfully, diligently, to the study of God's word and do that in the company of the saints of the local church.

So, second point in our outline, his timing is uncertain, so always be waiting. Second watch of the night, third watch, doesn't really matter when he returns. Always stay alert, always be ready and waiting for him to arrive, exercising patient watchfulness until he comes. It doesn't matter when he arrives, you're always at it. See what Jesus says in verse 39 to encourage this. He says, "But know this that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into." So, you also must be ready. That is like the master of the house or the Son of Man is coming at an hour, you did not expect.

1 Thessalonians 5, Paul described Jesus coming is like a thief in the night. That's where this image comes from, right here, like a thief in the night. Jesus is invited his disciples here to share his joy. The joy of reunion, the joy of homecoming. He now invites them to think, not like a servant,

but to think like a homeowner. Now he wants them to think, not as servants, but as masters of the house.

Like what would they do if they were in the master's position? Jesus is the blessed and only sovereign. He's always and ever watchful over his Father's house. He attends continuously to the matters of his Father's kingdom, and so he wants his disciples to think like he does. He's always discipling us. isn't he? He's always bringing us into his thinking, isn't he? Sharing the same commitment, he wants us to have this constant state of watchfulness like he does.

But since masters of the house are not omniscient, we're human beings. There are limitations on the knowledge of homeowners. So, homeowners do not know what time the thief is going to come. They, they have to remain vigilant. They have to remain watchful, always waiting, spending money on technology to help them stay alerted.

Listen, this is even more critical, isn't it? With the coming of the Son of Man? I mean, risking sleep when he comes, is nothing like risking sleep when a thief comes. A thief only takes your stuff, earthly valuables. Slinks away, stealthily

into the night. He doesn't want to be discovered. He doesn't want any noise, any attention drawn to him.

But when the Son of Man comes, it's not gonna be like that at all. I mean, he's going to come loudly with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. He's gonna come in light, and glory is gonna be shining. He's going to come, he's gonna come in judgment and when he comes, he never leaves. He's gonna judge all the unbelievers. He's also gonna judge the unwatchful. Those Jesus describes here in verses 45 to 48. He describes them as wicked or lazy or ignorant servants. And for them, the cost will be far higher than losing just a bit of coin or some fancy jewelry. So, like the watchful homeowner, who lacks omniscience and must therefore be always awake, always watchful, Jesus says in verse 40, "You also must be ready, the Son of Man is coming at an hour you don't expect."

Back to the timing of the second coming. That piece of information, that's been withheld from the Messiah as well. Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32, Jesus said, "Concerning that day and that hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." Some limitation, here on Christ

knowledge, has tripped some people up. Led to some very serious errors and heresies, but it's really not too difficult, if we stay close to a very biblical, faithful Christology.

Here's how you think about this, in Christ's divine nature, the Son of God, knows all things, he knows all things without limitation or qualification. He even knows the timing of the return of the Son of Man. As the Son of God, he shares in the divine essence which is an omniscient essence. Nothing is hidden from the second person of the Trinity. If it were hidden from him, there would be a change in the Son of Man, a change in the Trinity. There is no change in the Trinity. He is immutable, unchanging. So, in his divine nature, he knows all things, he's omniscient, but in his human nature, in Christ human nature, the Son of Man is limited. He's limited to what the Father wants him to know according to the Father's will.

We read that as early as Luke 2:52. Luke prepared us to understand this. He said, Jesus is a young boy. "He increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." So, in his human nature he had to grow. He had to mature. He had to increase. So, Jesus Christ in his humanity, and his human

nature, he knows all and only what the Father has revealed to him. All things revealed, and a few things withheld from him according to the Fathers perfect loving will.

Here, I think we can find, and not stretch the point too much, but I think we can find a point of encouragement. As we wait patiently, longingly for the return of Christ, not knowing when it's gonna happen. If you ever feel discouraged in the waiting, tired, soul weary, talk to Jesus about it, because he's waiting too. As we live in the tension, certainty about his return, and uncertainty about the timing of his return, you know what? So does he.

He too is longing to return. He too is longing to be united and reunited with you, with the rest of the saints for whom he died to redeem. So don't be discouraged. Know that he loves you, that he longs to be with you. He longs to be with you more than you long to be with him. Because he knows more, he sees more, he understands more, he understands the glory of the Father that he wants to bring you too. He longs to bring you there. He longs to be with you and have you be a part of that.

He prays that way in John 17, his high priestly prayer. He's waiting for the word of the Father. Just give me the word. He's got his track shoes on. He's gonna run, run to come and take you to himself, that where he is, there you may be also with him. According to what he's revealed in this teaching, he is eagerly, excitedly, waiting to share table fellowship with you and me, members of his body, members of his bride, members of redeemed Israel. He longs to be with his people.

And the fact that he is made to wait, is yet another point of connection of identity of him with us, as the Son of Man and us with him as our head, as the head of the church, as the head of a redeemed humanity. God made him perfect. To be our Redeemer in all things, even in waiting. Since his coming is certain, let's always be ready. As Peter said, 2 Peter 3:11 to 15, after revealing the dissolution of the heavens and the earth by fire, Peter says, "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But, according to his promise we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

"Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found in him without spot or blemish. Be at peace. And count the patience of our Lord's salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him." Since the timing of his assertiveness or the timing of his coming is certain, let's always be ready. Since the timing of his return is uncertain, not known to us, let's always be waiting, and waiting in the way that Paul told Titus to wait. Titus 2:13 to 14, "waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are as zealous for good works." That's how we wait. We're ready, or waiting, or watchful. All the time.