

## “Stay Awake?”—Mark 13:32-37

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Stay Awake?”, is Mark 13:32-37 → Jesus says: *But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

While it may be a bit risky to preach a sermon telling you to stay awake while the pastor’s monotone voice flows through the windmills of your mind, Jesus impresses the necessity of staying awake in connection to His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming. He’s referring to living in a state of constant awareness in faith, watchful for His coming on the Last Day. Why? Because God *has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a Man Whom He has appointed*, Jesus the Christ (cf.

Acts 17:31). And, as Jesus said in verse 32 of our text, *concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father*. Thus His command to *keep awake*. *For you do not know when the time will come.* (verse 33)

As always, Jesus is primarily concerned about your eternal life with Him and bringing that life to others. His sacrificial life and death, along with His resurrection and ascension served His preparing *a place for you* so that, when He comes again, He *will take you to Himself, that where He is you may be also* (cf. John 14:3). He has done all that is necessary to secure your place “in the life of the world to come” in the *new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells* (cf. 2 Peter 3:13). He has secured your salvation and even brought you to faith in His accomplished work for you by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, why did He keep talking about being ready, watchful, on your guard and awake in connection to His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming if you’re already “in” as one of His disciples? Because *your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour* and that someone is you (cf. 1 Peter 5:8). Using the world around you as a catalyst to bring forth sin from the sinful heart, he strives to steal your faith, love and hope **in Christ**. Jesus knows that the temptation is always lurking around the corner to draw you into unbelief in unrepentant sin, a terrible position to be in before Jesus on the Last Day. Thus, He instructs you in Matthew

26:41 → *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

Jesus even used an example from the practices of his day to describe this constant alertness. It was common practice for a *man going on a journey* to put *his servants in charge* of his household (or business, vineyard, field, etc.), assigning to *each . . . his work, and commanding the doorkeeper to stay awake*. One can see comparisons with Jesus and His Church. The *man going on a journey* could refer to Jesus leaving earth by His ascension into heaven and putting *his servants in charge, each with his work* could refer to Christians with individual spiritual gifts and abilities overseeing His work here on earth.

1 Peter 4:10 commands us: *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace*. We the Church have been entrusted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ—the good news of the forgiveness of sins by faith in His atoning work alone. He has commanded us to *go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation* (cf. Mark 16:15); to administer *God's varied grace* through Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Absolution; to serve our neighbor in faithfulness to His commandments. One aspect of Christ's command for His Church to stay awake deals with our intentional, prayerful working to hold out this word of eternal life in Jesus Christ to what Scripture describes as a *crooked and twisted generation* (cf.

At the same time, we are involved in spiritual battle as the devil strives to use this perverse world to draw us away from Christ and into hell with him. Thus, we are constantly tempted to engross ourselves in the stuff of earth in an idolatrous manner, to indulge our sinful flesh, and to believe the many lies which are placed before us daily. In Luke 21:34 Jesus alluded to such activities serving to trap us in unrepentance and unbelief, a terrible position to be in before Jesus on the Last Day. He said: *Watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.* Referring to believing the lies of false teachers and being influenced by behaviors of rebellion around us, Peter warns: *take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people **and lose your own stability*** (cf. 2 Peter 3:17). Spiritual discernment and resistance of evil are imperative this side of heaven as you are being tempted to turn your back on your baptism in unrepentant sin which can lead to unbelief and eternal damnation. Thus, it is important that Christians keep their focus on doing their Master's will, as He has assigned *each with his work* of bringing God's grace to others.

Jesus' example in our text also involves *the doorkeeper* who needs to *stay awake* (verse 34). The Romans split twelve hours of the day into what they referred to as "watches." Four three-hour watches (during the

usual dark hours) were appointed during which a soldier would watch for intrusion or attacks by the enemy while the others slept. The purpose for the doorkeeper was to keep watch for thieves and other criminals to protect their master's property.

Jesus referred to these watches in verse 35 of our text with the command to *stay awake*. However, Jesus stated that this doorkeeper was to watch for the master's return, not necessarily a thief, even though Jesus did compare His unexpected and sudden coming to that of a thief (cf. Matthew 24:42-43; Luke 12:39-40). But why was it necessary for the doorkeeper to watch for the master's return? Almost makes it sound like the doorkeeper should be ready to warn everyone of the master's return so they can "straighten up" and act properly in his presence. After all, it would fit the old adage: "When the cat's away, the mice will play!" Jesus' words in Matthew's account of His teaching about His return on the Last Day seems to reflect this same concept. However, there it refers specifically to **an individual servant** *whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time*, and how that servant behaves while the master is gone (cf. Matthew 24:45-51).

It is actually easy to act properly **in the presence** of the one who has the power over your fate. For example, a defiant person can act politely in a job situation because he knows that the customer in front of him could hold the fate of his job in his hands. For the same reason he may

submit to a supervisor he despises for a specific period of time. In other words, respect in such situations is created by presence coupled with self-preservation. It's a matter of personal motivation and loyalty to oneself, not a desire for the well-being of others or, in the case of Jesus' example in our text, a faithfulness to your Lord.

To *stay awake* is simply to function in your relationships and vocations in life as Christ's servant to others. It's not trying to prove your faithfulness to others or Jesus. It's not striving to secure your place in heaven by piling up good deeds in the sight of God and others. Paul applied this principle to the vocation of a *bondservant* in Colossians 3:22. He told bondservants to obey their *earthly masters . . . in everything, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, **but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord***, Jesus Christ. Notice the motivation of the Christian doing the work given him in his individual vocations of life is faith in Jesus as Lord. Such faith strives with *sincerity of heart* to be faithful to the Lord Jesus in service to our neighbor as Christ's bondservants, period.

It is in such a desire to act in faithfulness to your identity in Christ that you will *stay awake*, that is, guard yourself in the midst of the many attacks of the devil to sabotage the Church's work and witness as you look forward to your Master's return on the Last Day. Jesus' promise in Matthew 24:46 is yours: *Blessed is that servant whom his Master will*

*find so doing when He comes. Amen.*

*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,*

*knowing that from the Lord*

*you will receive the inheritance as your reward.*

*You are serving the Lord Christ.*

(Colossians 3:23-24)

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