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St. John's Lutheran Church of Burlington
23 November 2025

Sermon on Luke 12:35-40

Worship Theme:

EAGER ANTICIPATION

Today the Church marks the passing of another Church Year, waiting for our Lord to return. Jesus said he would return soon. However, the definition of “soon” for the One who has no beginning or end naturally differs from ours. While we cannot be certain when the day of fulfillment will come, we are completely confident of what that day will bring. No matter how many years we must mark, we watch with eager anticipation, and we pray, “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20).

Sermon Theme: “Are You Ready?”

1. It's Hard to Wait
2. It's Worth the Wait

Are you good at waiting? Some people are. Some people can sit quietly and wait for something for long periods of time without it bothering them at all. I'm not usually one of those people. I am okay waiting for a little bit, but if whatever I'm waiting for starts to take longer than I think it should, my patience begins wearing out. That only becomes more true if the thing I'm waiting for is a very good or very important thing. If it matters to me a lot or if I know it's going to be wonderful, then I want it to come as fast as possible and I'm hardly patient at all.

What would happen, though, if I got too impatient and stopped waiting, so that, when the moment finally did arrive, I wasn't ready for it? That's a key focus in Jesus' words today. He had been talking with his disciples about his imminent death and departure from this world. But he also reassured them that he would not be gone forever – he would return again! No matter how long it took and no matter how long Jesus' followers had to wait, **they needed to be ready**. To help them understand the importance of this, Jesus told a story: *“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... 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.”*

Can you imagine how difficult it was for those servants? Their master leaves to go to a grand wedding celebration. They must wait for him and be prepared to immediately serve him upon his return. When is that going to be? No one knows. Doesn't matter! **Be ready**. Why? It's their duty as his servants. This is what they do because of who they are. This is expected of them, regardless of how long it takes and how difficult it is to wait; they must be ready to go without any warning at all. It's hard enough to wait if we DO know when something is coming. Even more difficult if we have no idea at all when it will be.

Let's not get lost in the story though. Let's get right to the point of it so that we understand why Jesus told this story and just how important it is for us to pay

attention to and follow it. He explains at the end, *“You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”* So we’re not just talking about any random master and servants here; we’re talking about Jesus and his followers. Even though Jesus is God and is therefore always present everywhere, his physical body is not in this world right now. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, as we confess in the creeds. And he will return to Judge the living and the dead – we focused on that last week in church. When he returns, we **MUST** be ready! Why? Because it’s our duty as his people. This is what we do because of who we are.

So how is that going for you? **Are you ready?** If Jesus were to return today and the world ended, would you be prepared? Or if God has decided that today is your last day in this world, are you ready for that? Have you been eagerly and faithfully waiting, staying ready to go whenever he calls?

We like to say and think we are. But if we’re honest, there are plenty of moments in our lives when we’re not ready or expecting him. The most obvious of these are whenever we listen to the sinful nature inside us and choose to gratify our selfish desires rather than obey God’s holy Word. Whenever we choose sin over Jesus, we’re not ready. There are also many moments when sin isn’t necessarily involved, but we still aren’t quite ready for Jesus to return yet. We want to make it to more life milestones: graduation, marriage, retirement, becoming grandparents. We want to check more items of our bucket lists before we run out of time in this world. Or maybe we just don’t want the responsibility that comes with being a servant of Jesus and always being ready for his return. We don’t want to have to prioritize him and his desires over ourselves and our desires. We don’t want to have to obey everything he says because sometimes it’s hard and we would rather do what’s easier, or more acceptable in society, or more in line with our own personal opinions. And if that’s what our days look like – sin, personal priorities, and shirking responsibility – we’re not ready. **It’s hard to wait**, we grow tired of waiting, and we like doing whatever makes us feel good in the moment!

With those thoughts and feelings, we’ve proven exactly why it was so important for Jesus to speak these words. But don’t miss a critically important point here – Jesus spoke these words!! Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows our shortcomings and our weaknesses, our failures and our faults. As our perfect Savior, he took humanity into his divine being so that he would experience everything we experience and fulfill everything demanded of us in God’s holy law. So because Jesus knows what it’s like to be a human being, he knows how difficult it can be to wait and how strong the pull of temptation to sin can be. So he spoke these words to wake us up again and to remind us why we need to keep waiting – he is coming! And he wants us to **be ready** when he does!

And just to make sure we don’t miss it, he explains why this matters so much to him. It’s not because of what he wants us to do for him; it’s because of what he wants to do for us! *“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. It will be good for*

those servants whose master finds them ready.” This matters so much to Jesus not because he expects us to serve him, but because he is eager to serve us.

As Jesus is telling this story, you can imagine the jaws dropping as people heard his words. This was insane. Unheard of! A complete reversal of everything expected of these societal roles! The servants serve the master because that’s what servants do, and they don’t take care of their needs until his are satisfied. But this master returns from the wedding celebration and the first thing he does for all the servants waiting for him is invite them to recline at the table so that he may serve them. Because they were ready, they received what he had planned for them.

We want to be clear, however, and make sure there is no misunderstanding here, because this sounds like a lot of pressure for the servants and like there is something they need to do in order to be on the master’s good side and to receive what he wants to give them. And the answer to that thought is both yes and no. Yes, the expectation of the master is that his servants will be ready for him, and there is definitely a certain amount of discipline and effort that is involved in that. The servants ought to do what their master desires. But why is this expected of them in the first place? Because they are his servants. They belong to him. That isn’t something they caused – he chose them and declared them to be his own.

In other words, why are you and I expected to always be ready for Jesus to return? Because Jesus has made us his people. The Holy Spirit has given us faith which connects us to Jesus our perfect Savior and makes us members of his holy household. This is who we are! And who we are directly impacts what we do: God’s people wait for him. Not out of worry or fear, but with joy and eagerness, because we know what will happen when he comes. Our needs will be met. Not just for a little while, but forever. Because he willingly clothed himself as a servant and graciously chose to serve us for our eternal good. **That’s worth the wait!**

So are you ready for all this? By God’s grace, the answer is yes! God has given us faith which connects us to Jesus and brings us all the eternal blessings Jesus won for us with his cross and empty tomb – forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and eternal life in heaven. And for as long as we live in this world, every time we hear God’s Word, that faith connection to Christ is strengthened and we are rejuvenated to keep watching and waiting. Next Sunday we begin a new Church Year with the season of Advent, a time focused entirely on watching, waiting, and expecting Jesus to come. God himself has prepared us and made us ready for him. Now as his chosen and dearly loved servants, we gladly throw aside anything that pulls us away from him and we gratefully fix our focus on him and his Word. It won’t always be comfortable, convenient, or easy for us. But Jesus is coming – that’s certain! We don’t know when, but we know he is. And we know that when he does, we will be blessed forever, enjoying peace and eternal life in the presence of our Master who serves us and saves us. Jesus wants us to be ready so that we don’t miss it, so he himself makes us ready. **It’s hard to wait.** But dear servants of Jesus: keep watching, keep waiting, and **stay ready. It’s worth the wait!** Amen.

And the peace of God which goes beyond all understanding will guard and keep our hearts and our minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.