

## Be Ready.

Text: Luke 12:35-43

Suggested Hymns:

493, 347, 487, 482T407, 490

1) How The Lord Expects Us To Be Ready

2) The Reward Of Grace To Those Who Will Be Ready

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 12:35-43, <sup>35</sup> *“Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; <sup>36</sup> and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.*

<sup>37</sup> *Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. <sup>38</sup> And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. <sup>39</sup> But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.*

<sup>40</sup> *Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” <sup>41</sup> Then Peter said to Him, “Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?” <sup>42</sup> And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? <sup>43</sup> Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Some years ago a tourist was travelling along the shores of Lake Como in Northern Italy. He wanted to visit one castle especially by the name of “*Villa Arconati*.” When the tourist reached the castle, a friendly old gardener opened the gate and showed the tourist the grounds which this old man kept in perfect order.

“How long have you been here?” the tourist asked. “Twenty-four years,” replied the gardener. “And how often has the owner of the castle been here during that time?” “Four times.” “When was he here the last time?” “Twelve years ago.” “Never since then?” “Never.” “Does he ever write to you?” “No.”

“From whom then do you get your instructions?” “From his agent at Milan.” “Does this agent come out here quite often?” “Never.” “Who, then, comes here?” “I am almost always alone — only once in a great while a tourist comes here.”

“But you keep this garden in such fine condition and take such excellent care of all the plants, just as though you expected your master to come tomorrow.” “**Today, sir, today,**” the old gardener promptly replied.

This answer made a deep impression on the tourist. How faithful that old man was to his trust! Day after day his thought was not: “Tomorrow the master may come,” but “*today, sir, today.*”

Oh, how the Lord of heaven appreciates such faithfulness on the part of the workers in His vineyard, who will always think, “*Today my Lord may return. I must work and be ready.*” That is the lesson our text impresses upon us: “*Be Ready.*” May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. How The Lord Expects Us To Be Ready**

Today is the last Sunday of the church year. In some Lutheran churches it is a memorial Sunday for the dead. Other Lutheran churches observe this Sunday as a Day of Repentance and Prayer. Also very appropriate.

In the text before us both of these thoughts can be combined. Thinking of those who have departed this life, we wonder just how near our end may be. How soon we shall meet the Bridegroom; and we ask, “*Are we ready to meet Him?*” Only then are we ready if we wait and watch in repentance and in prayer.

Jesus uses fine picture language to encourage our preparedness, <sup>35</sup> “*Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning;* <sup>36</sup> *and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.*”

The picture presents a household of servants. The master has gone to a wedding. He is expected to return soon, but no one knows exactly the time. The servants are in danger of becoming negligent, careless, and sleepy.

The master has given them strict orders to be ready for him when he returns. Loins girded: Long flowing Oriental garments tied up, so they are ready for walking and working. Lamps burning: Everything in proper condition. There may be a measure of hardship in standing with loins girt about and lamps lit, waiting hour after hour during the night, while others are stretched at ease in sweet sleep, but this faithfulness is an absolute necessity.

*“Like these servants, you must always be ready, waiting and watching for My return,”* says Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, to each of us. But when will He come? We do not know. We know we are living in the night before His coming.

He keeps the exact time secret. <sup>39</sup> *But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.*

<sup>40</sup> *Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*

Time is not to influence our watching and waiting. No thief will announce his coming. He comes when the victim least expects it. In that respect the Lord is like a thief. We read in Revelation 16:15, <sup>15</sup> *“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches.”*<sup>1</sup>

And as we heard in the Epistle last Sunday, 2 Peter 3:10, <sup>10</sup> *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

And in today’s Epistle, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, <sup>2</sup> *For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.* <sup>3</sup> *For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them.* Thus, be ready every minute.

Friends, look back over the past church year. Were you always ready? What if the Lord would have come when you were in a fit of wrath, when you were deliberately giving your mouth to evil and your tongue was framing deceit,

when you were wilfully doing some wicked thing secretly? You were not ready. Your loins were not girded. Your lamp was not burning.

But in His grace God did not come just then. He waited. He gave you another chance. But do not think that God will never come at such a time.

Consider Ananias and Sapphira. We read in Acts 5:3–5, <sup>3</sup> *But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? <sup>4</sup> While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”* <sup>5</sup> *Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last.*

The hymnist wrote,<sup>2</sup>

By grace! but think not, you who livest  
Securely on in godless ways,  
That you — though all are called — receivest  
The promised rest that wakes our praise;  
By grace none find in heaven a place  
Who live in sin, and hope for grace.

Nor does the Lord consider our station in life. No matter how high we are in the world, we are still under Him. Peter, as spokesman for the Twelve, asked whether this was meant for all people. *“Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?”* Jesus’ answer makes it clear that all are meant, servants and stewards alike.

Since the Lord gives all of us this occasion at the end of the church year to meet in His house, let us use it to regird our loins, to refill our lamps, to refresh our faith by His Word.

If in anything we have been careless and negligent in this year of grace, let us admit it and plead for forgiveness. *‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’*<sup>3</sup>

Psalm 143:2, <sup>2</sup> *Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no one living is righteous.*

Psalm 130:3–4, <sup>3</sup> *If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? <sup>4</sup> But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.*

For Jesus' sake God forgives and pardons. Isaiah 53:4–5, *<sup>4</sup> Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.*

Isaiah 1:18, *“Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.*

Thus cleansed from sin, we will pray, Psalm 51:10, *<sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a right spirit within me.*

And Psalm 51:12, *<sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.*

Thus strengthened and upheld by His Spirit, we will be watching and waiting, always ready, no matter when and where and how the Bridegroom comes.

## **2. The Reward Of Grace To Those Who Will Be Ready**

And oh, what joy we will experience if we are ready when He returns! Our text says, *“<sup>38</sup> And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.*

Watching faithfully through this one night brings blessings ever after. For a short time we must keep ourselves ready here on earth, perhaps seventy or eighty years. If we do, eternal blessedness is ours.

The hymnist wrote,<sup>4</sup>

Brief life is here our portion,  
Brief sorrow, short-lived care:  
The life that knows no ending,  
The tearless life, is there.  
O happy retribution:  
Short toil, eternal rest;  
For mortals and for sinners  
A mansion with the blest.

Jesus describes this blessedness. *Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.* On earth we are the servants, we are to watch and work and serve.

In heaven our Lord will serve us. When we object and want to help, He will make us sit down. Such unfathomable love and mercy!

We read in Psalm 126:1-2, *<sup>1</sup> When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream. <sup>2</sup> Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."*

We have not deserved or earned this. We realise that. We will be overwhelmed because of His gracious service for us when we served Him so weakly and poorly while on earth. All will be an entirely undeserved gift of His grace.

No joy, no genuine pleasure will be denied us. Joys unspeakable and unending shall be our blessed lot. We read in Psalm 16:11, *In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

And in Psalm 17:15, *<sup>15</sup> As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.*

Is it no wonder then that the Lord repeats His precious promise in the last verse of our text, “<sup>43</sup> *Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.*

One of earth's greatest joys, is to see a faithful servant of the Bridegroom confidently, quietly, and trustingly approach the end. As the Saviour calls, *"Surely I am coming quickly,"* they answer longingly, *"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"<sup>5</sup>*

Such souls, washed clean in Jesus' blood, are now in heaven, enjoying the services of Jesus. On Judgement Day body and soul will be reunited and enjoy that pleasure together eternally. No doubt, you have some loved ones who have gone before you. You yearn to see them again. You certainly will if you are ready when the Lord comes for you.

He may not give you weeks of sickness in which to get ready. He may take you suddenly and unexpectedly through a stroke or an accident. He may also

come for Judgement any moment. He has told us, “*Be ready!*” Let us be constantly aware of that.

Let us not think, “My Lord may come tomorrow,” but rather “**today, sir, today!**”

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,<sup>6</sup>

Who knows how soon life may be ending?  
Time flies, and death is hastening on.  
A sudden death may be impending,  
And in a moment life be gone:  
My God, for Jesus' sake I pray  
Thy peace may bless my dying day. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> See also 1 Thessalonians 5:2

<sup>2</sup> Hymn 339 v 5 ALHB

<sup>3</sup> Luke 18:13

<sup>4</sup> Hymn 493

<sup>5</sup> Rev. 22:20

<sup>6</sup> Hymn 482 v1