

## **Be Ready for your Lord's Return!**

**Luke 12:35-40**

**Nov. 23, 2025 (Last Sun. of Pen.)**

**St. Paul's Lutheran, North Freedom**

*"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 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, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. 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. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Luke 12:35-40 NIV)*

In the name of Christ, the King who reigns and will return, dear fellow believers:

Three Sundays in a row we've been talking about Christ's second coming. "No one knows the day or hour" when our Savior will return on the Last Day. Here's a question I'd like us to think about: Would it be better for us if we knew the day or hour, so we could be prepared? Or would it be better not knowing?

Well, if God did tell us that Christ was coming on such and such a date, like Dec. 1, 2035, there might be a temptation for us to think, "Hey, that's not for another ten years. I'm going to live it up for now!" Then we'd be slacking off in our faith. So it's for good reason that our Lord doesn't tell us the day or hour of his return, or the day of our death, for that matter, because we don't know when that will be either. We should live each day as though it were the last.

In today's text, our Lord Jesus gives us some very good reasons to **Be Ready for your Lord's Return!** We need to be ready for service, and ready for the unexpected.

Jesus uses an illustration that teaches us to be ready: "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." Back in the past, a rich landowner would have numerous house servants who are expected to keep up the house and have things ready when he's away, like at a wedding banquet. If those servants think, "When the cat's away, the mice will play," and they have a party and have a little too much to drink, they'll be in for it when the master returns. The master expects that when he returns, be it early or late, his servants will be right there, properly dressed, ready to open the door and serve his needs—whether he wants a midnight snack or papers that he'll need for the next day.

We easily understand the meaning of Jesus' illustration. Jesus is the master, and it's by grace that we even belong to him in his household. Jesus made us members of God's own family by humbling himself and dying on the cross when he came the first time, to win our salvation. Then Jesus rose, and ascended on high to be seated at God's right hand—the wedding banquet in our Lord's story. But our Lord has told us that he will return again, and he will come at any time. He has called us to be his servants, and to be ready for service with lives of faith in him.

Like those servants we need to be properly “dressed.” We can’t be found wearing the tattered rags of sinfulness. Every day we need to repent of our sins. Nor can we rely on our good works as dress for our Lord. The prophet Isaiah speaks for all of us: “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). No, we need to be wearing the white robe of Christ’s righteousness, which covers the dirt, the guilt of our sins. His holiness, his righteous acts, and not ours, are what we need to be wearing, every day.

With the proper dress, we are ready for “service.” We live by faith, and as believers we are called on to serve God. We do that by serving one another. The pastor and the church president are not to lord it over others, but use their positions to serve and help; ladies’ aid members, Sunday School teachers, children and retirees and in-between, we are here to serve in our various callings.

As we serve, we are told to “keep your lamps burning.” That’s the light of our faith, and our faith is fueled with God’s Word, the gospel message of Jesus. Don’t let the flame of your faith die out by a neglect of God’s Word or neglecting holy communion. Keep the flame burning, continue hearing and reading God’s Word. With lives of faith and service, we will be ready for service at his return. And we will also be ready for the unexpected.

Jesus uses a second illustration of his return, teaching us to be ready for the unexpected. This one’s about an owner of a house. The homeowner obviously doesn’t want thieves to break in and steal his belongings. Too bad, thieves don’t cooperate and call you up ahead of time to let you know what time to expect them (“Mr. Owner? This is Mr. Thief. I’ll be at your house at midnight to take your precious jewelry and TV set.”) To prevent that, the homeowner invests in a home security system with alarms, maybe cameras and a watchdog to prevent the thief from breaking in.

In this illustration the owner is you and me, and the thief is Jesus. Peter and Paul both used that illustration when they wrote, “The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pe. 3:10). The point is that Jesus is going to arrive, unannounced, and unexpected. So Jesus also tells us in our text, “You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” You might say, when you least expect him, expect him!

The timing of our Lord’s return will be unexpected. But what our Lord Jesus does when he returns is also unexpected. We go back to the first illustration, when the servants open the door for their master to return: “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.” The master comes and serves us! What amazing grace that is! After a life of service to the Lord, when we get anything from him, Jesus teaches us to say, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done what is our duty” (Luke 17:10). But our Lord will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” He will exalt us, he will make us to be masters and rulers, and we will reign with the Lord forever in heaven.

For these reasons, we will be ready at any time for our Lord to return. It doesn’t matter if the Lord delays his return for another 100 or 1000 years, or if he’s coming today or tomorrow—we’ll be ready. It doesn’t matter if we live to be a 100 or if we die tonight—we’ll be ready. We’ll be dressed with Christ’s righteousness, serving him, living in faith that’s glowing by the Word, ready each day of our lives for the Lord’s return! Amen.