

Jesus Comes. Be Ready! Mark 13:32-37  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent 11/27/2011 Pastor Aaron Nitz

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, dear friends in Christ, He wasn't focused; He wasn't ready. I remember hearing a story about someone who worked at one of the jobs I had growing up. For quite a few years the company had a contract with an outdoor Renaissance Fair during the summer months. Many people would come from all over Southern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois to see people dressed in medieval garb and act out medieval plays and buy medieval souvenirs. Our company provided over 100 portable restrooms for this event which lasted all summer long. Every weekend about 3 or 4 trucks had to go there early Sunday morning to service and clean these units before the fair opened. Most of the workers didn't mind doing this since they got double time pay to do it. One particular Sunday one of the guys got done with his work early and usually then the person who got done early would go and help out the others. Well this guy decided instead of helping out everyone else that he'd park his truck in the parking lot and sit back, relax, and take a nap. And he did. But this particular Sunday something very unusual happened. The boss decided to drive to the fair and see how his men were doing. Needless to say this worker was woken up in the most startling and embarrassing way of his life. He wasn't ready. He wasn't focused. He wasn't prepared. One of the worst things that can happen to an employee is to be found by the boss not doing one's work and sleeping on the job. The same applies to us as Christians. Don't let the Lord find you sleeping on the job. Be ready! Be focused! Be watchful!

Jesus spoke the words of our text during Holy Week, a few days before He'd be nailed to the cross. His disciples had asked him about when the end of the age will occur and about the signs of the end. Jesus described the signs of the end but His answer as to the time was always: Watch! Be on guard! Be alert! Why? Because **"no one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."** No one knows when the Lord will return. There is no hidden code to decipher, no magical formula, and no superstitious clue to figure out in order to discover the date of Jesus' return. Perhaps at first glance it surprises us to see that even Jesus Himself says that He doesn't know the time of the Last Day. How can this be? Isn't Jesus one with the Father? Isn't Jesus a person of the Triune God? How can He not know the time of His return? In order to live on this earth to suffer and die for our sins, Jesus set aside the full use of His divine power for a time. Jesus didn't make full use of His divine power while He lived on this earth. He set aside His omniscience and used it only when it was essential for saving people. Jesus never spent one thoughtless second speculating about the time of the Last Day and He purposely didn't tell us because He knew it would be detrimental to our faith if He had.

So no one knows when Jesus will come the 2<sup>nd</sup> time. What's the purpose? **"Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come."** The very fact that no one knows when Jesus will return makes it imperative for everyone to be on guard, alert, and watchful. We may be uncertain about the exact time of Jesus' return, but there is the absolute certainty that it will happen. Observe the signs of the times and how Jesus' words have been fulfilled: Be prepared. Be focused.

To illustrate His point Jesus told a short parable. **"It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back- whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn."** A man leaves to go on a journey and it's not his duty to tell his servants exactly when he will return. It's the duty of all the servants to be actively engaged in their master's work should he come home suddenly. One special direction is given to one of the servants: the doorkeeper is to keep watch so he can be ready to open the door when his master returns. God has given to each of His children on earth tasks that He wants them to be doing. God wants each to carry out their tasks as doing it for Him. He's given everyone tasks: A father, mother, husband, wife, child, student, employee, employer, a citizen, a member of a church, etc. Let each servant of the Master be found actively going about the Master's tasks when He returns. Because He may return at any unexpected hour, like any unexpected hour of the night.

**"If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping."** The worst possible scenario for any Servant of the Master is to be found sleeping on the job. Let no one stop watching for Jesus' return and grow spiritually dull and unresponsive. Don't be sleeping on the job when God's given every person the task of watching for His coming. What Jesus told His disciples is also meant for us 21<sup>st</sup> Century disciples of Jesus as well, **"What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"**

God wants us to watch, to be ready, to be focused. The fact is that Jesus is coming. He wants the world to be focused and be watchful. The world at the time of Noah was not focused. In great patience God sent Noah to preach God's Word to the world for 120 years. God in love and patience did everything He could to rescue people from the coming judgment. For 120 years God waited...but the people focused on themselves rather than on God, they were too busy seeking their earthly treasures and pleasures. But then God kept His Word and came with waters to save His Church, Noah's family, and waters to judge the unfaithful servants.

So where is the world's focus today? Where do people today focus their attention and their ambition? How can I serve me? How can I get what I want? How can I build my paradise here on earth? Oh the glitter the world has to offer! There's no time for that silly church stuff! How can I please me?! How can I get people to like me?! What can I do for me?! And if you have any doubt that this is the Christmas culture of our world, you need only look to that thing that comes around every year and every year is exactly the same: Black Friday. Every year we see thousands and thousands of people line up for hours and hours to be the first ones inside some store. This year we even saw how thousands and thousands of people would line up for hours in the cold AND in the middle of the night! What focus! What determination! What excitement! And for what? A good deal that 2 years from now will be completely forgotten, out-dated, and collecting dust. Now picture the thousands of people lined up outside of stores on Black Friday or the crowded malls this Christmas season and now look inside the church. No lines of people waiting to get inside. No people lined up hours ahead of time to get inside. Still open seats. Still room left for more. Where did everyone go? Where are all the people hungering for heavenly treasure? Where are all the people alert and watching and excited and determined and focused on the day when Christ will return? Are they ready? The Master could return at any moment: "If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch!"

What about us? Where's our focus this Christmas season? Are we ready? Do we live with one eye on Christ's first coming and one on His second coming? How easily it is for us to get caught up in the glitter and sparkles of our world! How easy to lose our focus and look forward to the mere festivities of the Christmas season! How easy for each one of us to forget the real reason for Jesus' first coming. There was a reason why Jesus had to come the first time and it's one that doesn't make us smile. The reason Jesus had to come was because of our need. Each one of us is corrupted with thoughts of greed, covetousness, and selfishness. Each one of us on our own would be totally lost forever. Each of us has an incredible need for a Savior!

In a world that focuses itself often the farthest away and with people like you and me who've often focused our attention on the things of this world, where's God's focus? God's focus has always been and will always be on one place: rescuing sinful people like you and me. In boundless love God came to this earth. He set aside the full use of His glory and humbled Himself to be born in a barn and placed in a manger. In selfless love Jesus came to this earth to give Himself for sinful people who could never add anything to His infinite glory. In amazing love God came to this earth focused on one purpose: to go to the cross and pay for the sins of people who would rather focus themselves on anything but Him. It's knowing the amazing love of God and why Jesus came the first time and what He did when He came the first time that makes you and me prepared and ready for when Jesus will return the 2<sup>nd</sup> time.

How can we be focused and ready today? How can we keep watch and be on guard today? How can we be prepared for when our Master returns? Let us not be found sleeping on the job. He's given us tasks to do in His house: husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children, employees, employers, relatives and friends. In whatever situation we are in let us work at the assigned tasks God has given us with diligence and devotion. Let us recognize our need for Jesus' first coming- He came because of our sin, but He came in order to save us from our sins. And let us keep watch for His coming again. It's easy for us to get distracted especially in the midst of holiday preparations, Christmas gifts, parties, and celebrations. But let us each take to heart the words of our Savior and keep watch. Let us each keep watch by focusing on God's Word and the reality of Christmas and Jesus' first coming: our God coming to save us. Let us also keep watch and be ready for Jesus' second coming. Let us store up heavenly treasure and not earthly pleasures.

When Jesus first came He came to save us from our sins, when Jesus comes again He will give us the full reality of what He won for us the first time: eternal life. Jesus is coming and you are ready! Amen.