

Mark 13:32-37

Today we are entering into the **festive** half of the church year, and the season which we call **Advent**. Just what **is** the Advent Season? If we boil it down to its most basic form, Advent is a time of joyful **anticipation**, as well as a time of patient **waiting**. It is a time when we eagerly **prepare** to celebrate Jesus' **first** coming to the earth as an infant on Christmas morning, as well as a time when we patiently **wait** for His visible return to the earth on **Judgment Day**. One way or the other, **Jesus is coming!** That thought can leave us with many different **feelings** inside. In some ways the feeling of the Advent Season is like the feeling we would have if we were informed that the **President** of the United States, or the **Queen** of England, or some other world-famous figure, was going to pay us a **visit** in our home. While that would certainly be a great **honor**, it would also be a lot of **work** - many **preparations** would have to be made.

As I sat down to write this sermon, I couldn't help but think that in another way the feeling of Advent is like the feeling which a husband and wife experience, as they wait for the **birth** of a **child**. While you have approximately **nine months** to prepare for the little arrival, the day-to-day **waiting**, especially as you near the **end**, can be quite **nerve-wracking** and very **frustrating**. Naturally, in each of these instances we would like to know **when** - **exactly** when the visitor will arrive. That becomes **especially** true when that visitor happens to be **Jesus** - a visitor whose final arrival will mark the **end of the world** as we now know it!

But while Jesus makes it very clear to us that He definitely **will** return, He also makes it very clear that it is not possible for us to know **when** He will return. Our text today begins, "*No one **knows** about that day or hour, not even the **angels** in heaven, nor the **Son**, but only the **Father**.*" Even Jesus' **disciples** had been curious about when He would return to the earth. But, our heavenly Father has made that event His business **alone**. He has reserved to **Himself** the exact date and time of the **Last Day** - the Day of **Judgment**. Besides, the Lord Jesus assures us that it is far **better** for us, His **servants**, to be concerned about using our time **profitably** - however **long** or **short** that time may be. Today Jesus uses a story about a man and his servants, to illustrate that we are to **Be Watchful Servants**. Such watchfulness will do two things for us, each affecting a different aspect of our lives. Such watchfulness will provide us with **security** against the **outside**, and it will also provide us with **activity** on the **inside**.

Jesus' story begins, *"It's like a man going away. He leaves his house in charge of his servants, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to **keep watch**."* Let's focus on this **doorkeeper** for a moment. The function of a doorkeeper is to provide **protection**. He must **keep watch** to protect the household against those who would harm them. Today we use **security guards** or sophisticated **alarm systems** to provide this type of protection for our homes and businesses. Can you imagine anyone purposely hiring a security guard who would regularly **sleep** on the job? Can you imagine anyone installing an alarm system which was **not capable** of sounding an **alarm** - either audibly, visibly, or even silently? That wouldn't make much **sense**, would it? That brings to mind a story I read about a lady and her "watchdog." She wrote, "Why do I feel safer when I am with an animal that will offer its tummy for a scratch to any stranger, no matter how kind or sinister they look?" **That** kind of protection would be **no** protection at all! It is the very **purpose** of a security system to **keep watch** at all times, and to **sound** the **alarm** when it is needed.

As followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, and members of His Church on earth, we too are **doorkeepers**. We have been given the responsibility to **keep watch**. The Psalmist viewed this particular profession as a very **desirable** one. He wrote, *"I would **rather** be a **doorkeeper** in the house of my **God**, than **dwell** in the tents of the **wicked**."* Our souls and our faith must be constantly **guarded** against the foes who would do them harm. The devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh continually strive to lead us into situations which are **dangerous**. If you **doubt** this, then you are not being a very good **watchman**! Open your eyes! Just look around you, and **see** all the people whose lives are being **devastated** by the abuse of alcohol and other drugs. Observe the **loneliness** and **confusion**, the **stress** and **frustration**, and the inability to **cope** with the rigors of daily life - all of which lead many people into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins. And recognize that if it can happen to **them**, it can also happen to **you**. And perhaps **worst** of all, you don't know **when** it will happen. Therefore, we must be **on guard** against the evils of this world - always **watchful** for things which pose a danger to our souls - always **ready** to **sound the alarm** at a moment's notice. We must be **good doorkeepers** in the Lord's house.

But, notice that Jesus' story involves **more** people than just doorkeepers. Each servant has his own special **task** to perform while the homeowner is away - perhaps one to **clean**, another to prepare the **meals**, yet another to keep the house in good **repair**, and so forth. These servants are **also** to be **watchful**. Our text

concludes, “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. If he comes **suddenly**, do not let him find you **sleeping**. What I say to you, I say to everyone.’ **Watch!**”

A **quick** reading of these words might leave us with the impression that all of this man’s servants were **lazy** and **slothful**, and that they wouldn’t carry out their assigned tasks until the last possible moment. But a more **careful** reading would indicate that the homeowner **expects** his servants to be **faithful**. Watchfulness demands **activity** at all times. Regardless of whether the homeowner would return in broad **daylight** or during the wee hours of the **morning**, he would expect to find his servants **working** - **performing** the various tasks which had been assigned to them.

Our Lord Jesus has left those who **believe** in Him, His **servants**, with the responsibility and the privilege of taking care of His **house** - His **business** here on the earth. That means He has left each of us with some **tasks** to perform. What **are** those tasks? That all depends on what kind of servant God has **made** you to be. I hesitate to even begin **listing** the hundreds or even thousands of gifts and talents which our Lord gives to us as different individuals, lest someone would come away from this sermon with the impression that perhaps some talents are more **important** or more **valuable** than others.

Suffice it to say that we all **have** gifts, and our gifts are merely **different** - different by God’s **design**. Different **talents** for different **tasks** - different **tasks** for different **people**. Thank God that He has **not** made us all the **same**, nor has He left the care of His entire house in the hands of any **one** individual. Rather, we’re all in this **together** - each with our own talents - each with our own responsibilities; one to **admonish**, another to **comfort**; one to **exhort**, another to **teach**. All are necessary. So whatever the Lord has enabled **you** to take care of for Him, see to it that you don’t **disappoint** Him.

And finally, as servants of our Lord, we are all required to be **watchful** - to be **active** and **prepared** for His return. Jesus our Savior is coming! We don’t know how **soon** it will be, but **whenever** He returns, may He not find us **sleeping** - resting on our **laurels** so to speak. Rather, may He find us actively **using** the gifts and talents which He has so graciously provided. May He find us faithfully **doing** the things which He has commanded us to do. Dear friends, **Be Watchful**

Servants - servants who are securely **protected** against the evils on the **outside**, and who are faithfully **active** with our gifts on the **inside**. Amen.