
Wake Up Ready! (Matthew 25:1-13)
11/19/2017 Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow



I don't always like traveling. It can be so stressful sometimes. Part of that is my fault though. Generally, when I'm going on a long trip, I wait until about an hour before I want to be in the car to start running all over the house trying to remember everything I need, get it all packed and in the car and because of that, I take off about an hour later than I wanted, questioning myself the whole car ride on what important thing I forgot *this* time. It's not the most relaxing way to travel and it has made a lot of my vacations almost not worth it.

Then my wife showed me a better way. A long time ago she put together a list of everything we usually need for traveling. That takes away the stress of forgetting something important. Then we make sure that everything is packed up the night before the trip. That way, we can simply wake up and we are ready to go. Way easier. A way better way to start a vacation.

In our lesson from Matthew 25, we read a parable about 10 girls going to a wedding party. All of them fell asleep, but only 5 woke up ready. In the story, the girls all gather to celebrate a wedding. They were maybe bridesmaids and were all going to walk with the groom in a procession to start the festivities. So, they all brought their lamps because they knew the groom might be a little late. The groom, however, was much, much later than they expected. And all of them dosed off.

Suddenly, they all woke up to hear that the groom was coming! 5 of the girls had oil for their lamps. They woke up ready. But 5 hadn't thought to bring any oil. They woke up unprepared, and ended up completely shut out of the entire wedding party.

God shares this parable with us today so that we make sure we are ready now; so that we can wake up ready for Judgment Day. If we wait until Jesus comes again to be ready for his return, it will be too late. If we wait until later to repent, we may never get that chance. Today, God encourages us to be ready now, so that when the time comes, we will be prepared. Today, God urges us to Wake Up Ready!

So, are you ready? Sometimes the things God teaches us can be very abstract. Sometimes they can be hard to apply to our daily lives. Not so with our lesson today.

As we confess, Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead, and we have no clue when it will be. This means that we need to be ready at every moment.

Think about that: since we don't know when Jesus will come again, we really need to live as though this were our last moment. How would that change your life, if you treated every moment like your last? How would you live today if you knew this was your last day?

I remember hearing about two friends who got into an argument over something small, something trivial. Well, they let themselves get too heated and said somethings they shouldn't have and left each other pretty angry. Later that day one of them died in a car accident. The other friend had a very hard time forgiving himself after that. If he had known that would be their last conversation, he would have ignored the problem completely! He didn't even care what the argument was about! He couldn't believe that he had gotten so heated about something that didn't matter, that he ruined something that did.

If you knew that today could be your last day, how would that change you? How does that fact that you could be standing before God's judgment seat any moment now change how you look at your life right now?

If you lived with that truth in mind, would you allow your stressful day to be a reason to get angry at someone you love? Would you allow the temptation to do something you know is wrong to linger in your mind for even one minute? Would you treat God's Word like the water of life it is or would you treat it as something you can just take for granted? Would you justify your sins in your mind if you knew that Jesus would come back right in the middle of you committing that sin?

If you remembered that Jesus is coming soon, what would you allow your hands to do? What words would you let pass through your lips? What thoughts would you let stay in your mind? Jesus' second coming means that we need to be ready right now. It means that every moment of our lives be totally devoted to God, not just some of them. It means that we end every day expecting Jesus to come before we wake up. We need to be able to wake up ready for Jesus to come.

So, do you live like that? Are you ready? If Jesus came tomorrow, would you be happy to see him or would you be terrified? If Jesus came back right now, would

you be prepared? When Jesus returns, will your heart be totally devoted to him or will he find that you only gave part of yourself to him? Are there moments that you wish to hide from God? Are you deep down hoping that Jesus doesn't come soon? Are you ready?

If we wake up unprepared on Judgment Day, it will not mean a stressful hour of trying to pack before the car ride; it will be too late to do any preparations. It will not mean racking your brain for hours trying to remember what you forgot to pack; it will mean an eternity of regret. It will not mean a stressful start to your vacation; it will mean the door of heaven closed on you and God himself saying, "I don't know you."

This is why our God warns us about his coming, so that we prepare now, so that we repent now. This is the urgency of the gospel. We don't know if we will have time later.

We need to be ready now. How do we do that? By listening to our God's promises to us. God's promises to us in Christ assure us that he does know us. He does recognize us as his own. He will acknowledge us on the Last Day. In your baptism, God marked you as his dear child. When God created faith in your heart through the gospel message, he gave you new birth into his family.

That's really the meaning of the Aaronic blessing which closes many of our church services. In ancient days, it was a very serious thing to come in front of a king. In some cultures, if you came into the king's presence and he looked away from you, you might be executed on the spot. When we gather together in worship, we are coming before the King of the whole universe. We confess our sins to him and he forgives us through the pastor's words of absolution. We hear him speak to us in the Word and in the sermon. And finally we hear those words, "The LORD make his face shine on you... The LORD look on you with favor..." That is the blessing we leave our worship with: the knowledge that God, the King over all, will acknowledge us as his own on Judgment Day. He will accept us because of Christ. He will open the gates of heaven to us.

That is God's promise to you, and he never lies. Believe that. Trust your God when he says that you are clothed with Christ in your baptism. The Father sees you as his Son just as Jesus is his Son. Believe that. Trust your God when he says that

Jesus is coming soon and so you need to be prepared at every moment. Begin and end every day trusting in your Savior Jesus. Live every moment trusting in your God's promises. And God will keep you prepared for that last day.

In Christ, we can be confident that God will bless us and keep us. He will make his face shine on us and be gracious to us. He will look on us with favor and give us peace. Amen.