

GOSPEL READING: LUKE 12:32-48.
Be Prepared!

I really don't like waiting, especially if I am waiting for someone. Perhaps one of us may have come to church in a mental "miff" because we've been sitting in the car, waiting for family members to get **out to the car**. Or perhaps a spouse was upset waiting for the other (husband/wife) to get home from work, especially if they've had dinner in the oven getting extra crispy or on the table getting cold.

Our culture is not geared towards waiting. We live in a world where the pace of life is far quicker than it was at the time of Jesus. Planes and cars are designed to go faster and faster. And just think of how many "fast food" restaurants there are as compared with full service ones. Take outs or TV dinners are the solution for those who wish to eat at home, quickly. We have credit cards so we can buy the things we want without having to wait until we have the cash....**AND** we can pay using our cell phones in a split second.

The computer has become such a huge part of American life that most of our young people can't fathom how an old geezer like me could ever do a term paper using a library. For those of you who never heard of a library, that's an ancient building that used to contain books. In schools most libraries have been replaced by Media Centers, which consist of more computers.

The internet provides so much information that we can easily come to the conclusion that the answer to every question is out there, somewhere. You just need to know where to look.

But the answers to the most important questions, the fundamental questions of life, are not on the internet. They are not out there. They are in here (heart). The answers to these fundamental questions can only be found in faith. We'd like to find the answers to everything, but we can't. Only faith can point us in the direction of the answers we need. More than that, only faith can provide us with the questions we need to ask. Faith forces us to ask about that which is unseen, that which is spiritual.

All of this makes it difficult to live in the kind of peaceful world where the voice of God can be heard. It's hardly possible to find such a peaceful place without a conscious and deliberate effort on our part.

Biblically speaking, waiting is one of the things men and women of faith are called upon to do. Those named in Hebrews had to wait for the promised blessings of God. Their wait was even longer than we would like to contemplate—they were still waiting when they died!

Jesus calls upon His disciples to wait. He promised to return to rule over the earth as Messiah, but it may be a considerable period of time before that happens. **History has confirmed it...we've been waiting over 2,000 years.**

Jesus tells us that in this life, our preoccupation must not be with material things, but with true "life." We should not be worried about our own personal life, but instead, we should use things to minister to other's needs now – that is what laying up treasure in heaven for ourselves is all about.

And since we are required to wait, then we had better learn how to do it right. Jesus teaches us **"the way to wait"** for His return – we need to be ready and vigilant for and expect His return at all times.

Being alert to the reality and presence of Jesus in our personal world means learning how to pray. We are surrounded by the great noises of a busy world, but it is the "tiny whispering sound" of God that we need to hear.

A big part—of Jesus' call to readiness has nothing to do with practical, physical preparations. It has to do with living in anticipation of the Kingdom. It has to do with being aware, deep down, of Jesus' promised coming. We should anticipate that so deeply that every time we see the slightest sign, we think, this might be it! This might be Jesus!

God is constantly whispering to us that we are God's "little flock" - that we are precious and that God wants to give us the freedom and joy of the kingdom. But too often we're not listening. We're bombarded by sounds and sights that frighten and confuse us. We need to be quiet if we wish to hear Jesus knocking at the door of our hearts.

Attentive listening is one of the most precious gift that we can offer to anyone, but most especially to God. Faith is present when we listen to that voice within us. We follow that voice, trusting that God will find a way for us to confront and conquer the challenges of life. We do that which is moral, and we trust in God.

'Be prepared' is the Scout motto. It's the advice of your financial planner. It's the instructions of the weather forecasters when a big snow storm is coming: get a generator, stock up on bottled water and canned goods; be prepared. Insurance industries are built on people's compulsive need to feel prepared for situations that will probably never happen.

"Be ready," says Jesus. And in the final parable of the reading there are dire consequences for the servant who is not ready. This servant isn't punished for not being vigilant enough. It's not that the servant is asleep or doesn't have a hot meal

on the table. This servant is not punished for being unprepared. Instead, the servant is punished for acting as if the master were never going to return. The servant is punished for establishing his own household rules in the master's absence.

The servant is in charge of taking care of the household in the master's absence. But instead of distributing the food and drink equitably among all of the members of the household, the steward prepares feasts for himself and gets drunk on the wine that should be shared.

“Be ready,” says Jesus. **“Where your treasure is there will your heart be also.”**

Most of us have homes and cars and toys and kitchen gadgets and vacation plans. And it's not that we shouldn't have any of these things. But Jesus is pretty clear that if we are to be prepared for the coming of the Kingdom, our hearts cannot be with the things of this world.

As long as our hearts are wrapped up in worldly things, we'll not really be anticipating the coming of Jesus. Holding loosely to the treasures of earth and storing up treasure in heaven—it is a difficult and necessary first step in our efforts to be ready...because, ready or not, the Kingdom is coming. And Jesus says to us, “Do not be afraid, little flock. For it is God's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

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