

Sermon: How to Watch
Scriptures: Genesis 6:5-8; Matthew 24:36-44
Sunday, December 1, 2019 at The First Congregational Church of
Marshalltown, Iowa

Set the stage

Jesus, toward the end of His days on earth, finally confronts the religious leadership of His day, laments over the city of Jerusalem, predicts the destruction of the Temple (70 AD) and then describes the End of the Age. Part of a series of prophecies scattered throughout the Bible about things yet to come, it is notable that the Lord spoke on this topic at length. While the notion of "what is actual and historical and what is symbolic and metaphorical and what is both?" is a valid question when considering any part of Scripture, it is never more true than regarding this subject. In the midst of all that He says, He gives one vital command that can be obeyed by any follower of His whether they understand everything on the subject of the End Times or not. He tells us to watch.

Watch

In fact, Jesus tells us to watch numerous times in the Gospels, and the verb He uses is in the present imperative form. We are to go into the "watching" business. We are to make "watching" a serious habit. We're to be like sentries that are always on duty. So, considering the emphasis Jesus places on watching, let's consider what we can glean from the context of this verse.

note the ways of the day-the days of Noah

To be watchful is to pay attention to the moral state of the world, to note the hypocrisy, injustice and selfishness that is all too common in today's culture. It was also common in yesterday's culture as well. I recently watched, on Turner Classic Television, an old version of "Goodbye Mr. Chips", in which the beloved veteran teacher bemoans the degeneration of respect and morals from yesteryear. Every generation thinks that, but Genesis 6 describes the days of Noah as being filled with people who were continually pursuing evil. The world was filled with corruption. Be aware and pay attention to the world about you. That is part of watching.

how we treat each other matters-the faithful servant and the evil servant

Secondly, be watchful by being aware of how we treat each other. Soon after Jesus gave us this warning here in Matthew 24, he describes an evil servant whose master is away. He demonstrates his evil by gluttony, drunkenness and by beating his fellow servants. The evil servant refuses to pay attention to himself and mistreats his fellow guards. It does not go well for him when His master returns.

the preparation of the heart-the wise and foolish virgins

A little later Jesus tells the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. You know it, the wise ones were prepared to wait for the wedding party's delayed arrival, but the foolish ones were not and found themselves locked out of the wedding celebration. At the end of this parable (and five others), Jesus warns us again to "watch". This, I think, is a matter of our own spiritual assessment, and it can be done in a time of prayer and reflection. People have provided lots of questions upon which to reflect upon our own spiritual growth. Here are a few below:

- 1.) What is 1 good thing that God did in your life this year?
- 2.) What are 2 things you did right to grow closer to God this year?
- 3.) What are 3 things that got into the way of your walk with God this year?*
- 4.) If you found yourself standing before the throne of Christ today, what would you say?

Conclusion

Jesus commanded us to live our lives in a manner that is alert during at least six different episodes of the Gospels. He spoke of a spiritual life exemplified by a constant anticipation of meeting the Master, but also of a life exemplified by care for each other. Put these all together and we get a good idea of how we are to watch for Christ during the course of our lives.

*<https://womenlivingwell.org/2017/01/4-questions-evaluate-walk-god-new-year/>

Title: Be Prepared for Christ's Coming

Theme: Being prepared for Christ's coming

Object: Images of Girl Scout and Boy Scout emblems

Scripture: "So always be ready. You don't know the day your Lord will come." Matthew 24:42 (ICB)

Who can tell me what this picture represents? (Hold the Girl Scout emblem.) That's right! It is the Girl Scout emblem. Do we have any Girl Scouts here today? Can anyone tell me the Girl Scout motto? You are right again. The Girl Scout motto is, "Be Prepared." Can anyone tell me what this picture represents? (Hold up the Boy Scout emblem.) You boys and girls are really sharp! It is the Boy Scout emblem. Now, who can tell me what the Boy Scout motto is? You are right. The Boy Scout motto is "Be Prepared."

The Girl Scout and Boy Scout motto means that a good scout must always "Be prepared." That is also the subject for our Bible lesson today.

Today is a very special day. Today is the first Sunday of Advent and we have started the countdown to Christmas. There are many things that people do to get ready for Christmas, aren't there? Let's see, what are some of the things that we do to prepare for Christmas? We have to put up our Christmas tree, lights, and decorations. We have to get our Christmas cards addressed and mailed. We have a lot of shopping to do to buy gifts for our family and friends. There is a lot of cooking that must be done -- Christmas cookies and candy and, of course, we must buy all of the food for Christmas dinner. Can you think of any things that I have forgotten? (Allow kids to answer.)

While we are getting ready for Christmas, there is something else that we must be prepared for as well. Jesus promised that he would come again and the Bible tells us that we must be watching and be prepared for his return. We all know when Christmas is coming, but when will Jesus come again? The Bible says that no one knows the hour of his return. Not even the angels who announced his birth know when he will come again.

If we don't know when he is coming, how can we be prepared? If we want to be prepared for Jesus' coming, we must always be busy doing the things that he told us to do. We must be loving God and loving one another. What are some things we can do? (Allow kids to answer.)

It is fun and exciting to prepare for Christmas, but we must also be prepared for that day when Jesus comes again.

Dear Father, we love this season of the year. We love the preparation for the celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Help us also remember that he is coming again and that you have told us to be prepared. In Jesus' name, amen.

[Isaiah 9:2, 6-7:](#)

“The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned. [...]
For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David’s throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.”