

“Ready? Set...” -- Luke 12:32-40

Ladies and gentlemen! Step right up for the greatest treasure hunt ever devised! It's the greatest treasure hunt on earth! Find true happiness! Know the peace which surpasses all understanding!
Change the world! Step right up!
Are... You... Ready!

Top 10 responses for the next time you get caught sleeping in church...

10. They told me at the blood bank this might happen.
9. I was just taking a power nap.
8. It must be the residual smell of the communion wine.
7. I wasn't sleeping, I was meditating.
6. I was testing a new drool resistant shirt.
5. I was doing a highly effective yoga exercise to relieve stress.
4. Why did you wake me? I almost had our budget problems figured out!
3. Someone must have put the decaf in the wrong pot.
2. I didn't have my morning coffee (somebody broke the carafe...)

And the number 1 response for when you get caught sleeping in church.... In Jesus' name, Amen.

Is it being UNprepared to be caught sleeping in church? Or are you totally prepared and ready when you have a list of 10 viable excuses?

I don't know...

But there's a bit of a paradox in these passages today. In last week's passage, Jesus tells his followers not to store stuff up. Then in the passages just prior to today's reading He talks about not worrying and how if God provides everything that the flowers and the birds need, won't God do at least as much for you?

Don't worry about what you're going to eat or drink – “the pagans run after these things...”

And today we hear...

³² “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

BUT...

“Be dressed and ready for service...keep your lamps burning” ...Keep your shirt on because, “If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.”

So which is it?

Don't save up stuff for yourself – don't worry about what you're going to wear and eat? – OR... DO plan ahead and prepare for when Jesus comes back.



-- When Jesus comes back – Now, there’s something you don’t hear very often in the Methodist church...

I mean, as Methodists we DO believe that Christ is coming back – we say it at communion, “Christ was born, Christ has died, Christ will come again.” We at least say it once a month!

But Verse 40? “*You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*” You won’t hear a lot about the End Times here. Let me know if you want to hear more about it.

Scholars think that Jesus was not likely to have warned against his own return; and that that line was most likely not actually spoken by Jesus at all, but was an editorial choice and was added by Luke later on – when he was writing it. That’s what they were talking about 40-60 years after Jesus was crucified -- The 2nd coming. But I’m just not sure that’s what Jesus was trying to get across in this lesson.

This central section of Luke from about chapter 9 through 19 is frequently referred to as the Travel Narrative or Jerusalem Journey. **When we consider this section as a whole, two major themes stand out: (1) the growing rift between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, and (2) Jesus' preparation of his disciples for his departure.**

He was creating disciples. He was training the guys – and the women – women were always very involved in Jesus’ ministry – Jesus was training those who were going to carry on for him after he died... That’s us!

I don’t think this passage isn’t a general broad statement for all of mankind – This isn’t how everybody’s supposed to live. It’s only how we’re supposed to live if we want to the kingdom of God to come to earth as it is in heaven!

It’s for the disciples, and those who want to be disciples. It’s how we should live if we want to change the world. It’s for me and for you.

Listen again and imagine Jesus, talking to the staff – or in a classroom to a small group of people who dropped everything already just to be with Him and follow him as their Rabbi to learn all he had to teach....

“Do not be afraid, little flock,-- [little flock – I love that!] -- for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. [God has given it specifically to disciples?] ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. [which will] Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Let’s have a quick sidebar here to look at what the word ‘heart’ meant to the early Palestinians in the Ancient Greek world... This is from *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*.

The heart is the organ in the animal body which is the centre of the circulation of the blood, ... regarded as the seat of physical life ... AND the seat of spiritual life

2. Also, the soul or mind, ... the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, and purposes

1. of the understanding, ... and seat of the intelligence
2. of the will and character

3. of the soul so far as it is affected and stirred in a bad way or good, or of the soul as the seat of the sensibilities, affections, emotions, desires, appetites, passions
 3. of the middle or central or inmost part of anything, even though inanimate
- "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Is this passage the key to becoming a disciple?

In my preparation for this message, I found an article that points out three main elements in this passage.

Fear, Treasure, and Preparedness

According to Karoline Lewis, of Luther Seminary, "Fear, treasure, and being prepared is the pattern for discipleship. Being without fear, knowing the source of your treasure -- that is, your identity, your worth -- makes it possible to be prepared for and an actual participant in God's kingdom."

That got me to thinking... That's kind of what my life looks like – that's how I stay sober.

1. Don't be afraid...

Just take one day at a time – even one minute at a time -- or as they told me at the beginning, "Just do the next right thing." That's what got me through the application process of going back to school after only being sober for two years. First do the application. THEN you can worry about actually turning it in to the college.

2. Know where your treasure is, or where it comes from.... (identity, worth, talents, gifts...)

Know that God doesn't make junk. That you are here for purpose and that it's God's great pleasure to give you these things. God wants to give you the kingdom!

James 1:17 – "Every good gift and perfect gift is from above" -- No one else -- not your boss or your spouse, or your kids, or that next drink, or the internet, or that supplement Your treasure – your worth -- comes from God alone.

Psalms 18:32 – "It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure." -- Your identity and your strength come from God and God WANTS to give it to you! God loves giving you stuff and when you serve others, God will serve you!

The next line of *Psalms 18*...

³³ *He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he causes me to stand on the heights.*

So you've got the first two things taken care of, Fear & Treasure, so now you can be, (3.) Prepared, and actually participate in doing the work to bring about God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven! You are ready to go out and change the world...stand on the heights! Your lamp is lit!

You see, once you Get the first two figured out then the 3rd will just happen....You'll feel ready. You'll be ready and you'll know that you are doing the work of the Kingdom. You'll want to – you won't be able to help yourself! That way, whenever the master does come visit or come back home again. You'll be ready to serve!

Ronnie was a shift supervisor at Boston market and he was training Sarah for what he thought was a waitress job. As they worked Ronnie went on and on about how much the customers irritated him. "I literally hate customers more than anything...I hate them so much," he told Sarah. "It's all about them all the time and they demand everything," he continued. On and on he went, explaining his disdain at having to suffer all day long serving these ungrateful customers!

Well, unbeknownst to Ronnie, Sarah was actually, Sarah Bittorf – Chief Brand Officer at Boston Market and Ronnie had just run his mouth off to her on national TV. They were on Undercover Boss and poor Ronnie was far from ready for his boss to come back...

Ronnie had no fear, but he had no idea where or what his treasure was.

Being ready when the master comes back... Or not...

"...I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me."

"I tell you whatever you did not do for the least of these, you did not do for me."

Sound familiar?

It occurs to me that every time we encounter Jesus in the oppressed and marginalized it IS the second coming! Or the third coming -- Or the umpteenth coming of Christ? Who says Jesus is only coming back one time?

When did you come to us hungry, Lord? When did we visit you in prison?

When ... ?

I want to be ready. I want to be a disciple.

Psalm 121 says, "¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from?

² My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."

So...are you ready?

Go.