A Sermon for DaySpring

By Madison Harner

“*Ever Watchful*”

Luke 12:32-40

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We live in a world where communication can happen at the tap of a button. I can send an email, text, or reply to someone finishing their workout from my wrist in .2 seconds. With family 1800 miles away, I don’t hate that I live in this technological age with ability to FaceTime. With that said, to this day I don’t think there is anything better than Snail Mail. A handwritten letter and a box from my mom with St. Patrick’s Day leggings and a Spring tea towel in August is amazing! You’d think this box would have taken the Pony Express from Vegas to Waco with the items it included, but no. That’s just my mom, taking her time!

Speaking of the Pony Express, this historically famous mail service was situated between St. Joseph, Missouri, and California in 1860. It depended on constant movement and readiness to keep the mail moving from one station to the next. These relay stations were established every ten to fifteen miles or so. A rider would shout aloud as he approached a station on horseback, giving the station master very short notice that he needed to be outside waiting ready to go. Even when a rider came to the station where he was to spend the night, another rider was already mounted and waiting. He was ready to grab the first rider’s bundle of packages and continue the trip. These riders were vigilant; they were always watching and always waiting for their cue even though they had no idea when to expect the next arrival.

Jesus tells a parable of similar stride calling the disciples to be ready at all times.

Though, ready for what?

We see throughout the book of Luke the Kingdom of God being ushered in, and specifically through chapter 12, we see waiting and watchfulness a present theme. We’re warned that if we store up our riches in barns and wish for more wishes our hearts have been misplaced.

**The Kingdom of God is being ushered in all around us. Are we ready?**

From the beginning of time God’s people have been called to faithful watching and waiting for the Kingdom of God all around them. Like Sarah and Abraham, sometimes it pops up right in front of their faces. They are reminded that this promise of procreation in the midst of seemingly impossible circumstances is achieved through faithful waiting.

The disciples have just been told that as they are striving for this Kingdom Jesus speaks of, it is also God’s purpose to give the Kingdom. God’s plan is not for us to be afraid or anxious of how this will happen, but to shift our gaze from an inward internal perspective to that of an outward others-based perspective. How do we do this? By letting go of our tight grasp on things. We saw with the Rich Fool last week that we can store up things on earth or we can lay up treasure in heaven, but not both. We can be anxious about what we have and what consumes our mind and our material resources as the world has dictated, or we seek the Kingdom that God is already ushering in.

So, if we’re not to seek out things to store in our earthy purses, what does seeking the Kingdom look like? In verse 35, the servants are to be dressed for action or ready for service and have lamps lit. Luke, as did Hebrews, draws his audience back to the narrative of God’s people. In Exodus chapter 12, the Israelites are preparing for the Passover, to have their loins girded and sandals on their feet. They’re waiting and watching, ready for the LORD their God to pass through Egypt.

What the Israelites are waiting for--God’s presence and promise--is only slightly different than what the disciples are being told is coming to them, and I imagine it’s only slightly different for what we’re being called to today as well. **The Kingdom of God is being ushered in all around us. Are we ready?**

I can’t get the image of Santos and Heidi and Mayra’s faithful witness out of my head from a few Saturday’s ago in San Antonio. Everything always changes when a face is given a name. Somewhere along the way, the notion has been portrayed that those crossing the border need the Gospel. Let me tell you that these women have a prayer life that I’ve never seen or experienced before. Their faith is truly what sustained them in their journey without food and drink for days at a time. They are bringing faith to us, and I think it might just be what saves my life and hopefully yours as well.

Scripture goes on to say in verse 36 to be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. They are waiting with hopeful anticipation so that they don’t keep him waiting at the door when he comes.

I’ve been challenged to ponder the thought that the faith of these three women might be the Church coming and speaking life and truth, and what if I’m asleep to it? What if I’m not being vigilant to discern the Kingdom around me?

In the words of Richard Floyd, “We aren’t just waiting around for any ole moment, or just for Christ’s return, but the pregnant moments of possibility where history bends toward the Kingdom of God.” The pregnant moments where I’m in the kitchen pressing my fingers through the wet masa dough. Lauren Barron is translating the ingredients of the black bean mixture that will soon fill the *pupusas*. These *pupusas* we were taught how to make by Heidi. Her hands have been using muscle memory recalling a time from many years ago. Her hands are surely ready for a world in which God’s love is poured out on all of humanity through the tiny moments of the Kingdom this side of Heaven. **The Kingdom of God is being ushered in all around us. Are we ready?**

Jesus proclaims what Jesus came to earth for here in the latter part of 37. He says that when the master finds the servants alert, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat. Not only will they eat, but he will come and serve them.

If you’ll journey with me back to Luke chapter 1 beginning in verse 46, Mary proclaims the ultimate human reversal. God has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts, brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly. God has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. Defying the global superpower that is the Roman Empire, the master turns around and hikes up his tunic. Being ready to serve he welcomes his guests at the table.

Table fellowship is nothing to be undermined here. People didn’t just sit with anyone at the Table, though Jesus did. There is much the Bible has to say about eating, and the litmus test for Gentiles having full membership in the church was to dine with the Jews. Fred Bahnson says this is the most profound act of hospitality they could offer.

Pulling up more chairs around the table is just what Fred Bahnson himself witnessed at a meal around what was named the Welcome Table. The idea, he said, was simple. One day a week there would be a feast for anyone in the community, especially the needy. This wasn’t a soup kitchen; no, this was a full-on lunch banquet and all were welcome. Tickets were acquired in advance. Anyone who wished to donate to the meal could do so as they placed their ticket in the bucket. No one knew who gave and who didn’t because everyone put something in the bucket. Bahnson says he tried to distinguish the hungry people from those who came for the socializing, but failed. For the disciples, the table was the most visible and tangible example of how their world was changing and the Welcome Table offers the same for us.

Isaiah, being the prophet that he was, already called everybody out by relaying God’s message to cease doing evil, learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow. What better place to do just this than starting at the table and breaking bread with one another as Christ has done for us? **The Kingdom of God is being ushered in all around us. Are we ready?**

*If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn and finds them so, blessed are those servants.* We know how sleeping during the hour to which Jesus calls the disciples to stay awake turns out. They had many a chance to keep vigilant in time of need and failed miserably. It is with this urgency that is being referenced to in the following verse. It’s not that Jesus is being equated to the thief, but rather, being a byproduct of theft is a serious matter. You must know that you do not know the hour, for if the owner knew the hour he wouldn’t have been in this situation. He would have been prepared.

I thought about sharing the time when I came home late one night and thought that my house had been broken into, but that’s a story for another day!

I was on retreat this week with some dear friends and mentors and it provided a beautiful time for watching and waiting and being filled. It was also filled with challenging words, and being poured into and challenged are both necessary in a time of renewal. I’m grateful that our Pastor has had time to take a Sabbath and that we as a church think this is important. In order to be prepared and not be caught off guard for the coming of the Kingdom, we must have time reorient our minds. We must have time to see things in a new light. We must have time seek the Kingdom without distractions and without the worries of our normal rhythm. It is necessary for those rhythms to be broken up every once in a while, so we are able to reevaluate where we are and where we are going. We might call these breaks in our daily rhythm “holy interruptions.” Holy interruptions are what challenge us to be honest with ourselves and ask whether or not we are ready for the Kingdom at hand or if the thief is going to catch us off guard? I’ll be the first to admit that holy interruptions can be terrifying, and I’m not always thrilled to look them head on. But once we’re faced with whatever interruption it might be, we have two options. We can continue to live for our own interests, or we can choose to see this as an opportunity to live into the context of our community for others sake and not our own. This is what it means to be rich toward God. **The Kingdom of God is being ushered in all around us. Are we ready?**

We must be ready. We must know that we do not know the expected hour. We can find freedom in this reality! It isn’t a passive watching and waiting .Not knowing the hour is an excellent opportunity for every hour of every day to love God and love our neighbor. We are free to leave the worries of earthly possessions and the pursuit of wealth for wealth’s sake at the feet of Jesus and come to the table.

We are free to leave our claim on declaring anything ours and instead be alert to the Kingdom of God that is being ushered in all around us. What doors need to be opened so that this might become personal in our own life? What path leads to a fork in the road, and where are they leading? It is the faithful discernment between our watching and waiting and the Divine yes and no that future arrives. Church, are we ready to receive the Kingdom? Amen.

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