

August 10, 2025

Luke 12:35-40

“You Must Be Ready!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I happened upon an article titled: *The Tyranny of Getting Ready*. It was published December 2023. It opens with the story of Pamela Anderson who became famous on the American drama television series about lifeguards called *Baywatch*. She decided to show up at a red-carpet event without any make up. It caused quite a stir. Some praised her and others were horrified. "I have no glam team or anything here," Anderson told Vogue. "I was just like, 'Why am I putting so much effort into this? Why am I in a makeup chair for three hours?'"

Three hours in a makeup chair?! I would tend to agree that this might be accurately characterized as *The Tyranny of Getting Ready*. Still, we all know that the celebrity lifestyle demands that you are supposed to look a certain way for your public. That in part answers the "Why?" Pamela Anderson decided that she didn't want to get ready anymore because three hours was far too long to be in the make up chair.

In our text for this morning Jesus says, **You Must Be Ready** for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. From the time we become believers in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins to the time of either our death or the sound of the last trumpet we are in "the makeup chair!" so to speak. We are getting ready. To the sinful flesh this is a tyranny. To those who believe we wouldn't have it any other way than to be fully ready to greet Christ who gave up everything for us, no matter how long it takes.

The natural question to ask at this point is this: what does it mean for us to be ready? Let's start with verse thirty-five: "Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning ..." The words "stay dressed for action" is more literally translated as "gird up your loins" which, in this case, is the ancient practice of tucking the long robe into a belt around the waist before some sort of action. A slack robe suggested a time of leisure or ease. Believers are summoned to be in a continual posture of being ready to get up and go.

This imagery is reminiscent of the Israelites during the Passover in Exodus 12:11, where they were instructed to eat in haste, with their loins girded (their long robe tucked into a belt around the waist), ready to rise and leave Egypt. It signifies a state of preparedness and alertness, reflecting the believer's call to be ready for the Lord's return at any moment and leave this world behind. Jesus reminds us in Luke 17:31-33, "On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it." That captures the idea of being ready for action - ready to go. The question is: are we ready or are we longing for what we have down here?

Jesus also says, "... keep your lamps burning." The burning lamps symbolize spiritual vigilance and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the gospel of Jesus. In the ancient world, lamps were essential for navigating the darkness, and keeping them burning required constant attention and oil, which means to constantly receive the gospel and sacraments and thus remain in Jesus. In Jesus, who comes to us by the Holy Spirit in the gospel and sacraments, faith remains alive and looking for his arrival. This phrase calls believers to maintain their spiritual readiness, like the wise virgins who kept their lamps filled with oil, prepared for the bridegroom's arrival. The continuous burning of lamps also reflects the light of Christ

shining through believers, as seen in Matthew 5:14-16, where followers of Christ are called the light of the world, commissioned with letting their light shine before others. We tell others about Jesus.

The foolish virgins got careless and neglected the oil of the gospel and sacraments. They became slack in their readiness and were unprepared to receive the arrival of the bridegroom, as their lamps were going out. Locked out of the marriage feast, they knocked on the door to be let in, but the bridegroom will say to them: “Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.” **You Must Be Ready.** As a Jewish young woman did not know the day when her husband would come for her wedding day, you do not know the hour when your bridegroom will come. Readiness is to take the gospel and the sacraments seriously to preserve faith in the love of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus goes on to say: “... be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.” The way Jesus speaks here gives us a window to see things the way they are. Right now, our master is at a wedding feast and will one day return home from the wedding feast, so that his servants may open the door to him when he comes and knocks. It then says the following: “Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.”

Right now, our Lord Jesus is in the company of heaven, and is with us always until the very end of the age in the means of grace. There is a wedding feast that is going on already in the kingdom of glory, where all those who have gone on before us are dining in the beauty of Jesus. While we certainly taste that wedding feast by faith in the sacrament of the altar, we, who are down here, are still waiting to join the company of heaven who are no longer here in this world. They see the Lord without faith and in glory. We see the Lord only by faith. It is far better for our master to come home to us, that we may join those in his glory as he dresses himself for service and has us recline at table. What a joy it will be when the veils of water, and bread and wine will be removed and Jesus will come and serve us!

The very thought of these things are part of the expression **You Must Be Ready.** It's the why we spend our lives getting ready. Our motivation to be ready is to receive the very thing that we just described. He, who redeemed us, desires to come and serve us forever. He will come to give us himself and everything that comes with that. Thus, our motivation is always bound up in the wonderful relationship that we have with him, who cleanses us and keeps us clean. Jesus loves us like a husband loves and adores his wife and who does everything for her.

Jesus says: “Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.” What does it mean here to be awake? Here it means to be watching or a state of wakeful attentiveness so that one is not surprised. And we should not be surprised because all the signs of his coming have been met. Now it is only a matter of how long things will go on. Yes, those who are in a state of wakeful attentiveness are not surprised, but are truly blessed because they are living by faith in their master while anticipating his arrival to do good things for them. They are living by faith in the gospel blessing of forgiveness and life in heaven. They are dwelling in their baptisms and are clean. They are eating and drinking the very body and blood of Jesus to receive life and reassurance that they are loved.

Our gospel lesson closes with the following words of our Lord: “If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” Without going into all the details, the reference to the second or third watch is a time period spanning the middle of the night. It is the dead of the night. The “dead of night” is an idiomatic expression that refers to the darkest hours of the night, typically when it is very quiet and still because most people are sound asleep. Those who stay awake - who are watching in faith knowing what is theirs forever in Christ - are truly blessed!

You Must Be Ready. I cannot imagine what it would be like to sit in a chair for three hours and have make up applied to me for the purpose of getting me ready for the red carpet. As I said, from my perspective that would really be *The Tyranny of Getting Ready*. But when you think about the words of Jesus - “you also must be ready” - there is no tyranny/oppression in those words when we consider what we are getting ready for after we come to faith. Whatever troubles may be somehow attributed to getting ready, they are considered in the cross and empty tomb to be “light and momentary.” In fact, the Lord uses even the troubles to prepare for us “an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.” Indeed, there is no tyranny at all!

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott