

Sermon: 7th August 2022

Luke 12:32-40



Waiting For The Unexpected Hour

Prayer: Our Father, we thank you for your Word and for the eternal truths that guide us day by day. We thank you most of all for the living Word, Jesus Christ, and the sureness of his presence. Teach us how to turn unto you, so that your thoughts may be our thoughts, and your ways our ways. Amen.

From today's Gospel of Luke 12: Verse 39 & 40 - "But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

In our Gospel story - the master is off to a wedding banquet. His servants are at the family farm. Some are alert, ready for his return; some are not ready. The countdown has begun. No one knows exactly when the master will return.

Thus Jesus exhorted his disciples and us today concerning the importance of being ready.

Jesus will come for His church at the time that has been appointed by the Father.

At the end of our story, Jesus states this command, "You ... must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour"

Yes! We too need to be like those waiting for their master to return.

But - 'Do not be anxious.' That's what Jesus told his disciples. If only! we might think. Can we banish anxiety from our hearts simply because Jesus tells us to?

The hardest part of waiting is waiting. Waiting involves time, and we don't know when our waiting will be over. If we could wait a minute or two it would be one thing, but it often involves a great deal of time.

It seems that now in our day and time we want every-thing right now,..... we don't like to have to wait.

One reality of life is waiting; waiting for someone to show up, for something to happen, for things to change. Another reality of life is that most of us do not like waiting. We look for the shortest line at the supermarket and the bank. We become impatient, even angry, waiting for the doctor or the waiter who is slow

or inattentive. And just look how we behave when the lift is slow to begin moving. Lots of buttons are being pushed – the machine’s and ours.

Sometimes it seems like life is nothing more than waiting. As children we wait for Christmas, summer vacation, “are we there yet?”, and to grow up. As adults we wait for just the right job, that special someone who will make our life complete, a promotion, retirement. Some people wait for the diagnosis, ...others for a cure. Some wait for the day the pain will stop and the grief will end. Others wait for the answer to their prayers. Many of us wait for that day when we have enough time, enough money, enough freedom, and the day we will live happy ever after.

Many in the Anglican Communion wait for healing, reconciliation, and the resolution of conflict. Sometimes it seems as if the world has waited from the beginning of creation for peace, and the end of war, hunger, and poverty.

At some level waiting takes place every day. Each of us could name the things or people for which we wait. Sometimes we live with the overwhelming feeling of waiting but with no clear idea of what we are waiting for.

Sometimes when we wait, we may not realise that we don’t wait in the present. We move into the past or into the future. The great tragedy is that in doing so we lose the present moment. That’s part that makes waiting so painful and difficult.

Waiting in the future most often brings fear and anxiety about what will happen. We are haunted by the unknown and lack of control. Waiting in the past brings sadness, anger, or guilt about things that have happened, or the things done and those left undone. As difficult as our present circumstances may be, that’s the only place where we can ever be fully alive. It is the only place we can truly experience God.

When we move out of the present – either way, into the past or the future – we not only postpone life; we deny life. We deny our resurrection. We desecrate the sacrament of the present moment. We have refused the gift of God’s kingdom.

Everyone, everywhere, in every age waits. Jesus does not eliminate waiting. If anything, it sounds like just the opposite. He tells the crowd, “Be like those waiting for their master to return.”

Today’s gospel is not, however, simply about passing time. It is about presence and being present. Jesus sees waiting as an act of faithfulness; the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

So we are mistaken if we think today's gospel describes an absent God, a God who left some time ago, for whom we wait. We are equally mistaken if we think we are waiting for a God who lives out in the future.

Jesus is teaching us how and where to wait. He's inviting us to be present to the One who is always, already present. He's inviting us to listen for the knock, to watch, and to be alert. He's inviting us to be present to the reality of God in each other, in the world, and in ourselves. This is the God who is present in the ordinary circumstances of our lives, even in our waiting.

We might be tempted to ask, "So where is God in all our waiting?" But maybe the better question is, "Where are we?"

There was a chaplain at a diocesan summer camp for a whole bunch of 11 and 12-year-old campers. Each night before the kids went to sleep they would have some devotional time in their cabins. One of the helpers asked her campers, "Where did you see Jesus today?" A very surprised and excited camper cried out, "You mean He was here today?!"

Jesus responds to our surprise and excitement saying, "Yes, yes, yes. I was here. I am here. And I will be here."

So he says, "Be dressed for action. Something is going on right here and right now! And I want you to be a part of it. Come participate. For it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. This is for you."

"Have your lamps lit," he says. "There is something to see. Move out of the darkness. Come into the light. See what is right in front of you, what is all around you, and what is within you. For the Father wants you to have the kingdom."

"Be alert," he commands. But this isn't a threat of punishment. It's an invitation to be blessed. "Blessed are those whom he finds alert." Jesus is not just inviting us to be awake, to be ready, and to be watchful. He is calling us to be fully alive and to remain alive. Blessing and life are synonymous in God's kingdom. It is as if Jesus is saying to us, "Be alert, be blessed, and I will come and serve you. I will feed you the bread of life. I will serve you the cup of salvation."

All of this, Jesus says, happens at an unexpected hour. Like a thief in the night the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

So when is the unexpected hour? When will all this happen? Well, my guess is that for most of us, maybe all of us, the most unexpected hour is today, right here, right now.

The most unexpected hour is the hour spent in the hospital waiting room; the hour sitting next to the phone waiting for news of a loved one; the hour praying for a miracle; the hour in which we wait for clarity and a way forward; the hour waiting for the grief to end and life to return to normal; the hour in which it seems as if nothing is happening, life is not the way we want, and there is nowhere to go.

God does everything at the precise time.

Before it was time, the birth of Christ would have been premature, but when the time came, nothing could hold him back. When it is time for Christ to return, nothing will be able to hold him back.

We are all sitting in the waiting room. But it is how we wait, and what we do with the waiting, that is important. Waiting does not mean just sitting down and doing nothing. We need to be watching and looking for God to fulfill his promise. And let's believe He is going to do it.

It is possible to get ahead of God when we try to work things out ourselves, but it is also possible that we could miss what He is doing because we are just waiting without expecting God to really come through.

The final way in which we are to wait for God is: ... We wait faithfully.

To be faithful means to be full of faith — faith full — faith that completely trusts and depends on God.

It is active faith; It is a faith that delights in doing the Master's will. It is love that results in action.

It is a faith that keeps doing the right thing even when the waiting becomes long.

"You mean he was here today?!" Yes, right here in the most unexpected hour of your life.

Amen.