

If you hold a state license for your business, you know that the state will send inspectors to review your practices before they will renew your license. When the time approaches for that license renewal, the business will usually do an internal review to make sure that its practices have not become lax, and that they are abiding by all of the state regulations. Everyone seems to be on edge until the day that the inspector arrives. While inspections are necessary to keep everyone on their toes, if you are doing what you are supposed to be doing, it should not matter whether an inspection is coming or not. Doing what you are supposed to be doing every day is exactly what Jesus is asking of us in the Word of God which is before us this morning. Today, as we begin the season of advent once again, we hear our Savior reminding us that day by day, we are to Be Alert! 1) We need to be alert all of the time because we do not know the time of Jesus' return to this earth. 2) Still we are always to be prepared for the time of His return, no matter when it happens.

In order to illustrate this concept, Jesus uses a little parable — an earthly story. **It's like a man going away: He leaves his house in charge of his servants, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.** (34) When the master leaves the house, he expects his servants to continue to carry out their duties, even while he is not present with them. In this little parable, Jesus is the master, and He has left the earth for a time. While He is gone, He has given each one of us tasks that He expects us to be carrying out day after day until He returns. They are not super-human feats that need to be done, just the ordinary, every-day activities which He desires His children to do for Him. Those activities are going to include teaching and training our children to know and to love Him. It includes learning more about Him for ourselves as we grow in our faith through His word. It means sharing that Word with others so that they may also come to know His love and mercy.

While we continue to remain here on this earth, we are to be faithful in doing these things, as well as using all of the other gifts and abilities which He has given to us to His praise and glory. We will go to work and provide for our families, as we enjoy the blessings which God has given to us in this world. We will want to be doing these things faithfully each and every day, just as though our loving Savior was here with us watching over all that we do.

For the day of His coming again is getting closer all of the time. No one knows when that time is going to be. Jesus tells us: **No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.** (32) It is kind of like waiting for guests to arrive. They could hit good traffic, and make excellent time, and then they might arrive much earlier than you anticipated. Or they have run into bad weather and terrible traffic so that they arrive much later than expected. Or they could have gotten completely lost and would not arrive any time soon. But no matter how long it takes for them to arrive, you will be expecting them and will be ready to greet them.

In this way, it should not matter to us whether Jesus returns for the Last Day soon, or what appears to us that He is waiting an awful long time, we will still need to be carrying out the responsibilities which He has given to us to do day by day. This is not to be used as a threat of possible punishment for not doing what He desires. Rather it is a way of showing loving responsibility day by day by doing just what He left us here to carry on for Him until He returns.

Because when we are doing what Jesus has asked us to be doing day by day, then it really should not concern us at all when He is going to return, for we shall be ready for Him no matter when He comes. As we carry out our daily responsibilities, we are prepared to meet our Savior as we keep looking to Him in faith for the gifts which He came here to win for us. We receive the forgiveness of sins, we receive His salvation, we possess the peace and hope and joy that accompany all of what He brings to us. Faith is what makes us prepared. And that faith will be with us day by day.

So it really does not matter when He comes again, for when we live by faith, we will be doing those things which He has set us to be doing while He is gone. **If he comes suddenly, do not let him find**

you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone, “Watch!” (37) Advent is time for us to remind ourselves that we do need to keep on watching day by day. The season of Advent reminds us that Jesus is coming. Certainly the first type of coming that we will begin to think of at this time of the year is His coming into the world the first time as a baby born in Bethlehem. Certainly we want to prepare our hearts to welcome Him again as the Savior come into this world to win for us the forgiveness of our sins, and the life and salvation which only He could gain for us.

But we will also be thinking of His coming again the second time, when He comes on the Last Day with the angels of heaven, and in all of His heavenly glory. At that time we will receive the fulfillment of all that He came the first time to win for us. Just like the Old Testament people did not know when He was going to come the first time, so we do not know now when He is going to come the second time. So Jesus’ warning is something we will need to take to heart. Watch! Be alert!

That does not mean that we need to be frightened or wondering if we are ready to meet Him or not. We know what it takes to be prepared for Him to come a second time. That is simply faith. We have that gift of His, and we have all of the blessings that come along with faith. So each week we come to His house to have that faith nourished and strengthened. We come before His altar to confess our sins, and then to be assured that He did give His body and blood to wash away all of those sins. Each week we share the love and forgiveness which this Savior has lavished upon us with those around us. Then we go about our daily responsibilities as we keep watch for Him to return. That is what the season of advent is all about.

What Jesus tells us, Be Alert! is nothing new, and it is not something that is difficult for us to do. We are always to be careful and attentive to what we are doing, because we know what disastrous results there may be if we are not always alert. The disastrous results of not being alert as our Savior has asked us will last throughout eternity. So this advent season, may we continue to let our light of faith shine through all of our actions, for we are anxiously waiting for the return of our Savior.