

Text: Mark 13:32-37. First Sunday in Advent. **November 30, 2014.**

Our Savior is coming. Amen.

Did you have lists of chores growing up? It seemed like over the summer, every day, my mom would leave a list before she left for work, with the instructions to have the chores done before she got home. The thing was, my mom didn't work the same hours every day and often she didn't know how long it was going to take. Might be home by noon. Might be 3 p.m. Might be 10 a.m. You didn't know. What you did know was that when mom got home, your chores had better be done. You had better get at your job right away and keep careful watch for mom. Some days the list was short and you got right at it. Could relax. Ironically, it seemed that when the list was longer, you thought, "Man, that's a lot of work. I better eat a big breakfast. Man, some video games will get me in the mood for work." Then you heard the garage door. The car is pulling in. Quick, turn off the video game. Try to act like you are working. But it's too late. Mom is home. You didn't keep watch.

It's a lot like that with Jesus. Jesus says again and again and again, "Keep watch! Keep watch! Watch!" Watch for Jesus! You don't know when he's coming. God has not told us when Jesus is coming. God has given us signs of the end. Those signs are happening. But they were happening 500 years ago, 1000 years ago, almost 2000 years ago. You don't know when Jesus is coming. You better watch!

Even Jesus said he didn't know the day or the hour. Did that strike you? How can Jesus, the Son of Man, not know? Doesn't Jesus know when he's coming back? How is this possible? Good questions. Made me scratch my head, too. First, notice how Jesus refers to himself. The Son of Man. This was a reference to his humanity, his humility. Part of Jesus' humility while living on earth as the Son of Man, was that he laid aside the full use of his power and glory. He laid aside his advance knowledge of things. Jesus didn't use his power and glory and knowledge for his own benefit, like we might do. Think if you could predict the stock market. No, Jesus used his power always to do the will of his Father. The Father has kept secret the time of his coming. The Father wants preparation for his coming, not calculation about the timing. The Father wants preparation for his coming, not calculation about the timing. The Father hasn't told us so we will always keep watch, keep on watching for Jesus.

Jesus used this illustration, much like mom and the chores. It's like a man going away on a journey. That man stands for Jesus. He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge. The servants stand for us. Now there's something gracious and dangerous here. Literally the owner gives authority to the servants. Authority is a very powerful word. Jesus himself said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Jesus has chosen to share some of that authority with us, his servants! Wow! That's gracious! Wow! That's dangerous! Jesus has given some authority to us? Yes! Jesus has given each one of us a little bit of authority over a little part of his world.

That authority is our assigned task. Actually, you have many assigned tasks. Men probably think first of their jobs. If you are an accountant, that is your assigned task, that's part of the authority Jesus has shared with you. Give it your all to God's glory. Work hard while you watch for Jesus. But what else is part of your assigned task? Are you a mother? Then raise your children to watch for Jesus. That's your task. Are you a son or daughter? Then obey your parents while you watch for Jesus. That's your task. Are you a janitor? Then clean to God's glory while you watch for Jesus.

The assigned task doesn't have to sound glorious to others. If God has given you the task, it is glorious in his eyes. Look at the task that Jesus mentions and elevates. He commands the one at the door to keep watch. The one at the door. The door man! Oh, the door man. Not a very glamorous job. If you see a doorman, do you just walk right past him? Do you notice him? Care if he is having a bad day? But Jesus looks at it differently. The door man has an eternally important job, to keep watch! The door man gets to warn others and watch for others. The door man gets to watch for Jesus. That's the most important task of all. Watch for Jesus! Watch for Jesus! Watch for Jesus!

Watch! Stay awake! Be on guard! Be alert! What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' Stay awake, don't let the owner of the house find you sleeping. That can be difficult, to stay awake. Maybe these fifteen minutes are the hardest time of the whole week to stay awake. But notice the time Jesus mentions. Evening. Ok. I'm usually awake then. Midnight? I turn into a pumpkin long before then. When the rooster crows? You are supposed to be sleeping then. That's why the rooster crows. At dawn? Who's awake at dawn?

Jesus specifically refers to the evening hours. We might not be familiar with the phrases Jesus used, but it seemed like he was referring to the terms for the watches of the night. It's not essential Bible knowledge, but worth a mention that the Roman empire divided the evening hours from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. into four watches of three hours each. Evening was 6 to 9 p.m. Midnight was 9 p.m. to 12 a.m. The 12 a.m. to 3 a.m. watch ended with the rooster crowing, so that was the name for that watch. And the 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. watch ended about dawn, hence the name. So what's the big deal? Jesus' coming will be unexpected. It will be at night when

many are sleeping, maybe not the literal evening hours, but a time when people are just living life, working, making money, getting married, having kids, going to soccer games and weekend wrestling tournaments and visiting family for the holidays and then bang! Surprise! It's Jesus! Surprise! He's here. Surprise! Ah, Jesus, would you mind waiting a little bit. I'm kind of having fun. I'm not really ready. Too late!

Is that what you will say to Jesus? Would you mind waiting? I'm not really ready yet? Jesus is giving you time to be ready. This season of Advent is all about getting ready for Jesus to come. Jesus is coming, ready or not. Jesus is coming, whether you are watching or not. Think of all the events in life, good events that are gifts from God, think of all the events in life for which you get ready. Think of all the planning and preparation that goes into a wedding. The average wedding today costs \$30,000 and if you think you are going to plan it in less a year, no way! What about that wrestling tournament. How many practices before the match? How many special shoes and singlets? When I planned a surprise birthday party for my wife, I started in November for a June birthday. We put lots of time and effort and money into planning for important events. Are you putting that same planning into the biggest event of your life, the coming of Jesus?

What's at the top of your list as Jesus' birthday nears? Entertainment or eternity? Glitter or God? A heart longing for some vacation, or a heart ready for Jesus? Presents for family or presents for your best brother, Jesus? Are you watching for Santa or watching for Jesus? I know this is making us all feel uneasy. I know we all mess up our priorities. That's because we're sinful. We're selfish. We don't normally watch for Jesus, we watch out for ourselves. We naturally push Jesus out of his own birthday party. I pray that makes you feel uneasy, uncomfortable, convicted.

Our Savior Jesus comes to calm the convicted. Our Savior comes to comfort the uncomfortable. Our Savior Jesus comes to ease the troubled conscience of those who are uneasy at their sins. Our Savior's life started in a cradle, but it didn't stop there. Our Savior's life was perfect every day, to calm your convicted conscience, to cover your cares with the waters of baptism, to convey a holy and perfect standing before God. Our Savior's life went to a cross, yes a cross. He laid aside his glory and became obedient to death, for your forgiveness. But our Savior's life didn't end in death. Our Savior's life didn't end in a cave. His life started all over in a cave, started all over with a resurrection from the dead, a resurrection to live and rule eternally. Our Savior left to get a place ready for you, a monogrammed mansion just for you. He put you in charge. He gave you authority. He gave you a job, to keep watch.

Our Savior wants you to keep watch, to stay awake for his coming. He's talking about spiritual watching, spiritual strength. That strength comes from the Bible. Think of the Bible as your Red Bull. Those are the words of Jesus. Jesus speaks to you there. Jesus comes to you in those pages with his love, his comfort, his protection, his forgiveness, his care, his power, his strength, his calm to wipe away tears, his answers to prayer, his power to be prepared, his promise to work all things together for good to those who love him, his assurance that even when you have trouble in this world he has overcome the world. That's why we watch. We can't wait for him to come.

A few years back I went to Mexico for two weeks. Longer than I ever want to be gone from my wife and children ever again. It was 50 degrees here in January for those two weeks. Until the day I flew back. We landed in a snowstorm that caused delays. I was riding a train and the snow caused delays. What was supposed to be like a 4 p.m. return became like 11 p.m. This was before cell phones. I couldn't text my wife and let her know. But when I stepped off the train, there she was and my two sons, tired, but excited to see dad again.

Someone better than dad is coming. He's excited to see you. He wants to be with you. For eternity. Be ready. Watch. Keep watching. Watch for Jesus. Amen.