

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, Sunday, August 7, 2022, Year C

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 12:32-40

“Are You Ready?”

When Jesus spoke - His followers made sure to listen. He told them not to fear because God the Father was giving them His Kingdom. He also told them to sell their possessions and give to the needy, but also providing for themselves. He also cautioned them to be ready for when He returns.

Being ready means needing to be dressed and be available for action, at least that was the way it was in the first century. Last week we drove to New York and back for my sister and brother-in-law's 50th wedding anniversary. I was blessed to officiate the reaffirmation of their marriage vows. Could you imagine getting to I-95 without a map or a GPS, to travel north and not knowing where you are when you are told that you must detour – as we had to near Florence S.C. We were taken so far out of our way. I have got to tell you that it really was an adventure and would have been so much worse without the necessary tools to continue traveling. Thank God we made it – a little later than planned – but all went as planned – and a great reunion with our family and friends. It was great to see our grandkids, as Theresa and Andrew came over from Pennsylvania and we got to have some grandkid time, which was excellent.

Sometimes you realize that the enemy is trying to throw things at you to try to thwart you from achieving what you had planned and what you had hoped for. He throws everything at you! When we set out on Sunday to drive straight through to Douglas, because Marilyn had to report to school that morning at 8AM. I started driving and figured I would go until around 1 PM – so we switched and around Washington DC everything went SLOW! We crawled for three hours at about 5 MPH. It was brutal. We finally made it past Richmond and suddenly for no reason whatsoever – traffic picks up. There were no accidents but we got there. All in all, Satan's attempts to thwart us on our way – causing us to arrive at 2:30 AM. We made it and praised Him and laughed all the way. What are you going to do? Get angry – for what? You just have to say – OK - there is a battle going on and we must be ready and equipped to handle it. The Lord, through the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:13-17 instructs us to *“put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (Yes, even on I-95) Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*

God has already given us His spiritual armor; and our job is to be aware of the equipment He has provided for us and to ask Him to dress us in it each and every day. The truth is that Satan wants to destroy us, so we've got to be focused on the battle and not let our passion fade.

Jesus' second instruction is for us to wait patiently for Him to return. He is coming back – He said so! God's timing is something that is hard for most of us to understand and even harder

for some to wait and accept. Like those three hours on I-95 going so slow! Prayer is how we can learn to accept God's plan and fight the enemy's attempts to cause us delay.

We are all faced with situations in our lives that we want instant results, (we are in an instant society) instant answers, and God does not work that way. Every prayer, as I mentioned two weeks ago, is answered by Him and He is always listening. When we are impatient and try to force God's hand – we run into some major disappointments. We heard all about Abram today – the faithful friend of God. In today's Old Testament reading from Genesis, we read where God made a covenant with Abraham. In this covenant – God promised Abram and Sarai an heir. He told Abram *"Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them."* Then he said to him, *"So shall your offspring be."* (Genesis 15:5) Later, Abram and Sarai were impatient and could not wait for God to bless them, and so they took things into their own hands, and used Hagar, their Egyptian maid servant as a surrogate. Ishmael was born, but he was not the one that God promised. God then changed Abram and Sarai's names to Abraham and Sarah, as a sign that He was in the midst of all of this. Abram means "high father" and God changed it to Abraham which means "father of a multitude." God promised and so it would happen. Sarai means "my princess," but Sarah means "mother of nations." God was laying out His plan for His family to grow – in His timing. When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, in God's timing, not Abraham's, Isaac, the promised heir would be born, and from his family line would come the nations of Israel. The children of Ishmael – the Ishmaelites – would later be at odds with the Israelites, and they still are today. You have the Israelites in the Land and you have the Ishmaelites who are claiming the Land for themselves. They take many names – Arabs, Palestinians, but really who does it belong to? Ultimately it is God's – and God gave it to Israel.

Jesus' final instruction to us in this week's Gospel reading is for us to keep watching. To watch means to stay awake intentionally. The act of keeping awake is to guard, protect and to attend, and at a state of alert and continuous attention. Jesus is not telling us to stay up late and over caffeinate ourselves until the dawn or to somehow defy the physical limitations that have been put upon our bodies. Instead, Jesus is telling us to stand guard, to protect the faith once given to us, and to let nothing dilute the power of the Word of God. We are to not allow God's intentions for His people to be changed. There is nothing in the Bible that is erasable or changeable. It is a gift from God. We can't allow His intentions to be changed, and to not modify or seek "new and profound interpretations" of the Holy Bible that are more suitable to any lifestyle or culture. While on our "watch" we have to be ready, to defend against those who find Jesus as something other than the Only Son of God! We have been given such a rich treasure - God's Holy Word, both written and Incarnate. Is your heart all about this treasure - or the treasures of this world, the treasure of this culture? Are we good stewards of everything that God has given us, especially His Word and the heritage that goes with it? Or are we so in love with this world and the things of it that we become so preoccupied with everything that surrounds us that we would not be ready when Jesus comes again. We cannot tell Jesus to just hold on because we are not ready. You know – can you wait another year or two - it will not

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work that way. Jesus said in Luke 12:40, “*You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*” And in Matthew 24:36 “*No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*”

In 1970 there was a song that was made famous by a band named ‘Pacific Gas and Electric.’ They released a song that went to number 14 on the Billboard Hot 100. The song was called “*Are You Ready?*” What is crazy is that in 1970, people heard the song and loved it, but they didn’t have a clue what it was about. I want you to hear the words and see if you can see what it is about. The chorus of that song has these lyrics:

Are you ready to sit by His throne?
Are you ready not to be alone?
Someone's coming to take you home
And if you're ready, then He'll carry you home
Are you ready?

Written by: John Hill and Charlie Allen

I sang that song as I drove back and forth to college and I didn’t know. I was a good Roman Catholic but I didn’t catch on what that song was about – and now I happen to play a version of that song by a band called DeGarmo and Key from the ‘80s on my Christian Radio show. For years people had been listening to that song, and grooving to it – never realizing that it was speaking about Jesus, because it didn’t mention His Name. Someone’s coming! It was the Second Coming right there on the radio. A subtle invitation that may or may not have been heard. All we can do is respond to Jesus’ words. Be on your guard – prepare each day – in grateful obedience to God– with the intention that today could be the day – and now could be the hour.

Think about Jesus’ three instructions to us in today’s Holy Gospel – so let me ask you:

- Are you ready?
- Are you prepared for the next thing that Jesus has for you, and for His return?
- And lastly, are you ready, willing, and able?

Someone's coming to take you home
And if you're ready, then He'll carry you home
Are you ready?