

Scripture Lesson: Luke 12:35-40

35 “Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; **36** be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. **37** Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. **38** If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. **39** “But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. **40** You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

Sermon: What Would Jesus Say Now that Streaming Videos is 24/7

I remember the **first tv we** had growing up. It wasn't very big, and there was no remote, it had a turn dial. You had to turn the dial to the channels you wanted. And the options were channels 2-12. Now not every channel had something playing on it. But I knew in the mornings I could watch Sesame Street on channel 8. Reruns of Bewitched, Bat Man, or the Brady Bunch, on channel 5, in the evenings. And Sunday before church, I watched this show, Davey and Goliath. Davey, being the boy, Goliath, his faithful dog, and in each episode was a message about God, because as it turns out the Lutheran Church produced this show. That was the extent of my tv experience until this came along, a cable box, and then all of sudden we got channels from Chicago, Atlanta, and New York City. And if you knew how to open the back of the cable back, and pull the one card out just enough, you got even more channels, including HBO.

Now you can watch anything you want or desire, from sports, to cooking, to disco, to the news and documentaries, even Broadway plays, whatever, at any time. No more signing off of channels with the Star Spangled Banner playing, we control what we watch, when we want to watch it, 24/7. And statistics prove, we like that control of our entertainment. According to recent studies, more and more people are watching online platforms on their tv, with 6 out of 10 people saying they prefer watching online video platforms vs. live TV. (Google/comScore, Custom Survey) And here is another staggering fact: More video content gets uploaded in 30 days than what the major US television networks have broadcast in 30 years. (Source: Wordstream) Isn't it crazy to think that, three decades worth of TV content being uploaded every 30 days!

So as we are working through this sermon series on what Jesus would say about some of the issues we face as his disciples today, what would Jesus say, now that streaming service is 24/7? Would he think it's amazing, disruptive, what would he say?

Let's begin by looking at the passage we heard from Luke. And you should know that right before Jesus speaks of this parable, he shares a passage encouraging the disciples not to worry and sums up his teachings with these words: ³² “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” The treasure is the kingdom of God, which God has been pleased to give. And we know Jesus has been quick to point to. Recall all those parables where he tells us the kingdom is real and present and special. He says the Kingdom is like the sudden growth of a tree you had given up for dead. Or the kingdom is like a party where the gates are thrown wide open to people not normally invited. Or a shepherd who finds a lost sheep. Every time Jesus spoke of the kingdom, he said it was something special that was occurring so his disciples could relate and understand that the kingdom is around them. Now he wants his disciples to watch for it.

So he tells the story of an owner of a house who is going to his bride's home to be married. His servants are to await his return and be ready when he comes home, even if it is in the middle of the night. And if they are, he will be so pleased, that he will serve them. Verse 37, “he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them.”

But then Jesus gives a warning, what if a thief breaks in, ³⁹ “if the owner of the house 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.” Here Jesus teaches us to not to be caught unaware or unprepared.

Be ready, he claims, be watchful, for to do so is to be prepared for the return of the Lord, or rather the Son of Man.

Let's take a few minutes to discuss that phrase, Son of Man. In the gospels, Jesus often refers to Himself as the Son of Man and his use of this title connects Him to a passage describing the coming Messiah found in the Old Testament book of Daniel 7:13–14.: “There before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. . . . He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” The teachers of the Law during Jesus' ministry would have readily understood Jesus' meaning when He applied the title *Son of Man* to Himself. He was claiming that he was here to fulfill Daniel's prophecy.

More than that, Jesus was also claiming he is *the* Son of Man, meaning he is the example that God intended humankind to be, the perfect one, the sinless one, the one to reconcile us with God. You and I believe in Jesus as the Son of Man, just as we believe him to be the Son of God. He is fully human, fully Divine. Further we believe that there will be a time when we meet face to face with him and will need to be accountable for our actions or inactions, our words, or our silence.

And so what Jesus is really get at in this passage is: to be his follower, his disciple, is to pay attention to the presence of the kingdom among us, be aware of it, watch for it, participate in it and be ready to share it with others. So that like the servants, we do not let distractions or even fatigue get in the way of our faithfulness.. We must be concerned with the work of the kingdom as a servant left to watch a door waiting for their master's return. This is what Jesus asks us to do as his followers, and be a priority in how we live our lives.

So if the kingdom is among us, are we missing it with our 24/7 streaming? Could be, if we let it distract us. In particular if we let it distract us from receiving God's wisdom.

In Proverbs 8 we read, *Does not wisdom call and understanding raise her voice?² On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand;³ beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out:⁴ “To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all who live. O simple ones, learn prudence; acquire intelligence, you who lack it. Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right, for my mouth will utter truth;*

It is easy to miss the wisdom of God if we are not allowing ourselves those moments to receive it. But it cries out to us, in different ways to hear what is right and the truth. It's like those times our mothers would lecture us, and we would tune them out because we thought, “oh boy, here she goes again” only to discover that what she said was spot on and we would have done well to listen. You know what I am talking about. I have those conversations often with my mother, now that I am older. “You know mom, you were right...” and I am grateful that she just smiles at me with no “I told you so!”

When Jesus tells us to be watchful, that includes keeping an open channel to hear God speak to us at the gate, beside the path, at the crossroads, etc. And sometimes friends even through the streaming platform. Consider the livestreaming our church is able to offer on a weekly basis. Often times our staff receive notes of thanks that the church offers that ministry, and not just due to covid concerns, but from members who live a distance due to work or school. And our shut ins get to watch it on their ipads and computers. One shut in has her nursing home turn it on and show it to group of residents that congregate around the tv on Sunday mornings. Another is able to watch the service with her family that gathers with her, and they hear God, they see the kingdom and experience it in our worship.

So, what would Jesus say, now that streaming service is 24/7? I think he would point to the rest of that passage from Proverbs 8 that continues: Proverbs 8:32-35: *‘And now, my children, listen to me: happy are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Happy is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favour from the Lord;* In other words, the ongoing streaming would not be a concern of his, *so long as* it wasn't taking us away from living our lives that build and share the kingdom. That means watching for him, listening for him, following his lead, ready to greet him at any hour, as he is the source of our life.

Let us pray:

Lord, may we hear, embrace, and hold fast to the blessed hope of your kingdom, which you have shown us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen