

Get Dressed

Luke 12:35-40 (NLT2) ³⁵ “Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks. ³⁷ The servants who are ready and waiting for his return will be rewarded. I tell you the truth, he himself will seat them, put on an apron, and serve them as they sit and eat! ³⁸ He may come in the middle of the night or just before dawn. But whenever he comes, he will reward the servants who are ready. ³⁹ “Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would not permit his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.” **Luke 12:45-46 (NLT2)** ⁴⁵ But what if the servant thinks, ‘My master won’t be back for a while,’ and he begins beating the other servants, partying, and getting drunk? ⁴⁶ The master will return unannounced and unexpected, and he will cut the servant in pieces and banish him with the unfaithful.

The word Advent originates from a Latin word “Adventus” which means “coming” or “arrival.” Advent Season is focused on preparing for the comings of Jesus, His first coming in the past at Christmas and His future coming when He brings the universe to an end with fire and there will be a brand-new heaven and a brand-new earth. We read Old Testament prophecies foretelling of Jesus coming. There are at least 100 prophecies fulfilled at the first coming of Jesus. Both the Old and New Testaments have prophecies about the 2nd coming of Jesus and many of them come from Jesus Himself. As a matter of fact, as I am in the Gospel of Luke for my devotions, I stand amazed at how many times Jesus refers to His second coming. I’ve been a Christian for 54 years and I did not know that at all. I’m enthralled by this. It has taken 54 years for something to sink in.

What do the four candles of Advent symbolize? The candles on the Advent wreath symbolize hope, love, joy, and peace. The fifth candle, called the Christ candle, is lit on Christmas Eve and Day to remind the church of the light Jesus brings to the world.

Listen to the teaching of Jesus found in found in Luke 17. **Luke 17:26-27 (NLT2)** ²⁶

“When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. ²⁷ In those days, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came and destroyed them all.

At the time of Noah, the people had no thought of God, loving God, or living for God. Their hearts were continually on violence and evil. God gave them 120 years to repent and finally the flood came and all but the family of Noah missed the boat. Advent is a warning for God does not want any of us to miss the boat again. You do not want to be left behind. Advent gives us time to have our lives right with God, morally, spiritually, relationally, and more before it is too late. When you are saved by grace through faith you enter the ark so to speak and you will be safe from judgment forever and ever. For the Christians it is no time to slack off in following Jesus, thinking His coming is far off. The ark is living our lives in Jesus. The floods of judgment will not touch you.

Luke 17:28-30 ²⁸ **“And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot. People went about their daily business - eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building**
29 until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and burning sulfur rained down from
heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰ **Yes, it will be ‘business as usual’ right up to the day**
when the Son of Man is revealed. When you read Jesus’ warning it is so clear that far too many will not have clue that judgment day is coming. They will be living their lives as if God did not exist at all. In the Life Application notes we read, “Life will be going on as usual on the day Christ returns. No warning sound. Most people will be going about their daily tasks, indifferent to the demands of God. They will be surprised by Christ’s return as the people were of Noah’s day by the flood or the people were in Lot’s day by the destruction of Sodom (Life Application Notes pg. 2245, Luke 17). I also learn from the words of Jesus that life as we know it will continue until that day when Jesus shows us the new heavens and the new earth, for the old ones will be destroyed by fire. Since God created all that there is in the first place, God has the right to replace it all and that He will do. And it will happen suddenly. That is why we are told in the New Testament over and over, “Wake up.” Do not miss the signs of the times. Don’t be caught sleeping – ignoring God and God’s perfect ways.

Tonight's reading struck me like lightening, especially the first verse. **Luke 12:35** ³⁵ **"Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning."** Another translation says, *"Be dressed for action and keep your lamps burning."* I felt as I read this one verse God was giving His instructions in how I am to live every day until the Lord takes me home, and I don't mean the farm, I mean heaven. How am I live out my remaining years? And the answers apply to all of us. Jesus says, "Be dressed for service, be dressed for action. In Peter's letter he says something similar. Peter writes, "Gird up your loins." In New Testament times men generally wore long robes. I have a robe on. Whenever I try to go up the stairs to speak to the tech people, I almost fall on my face. It is difficult to move quickly with this robe getting caught underneath my shoes. The best way to run to go upstairs or to be ready for action is to pull the rope up to your middle and tie it up. Then you can move quickly and be ready to do the work that you are supposed to do like fishing or needing to walk fast.

To be dressed for service applies to us this way. Always be ready to be a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Your witness of Jesus is the most important aspect of your life. It means "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul writes, **Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV)** ¹² **Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.** ¹³ **Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.** ¹⁴ **And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.** As Christians we do not want to get caught without being properly clothed. Dressed for service means you know you are representing Jesus wherever you are and wherever you go. It is not putting on an act. It is being authentically Christian. You dress every day so your life can demonstrate someone walking closely to Jesus. As a Christian, you are being watched. You may be the only believer some people will ever meet.

Sometimes when I pray with people that I have never met they say this to me, “You are the first person that has ever prayed with me.” When I hear that I cringe. How come there are so many people out there that have never been prayed with? I want more of us to take the time to say a simple prayer with another person. It’s called being dressed for action, for Christian service.

You walk into Butera and you see someone who has not been to church in ages. You take the time to stop and give a warm hello, handshake, or hug. You spend less than a minute with the person and God uses that warm hug or handshake to convey Christian love. That person just might be in church that next Sunday. I hear a concern about numbers in church. By being dressed for service, by being dressed for Christian action, you are the best advertisement for this church. Those who are dressed for service want to make an impact for Jesus and do so. It becomes second nature. The Lord does it through you. That is what it takes to grow a church at least in number.

The second phrase, “And keep your lamps burning.” I interpret the phrase this way. “Always be on fire for Jesus and don’t peter out.” Always be ready to give away Christian love in a tangible way. Always be ready to speak, giving Jesus the opportunity to speak through you. Always be aware that God will provide opportunity for you to shine brightly for Christ. Don’t get caught sleeping when God has work for you to do that is necessary to get done before Jesus comes again. Time is short, be dressed and ready. There is much to be done for the sake of Jesus. It is why we get out of bed. Your life is the only Bible some people will ever read.

I close with these suggestions about staying properly dressed and ways to keep your lamp burning brightly for Jesus.

1. Get dressed for serving Christ. This means accepting the fact that as a Christian, you are being watched. People know you attend church. Is there something about you that makes you stand out as a believer in Christ? Wear that every day. Not that long ago someone

asked me to turn around and I did and the person hugged me. I was caught unaware. It is not in this person's nature to do so on his own. When I was hugged, I genuinely felt loved by God. Simply giving a person your personal attention even for a short time is a way of showing off your clothes, your Jesus clothes and shining brightly for Christ. It is all about relationships. It can be as simple as sending a text or leaving a phone message, "I am thinking about you right now. God bless." There are hundreds of ways to show your Jesus clothes based on your personality and spiritual gifts. You have ways you can teach me that I have never thought of. I am more of a bull in a China store. I don't hesitate to barge in and make a scene. Others of you are like the China in the China store, you radiate Jesus with your kindness, your genuine compassion, your sincere concern, and you have just what is needed for the person God puts right in front of you, an expression of the love of God. Get dressed for service.

2. Don't be a loner. We are all in this together. We help each other to dress even better for Jesus. One's light might be dim, but by gathering together, we get recharged, we receive much needed encouragement from one another as we gather in the name of Jesus. Last weekend as Jeff was speaking on the topic of love, I felt completely immersed in God's love. I did not want his talk to end. Being a participant in the Community of Christ, the church, is absolutely essential for such a time as this.

3. God will richly reward you for every act of service you do for Jesus. ³⁷ The servants who are ready and waiting for his return will be rewarded. I tell you the truth, he himself will seat them, put on an apron, and serve them as they sit and eat! I know it is easy to sink into discouragement or to just be exhausted and pooped out completely. And then your pastor says, "Get dressed for service – Keep your fire burning." That's easy for you to say Pastor. You don't know what I am facing in my life. True. Jesus says to you. ³⁵ "Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning." Whatever the Lord asks of you, He promises to do it through you and He

gave you the inner strength to do it. It is all about living our lives in the ark, in Jesus. It is the only safe place to live. Amen and Amen.