

## **“Clothed in Confidence” – Pr Jim Sprengle – New Year’s Eve December 31, 2025**

- I. **Luke 12:35; 37** – “Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning... Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.”
- II. **Have you ever been surprised by an unexpected visitor?**
  - a. Michele and I had a construction job lined out to replace some windows at our house this week.
    - i. The company called me last week to say the crew could not show up on Monday as scheduled, but would be there on December 31 (today) to take care of everything.
    - ii. On Sunday night, I was enjoying card games with our family, as Morgan and Alexa (my daughters) were here to visit... and we stayed up late chatting and hanging out.
      1. I had every intention of sleeping in, but around 8:00am, I heard the sound of the doorbell, and someone knocking.
      2. It’s hard to get going when you go from a dead sleep to 100mph trying to find glasses... clothes... and fix the rooster tail sticking up from your hair... as you go down to see who in the world is at your door.
      3. Sure enough, the construction company was confused, and the job was actually starting on the original day we scheduled... Monday!
      4. I immediately had to race around and pull blinds down, move furniture, and do everything that was not on my radar until after the girls went home...
      5. My assumption was that I had plenty of time... but there I was, scrambling... and wishing I had done more to prepare before.
    - iii. Jesus’ words tonight are spoken to people who assume there is still time... who believe the Master probably won’t come soon... who are comfortable with their lives, and aren’t thinking about the Last Day.
  - b. As Christians, it’s easy for us to confuse awareness with readiness.
    - i. We live our lives full of information and knowledge, but that does not mean we’re being alert or ready for the actual event to happen.
    - ii. For example, we know Jesus Christ will return – as He promises – but even with that knowledge, we are still distracted to no end!
    - iii. We may know Jesus is coming at any time, but we’ve got other things that grab our attention and focus instead.... so, being ready for Him is on the back burner... or even made into a “spiritual” thing rather than an actual, physical return with a new creation (like, “it’s not gonna happen in my lifetime” attitude).
  - c. The distractions that lull us to sleep may not be terrible sins, or an outright rejection of God.

- i. Some of these things are respectable things... like me playing cards and hanging out with my kids for Christmas.
- ii. However, some of these “distractions” that take us away from being ready include:
  - 1. Comfort... we work hard to make everything around us comfortable and peaceful.
  - 2. Entertainment... we spend a lot of time on social media, movies, streaming, sports events, concerts, or eating out.
  - 3. Anxiety... oftentimes, our anxious thoughts lead to taking care of minor issues rather than focusing on the bigger ones.
  - 4. Planning and managing... whenever we want control over our lives, we plan... but what are God’s plans?
  - 5. Again, these are not necessarily evil in themselves, but they quietly displace watchfulness.
- d. I guess you could say that the danger is not so much outright rebellion... but drowsiness.
  - i. Jesus does not warn about open hostility in our reading tonight, but about servants who simply stop watching... as falling asleep spiritually feels kind of harmless and normal to us.
- e. So, Jesus helps us by talking about what readiness means as He names it, describes it, and even shows us what it actually looks like.

### III. **Jesus gives us some help to understand being ready.**

- a. First, He says, “Be dressed for action”.
  - i. The literal translation is to have girded loins, or to take your long robe or tunic and pull it up into clothing for work, or battle, or travel.
    - 1. I know how much you like your jammies... but He is not talking about bedtime clothing here.
  - ii. This readiness assumes that we prepare with intention.
  - iii. Yet, our lives often look spiritually frumpy... like we’ve made a mess out of our clothing...
    - 1. Things like sloppy commitments, half-hearted focus on God, and divide our loyalty between God and the world.
- b. The next thing Jesus says is to, “Keep your lamps burning”.
  - i. Of course, we have a never-ending source of energy by the power of the Holy Spirit, but sometimes you’ve felt the spiritual gauge go down as you distance yourself from God.
  - ii. When we neglect our relationship with God and put all things spiritual on the back burner, our trust and confidence in God dims... and so does our watchfulness and readiness.
    - 1. As the Word, prayer, and worship are pushed aside, we are left with a spiritually dim light.
- c. And lastly, Jesus says, “Stay awake”.

- i. Sleep is not active rebellion... but in this context it means a sort of passive neglect... almost like procrastination.
- ii. So, our assumption that, “Later will be fine”, is not what Jesus expects... and in fact, He will return at an hour we do not expect!
- d. I suppose if being ready means we are alert, disciplined, and spiritually dressed for action, then we are failing.
  - i. Yet, the Bible has good news about readiness.

IV. **Our readiness is not our hard work, but it is given to us by grace.**

- a. The surprise message of the Gospel, and what many of us fail to understand is not, “You need to try harder to stay awake!” but, it is “You are clothed.”
  - i. We have something given to us through faith and our Baptisms... Baptismal clothing.
    - 1. The Bible talks about being clothed in Christ and putting on Christ... and this is not just symbolic... being clothed in Christ is His righteousness covering us... it is a divine covering.
- b. You see, Jesus doesn’t just inspire us to be ready... He stands in our place.
  - i. He bears our sin... our negligence and procrastination... our distraction... and our spiritual sleep.
  - ii. His obedience overcomes our failures... and His righteousness covers our sin.
- c. I want to be very clear tonight, that our confidence does not come from being vigilant and doing all the right things... No, it comes because Jesus did all the right things and was ready for us long before we could be ready for Him.
- d. In Christ, we have confidence, not fear.
  - i. The Master coming back is the same One who already served us... through our Baptisms, the Lord’s Supper, the Word, and the forgiveness of sins given as He went to the cross and rose again.
  - ii. The One who will come again is the One who has already given Himself fully.
  - iii. As we are clothed in Christ, we do not watch in fear, but we can say that we are clothed in confidence.

V. **God intends for us to live as those already dressed and ready to go.**

- a. Every day is another day that we are faithful in our vocations, whatever they may be... as a parent, grandparent, worker, or your place of influence.
  - i. Not to earn anything... or to be anxious... but to reflect our identity in Christ... our identity as God’s own children.
  - ii. And when we fail and allow distractions to pull us away, we can always return to Jesus and His promise of forgiveness as we repent.
- b. As we sit on the cusp of a new year, we look backward and forward.

- i. On the one hand, we recognize our distracted hearts and lack of discipline, but we do not stand here exposed... we stand clothed... clothed in confidence... because we are clothed in Christ. Amen.