

You Must Be Ready  
Luke 12:35-40  
August 7, 2022

Samuel Beckett wrote a play titled *Waiting for Godot*. It was a satire of the human condition and the futility of waiting for God to show up. Those who wait are continually told that God is coming to save them but he never does. Their waiting is in vain. "The only prop in the play is a dead tree. The implication is that there is no God or Savior." (1) Life is dreary for those who wait. Since life has no ultimate purpose or meaning they seek to create an existence without "artificial props like a belief in God." (2) The characters are pathetic. They come to believe that they are being deceived and that God is not coming. A sense of hopelessness overcomes them. Some lose their faith and others become bitter and angry. Beckett wants people to stop waiting for God but offers no alternative but despair.

This is nothing new. Peter wrote to the people of God saying, "First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this "coming" he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.'" (Peter goes on to say,) "...do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief." ... "the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives." (2 Peter 3:3-4, 8- 10a, 11)

Those who believe that it is futile to wait for God have always been around. They choose not to see that he has already come to Abraham, to Moses at Mount Sinai, to Samuel and Jesus and that he will come again. God comes to us many times in our daily lives if we have receptive hearts and open eyes. Although there are many who doubt or grow weary of waiting for God's coming, we are not among them. We know that God in Christ is returning.

Our scripture says that we are to be people who are waiting for our master to return. We are to be ready: dressed for service with our lamps lit. "The long robes of the Middle East [worn by men and women] nearly touch the ground. They were and are worn without belts. The hot climate makes loose-fitting clothing the nearly universal preference. Any strenuous activity requires the wearer to tie a belt or rope around the waist and then tucking in the bottom edge of the robe into the belt to keep it off the

ground and out of the way.” (3) They were freed up for service. The servants are also told to keep their lamps lit; something we don’t normally do unless we are tent camping. Usually, we just flip on a light switch. With a lamp it is not that easy. It is even more difficult preparing a lamp with oil and a wick after it is dark. It is best prepared before-hand in the light.

Verse 36 tells us that the master is away. “The story seems to be of a master who went off to get married. Because of the heat, Middle Eastern weddings were held late at night [and could last a week]. The picture is of the new husband coming home with his bride. Most certainly he would not want to be kept waiting on this special night. Applied spiritually the sense is to be ready for the Lord Jesus when He returns from the marriage feast of heavens glory. Jesus wants you to be watching and ready for Him not needing to be aroused from spiritual slumber.” (4)

Part of our waiting is patience. Patience is a fruit of the spirit. The last couple of years I have lived pretty much with my Aunt Dorothy and she has told me countless times to be patient which is not one of my strong points. Perhaps I will learn to be as patient as she is when I get to be her age.

Not long before his death, Henri Nouwen wrote a book called *Sabbatical Journeys*, in which he wrote about some friends of his who were trapeze artists, called the Flying Roudellas. They told Nouwen that there is a special relationship between the flyer and the catcher on the trapeze. This relationship is governed by important rules, such as “The flyer is the one who lets go, and the catcher is the one who catches.” As the flyer swings on the trapeze high above the crowd, the moment comes when he must let go. He flings his body out in mid-air. His job is to keep flying and wait for the strong hands of the catcher to take hold of him at just the right moment. One of the Flying Roudellas told Nouwen, “The flyer must never try to catch the catcher.” (5)

Nouwen believed that waiting is a period of learning. When we get too impatient, we get ahead of God and we try to work things out on our own. This is often a disaster because we start trying to catch God instead of waiting for him to catch us. Waiting gives God time to work in our lives. Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of Romans 8:24 in *The Message* reads, “Waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting.” (6) Give God a chance and let him catch you and work things out in his way.

Verses 37 and 38 say that believers are to be ready and waiting. Jesus tells us that we are to wait expectantly for his return.

Gary Preston tells a story in his book *Character Forged from Conflict*, that illustrates how we are to wait. He writes: “Back when the telegraph was the fastest means of long-distance communication, there was a story about ... a young man who

applied for a job as a Morse code operator. Answering an ad in the newspaper, he went to the address that was listed. When he arrived, he entered a large, noisy office. In the background a telegraph clacked away. A sign on the receptionist's counter instructed job applicants to fill out a form and wait until they were summoned to enter the inner office. The young man completed his form and sat down with seven other waiting applicants. After a few minutes, the young man stood up, crossed the room to the door of the inner office, and walked right in. Naturally the other applicants perked up, wondering what was going on. Why had this man been so bold? They muttered among themselves that they hadn't heard any summons yet. They took more than a little satisfaction in assuming the young man who went into the office would be reprimanded for his presumption and summarily disqualified for the job. Within a few minutes the young man emerged from the inner office escorted by the interviewer, who announced to the other applicants, 'Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming, but the job has been filled by this young man.' The other applicants began grumbling to each other, and then one spoke up, 'Wait a minute! I don't understand. He was the last one to come in, and we never even got a chance to be interviewed. Yet he got the job. That's not fair.' The employer responded, 'All the time you've been sitting here, the telegraph has been ticking out the following message in Morse code: "If you understand this message, then come right in. The job is yours." None of you heard it or understood it. This young man did. So, the job is his.'" (7) The young man got the job because he was doing more than merely waiting unlike the others, he was alert to what was happening and responded to the summons in the background. He was waiting expectantly. We are here in God's house and he has things he wants us to do for him. Just to sit here and do nothing but wait for his return is not enough. Waiting does not mean just sitting down and doing nothing. Jesus always valued service. That is what makes Christianity different from many of the other faiths in the world. We are to be doing for the Lord.

Verses 37 and 38 read, "It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night."

Christians are to serve others. Here Jesus says that he will honor those who have faithfully served him by serving them. This shouldn't surprise us because that is the way it has always been on our Christian walk. Christ has honored us by walking with us and showing us what we are to do with him and for him. Blessed are those who are alert and watching, walking and working with the Lord for they know that life is empty without him. Jesus goes on to say we are to be steadfast in our watching and waiting for his

return. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 4:8, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” We are to look forward to the Lord’s return even as our scripture says, if it is in the third watch, which is 2 a.m. to sunrise. Many Christians believe that is where we are at present. They believe that we are in the third watch and that Christ will return soon.

Finally, we are to wait faithfully. Paraphrasing verses 39 and 40: If the owner of the house had known when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You must be ready, for Christ will come when we don’t expect him. We are to be steadfastly faithful. It is such faith that keeps us going even when the watch is long. Waiting is essential in our Christian walk.

Through the years there have been many predictions as to when the second coming of our Lord will take place. All of them have been wrong. Jesus says in Mark 13:32, “No one knows about that day of hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Even Jesus says he doesn’t know. How could we? The point that Jesus is making is that he is returning: Be on guard! Be alert!

Reverend Dennis Davidson tells a story he heard: “a person in California GOES TO SLEEP every night with her shoes and a flashlight under the bed. When she was a child, her father required every family member to be ready to leave the house if an earthquake were to come during the night. She says that during a tremor windows shatter and electricity is lost. With shoes she can walk on broken glass and with a light she can find her way in the dark. She never goes to bed without them. She’s ready.” (8)

What does “being ready” mean to us? We need not worry about things we can’t control. We must not be lulled to sleep by the Lord’s delay but prepare for his return. Get right with the Lord and keep on keeping on for and with him. Don’t wait. The Lord keeps his promises—he will return!

Amen.

- (1) Sermoncentral “Waiting for Godot” Rodney Buchanan December 22, 2001 p. 1
- (2) Ibid. p. 1
- (3) Sermoncentral “The Watchful Servant” Dennis Davidson September 3, 2014 p. 1
- (4) Ibid. p. 2
- (5) Sermoncentral “Waiting for Godot” Rodney Buchanan December 22, 2001 p. 2
- (6) Ibid. p. 2
- (7) Ibid. p. 3
- (8) Sermoncentral “The Watchful Servant” Dennis Davidson September 3, 2014 p. 4