

# Ready or Not

**Passage:** Luke 12:35–59 | From the series: Luke

**Preacher:** Cormac Parker Jr. ▾

**Date:** Oct 11, 2026

---

One of my favorite games as a kid was Hide-and-Seek. Don't miss what makes the game work. It's the count. Ten, nine, eight... Every kid knows what that sound means. The clock is running. Find your spot. Three, two, one. "Ready or not, here I come!"

Because of the count, you know exactly how much time you have before someone comes looking for you. The truth is, most of us do pretty well when we know the countdown. Dentist appointment at 2? You're there at 1:30. Wedding at 4? You're dressed by 3. Flight boards at 6:40? You know exactly when to head to the airport. (Well, most of us.)

But what happens when you don't know how much time you have? Let's be honest. We say, "I'll get to it later," or "eventually." That's not just a calendar issue. It's a life problem.

What we believe about tomorrow shapes how we live today. In our passage, Jesus confronts his disciples with a future reality that should change the way they live right now. Here it is in three words: He's coming back.

No countdown. No date on the calendar. Just a promise. He doesn't give us the date, but he tells us how to live while we wait.

**Stay dressed. Stay faithful. Stay awake.**

This entire chapter is drenched in what theologians call eschatology. The word comes from two Greek words: eschatos (last, end) and logos (word, study). In short, it's the study of the end times. When most of us hear "end times," we think of charts, dates, and the guy on the corner with a sign. It's easy to hear only the countdown. But biblical eschatology is about the promise. God has already begun his plan in Christ, and he will finish it when Christ returns. Already and not yet, and we live in between. (Luke 12:35-40)

*35 "Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, 36 and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. 38 If he*

*comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! 39 But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

## **1. Stay Dressed: He could arrive at any moment.**

Jesus uses three pictures.

First, clothing. In the ancient world, people wore long garments and would tie them up when they needed to move quickly. The literal phrase is "gird up your loins." Jesus is pointing back to the Exodus. On the night of the Passover, the last of the plagues on Egypt, the Israelites were told to eat with their belts fastened, ready to move at a moment's notice (Exodus 12:11). Expectant, ready, keeping the lamps burning adds to that picture of readiness and vigilance, like the priests who kept the lamps burning in the tabernacle (Exodus 27:20; Leviticus 24:2).

Second, the wedding feast. They are to be ready like servants waiting for their master to come home from a wedding. In that day, a wedding feast wasn't the four- to six-hour occasion we know. It could last several days. (Side note: I would love to have seen my father-in-law's face if Jaz and I had told him we were thinking about a week-long party.) The servants wouldn't know when the master would return. Again, the point is readiness.

Third, the thief. Thieves back then didn't pick locks. They often broke in by digging through a mud-brick wall. But some things never change. Thieves don't give you notice. They don't book an appointment. They don't even give you an 8-to-5 window like the cable technician. The only way to guard against them is to always be ready. People have spent countless hours trying to figure out when Jesus will return. What actually counts is being ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Paul says the same thing: the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

Then Jesus says something that would have really gotten people's attention. Those who are ready, alert, and awake are blessed, so much so that the master will actually serve them a meal. This is the upside-down kingdom, where the master serves the servant. It's a picture of the great banquet, the marriage supper of the Lamb, the final feast of Christ with his Church.

**Application:** To stay dressed is to live with a posture of readiness. It means ordering our lives around the expectation that Jesus is coming back. Keeping short accounts with God. Confessing quickly and forgiving quickly. Holding possessions loosely. So ask yourself: What am I holding so tightly that I couldn't leave it on a moment's notice? (Luke 12:41-48)

*41 Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" 42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 45 But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. 47 And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. 48 But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more."*

You've got to love Peter. He asks for clarification. Lord, who are you talking about? Is this just for us disciples, or for everyone? The answer is yes. It's for those who lead, but also for everyone connected to the Kingdom, especially those who know Christ. As we'll see, to whom much is given, much is required.

## **2. Stay Faithful: He will repay.**

Jesus keeps building on this theme of faithfulness. The faithful servant is trusted to help oversee the master's possessions. It's not entirely clear what that will look like, but some scholars suggest it involves helping administer the Kingdom. Jesus also describes a range of consequences, tied to how much the servant knew and how faithful he was.

Don't miss what Jesus uses as evidence of the servant's unfaithfulness. He mistreats others, and he indulges himself. He stops living like the master is coming back. According to Jesus, readiness isn't just about what you believe about his return. It shows up in how we treat people and how we handle our appetites while we wait.

That servant forgot that the people, the possessions, and the house weren't his. He was a steward. And so are we. To whom much is given, much is required. The more you know, the more responsible you become.

Think about a new hire who makes a mistake because they haven't been trained, compared to a team lead who makes the same mistake. The team lead knows the system, sat through the training, and has access to the information. They're responsible for everyone else. Same mistake, different conversation, because more has been entrusted to them.

In our culture, we measure success by accumulation and advancement. Jesus paints success through the lens of faithfulness: stewarding what God has placed in your hands.

**Application:** What has Jesus entrusted to you? For some of us, it's family: a spouse, children, people who depend on us. For others, it's a team at work, colleagues who depend on your leadership. It may be influence or resources. Are the people entrusted to your care flourishing because of your stewardship, or suffering because of your neglect?

Jesus has told us to stay dressed and to stay faithful by stewarding what we've been given. Now there's a shift. He makes it very clear that his coming demands a response. Not everyone will welcome it. Not everyone will recognize it. That leads us to the call to stay awake. (Luke 12:49-53)

*49 "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! 50 I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! 51 Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. 52 For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."*

This baptism clearly isn't water baptism. That already happened at the Jordan River with John the Baptist. This points to the cross, "Until it is accomplished." We know this because the word for "accomplished" shares the same root (telos) as what Jesus says from the cross in John 19:30: "It is finished."

Wait a minute. He didn't come to bring peace on earth? Excuse me? What about Luke 2:14, when the angelic choir sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace"? Or the forgiven woman in Luke 7:50: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace"?

Look a little closer. Peace comes to those who respond. Division is the byproduct of a peace that demands allegiance to truth rather than comfortable compromise. Later, in Luke 19, Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because they did not recognize the things that make for peace. (Luke 12:54-59)

*54 He also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming.' And so it happens. 55 And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. 56 You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? 57 And why do you not judge for yourselves what*

*is right? 58 As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. 59 I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny."*

### **3. Stay Awake: Don't miss the moment.**

This would have made perfect sense to his audience. To the west was the Mediterranean Sea. When clouds gathered over the water, rain was likely coming. To the south was the hot, dry desert.

Jesus says, you know how to read the weather, but you can't recognize what God is doing right in front of you. The Messiah they had waited so long for was standing in front of them. God's kingdom was breaking in. The sick were being healed, the blind were seeing, and good news was being preached. And they missed the moment.

If Jesus were here today, he might say: You can read the stock market and the trends of the day. You can forecast technological advances. You can predict what AI might do to the workforce. But can you recognize what God is doing right in front of you?

Don't mistake this for advice on how to handle a court appearance. Jesus is once again pressing the urgency of the moment. There is still time to respond, but the door will not stay open forever. It's an invitation to get right with God while there is still time.

**Application:** Stay awake to the moment. What is God calling me to respond to? Don't confuse God's patience with unlimited time. Is there anything in your life you keep putting off because you assume you'll have more time? Maybe it's a step of obedience that will cost you something: a conversation, a relationship that needs repair, an act of obedience. Don't miss the moment. There is still time to respond to what he is calling you to.

So how do you live when you know he's coming, but you can't hear the count?

#### **Stay dressed. Stay faithful. Stay awake.**

If you've ever played hide-and-seek with a three-year-old, you know they're terrible at it. They pick the curtain, feet sticking out, giggling. You haven't even finished counting, and they jump out: "I'm right here!" They don't want to stay hidden. They want to be found.

One day, the waiting will be over, and the Seeker will say, "Ready or not, here I come." May he find us not hiding. Not telling ourselves, "My master is delayed." But ready at the door when he knocks, saying, "I'm right here."

And when he finds you, he won't tag you out. Jesus says the Master will tie on an apron, pull out a chair, and serve you dinner.

**Ready or not, he's coming. May he find us ready.**