

Luke 12:32-40 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. “Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Watchful Slaves

“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; “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.”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. “If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

“But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he^d 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.”

- Boy scout motto – Be Prepared – some chilling things but the line that resonated with me was “by having thought out beforehand any accident or situation that might occur, so that you know the right thing to do at the right moment, and are willing to do it.”
- Carol Autumn and I just returned from a two week trip to Iceland and Europe. I love travelling – and some of what I love is like the Boy Scouts “by having thought out beforehand any accident or situation that might occur, so that you know the right thing to do at the right moment, and are willing to do it.”
- There’s all the lists, and that trip to CVS where you find travelling sizes of things you didn’t plan to buy but it’s only little. And of course there are clothes – it’s amazing the range of clothing you need if you have thought out any weather that might occur.
- The biggest thing for us turns out to be the luggage itself. We return from every trip with a new idea about what is the ideal size and configuration a suitcase should be and a determination to not let our suitcases control us. Instead they control our house – we have a complete range of sizes and styles – many of whom only got to go on one trip.
- This year we vowed to be modest in the clothes we brought – and succeeded for the most part. Instead we channeled our preparation energy into electronics – terrorized as we were about the specter of being locked in a hotel room with a 14 year old whose ipad isn’t charged. It was the first thing we did when we unburdened ourselves of our luggage – set up the chargers – and then began the argument about whose electronics merits that first charge. It turned out we had 4 plugs for one country and none for another – we thought disaster had struck until the hotel provided what we needed. I was so uncertain about how Autumn would travel that we lugged along her PS4 in its own (expensive) case. I’m glad to say it never got opened.

- Our vow of modesty got swallowed up in our eagerness to Be Prepared. Suitcases of modest size that glided along the airport floor were disproportionately balanced by the heavy chargers, laptop, ipads and PS4. This did bring us closer as a family since we had to move as a unit – especially when we bought another suitcase for all the electronics. We got pretty good at getting on and off a train without holding up the line too long. A 14 year old does have her uses – she looks skinny but she’s strong. Being burdened with stuff didn’t wreck our trip, but it restricted us some. It was hard to feel the grandeur of the alps if you have to keep your eye on your luggage all the time. (PLEASE STEAL)
- So, in letting today’s scripture roll around in my head as we travelled I wondered is this the kind of preparation, of readiness that Jesus is urging us to. How would that look? I couldn’t imagine the list and the luggage which would accomplish that. I thought about the Boy Scouts – their preparedness requiring vast knowledge; about doctor’s who need to know so much in order to be ready. Is this how we are called to get ready for God’s presence?
- Or is that how we get ready for something we are doing? If it is God who we are welcoming then perhaps we should turn from what WE have to do but instead focus on anticipating God’s presence. I bet the servant in the scripture had cleaned the house and stocked the shelves, any servant expecting their master would have done that. But that wasn’t what the master rejoiced over – it was the servant’s anticipation; the servant’s preparing for the master’s return. This is a different way of preparing.
- I like to think that what Jesus is hoping for from us is that expectancy. Have you ever seen a dog whose owner has gone out, how he sits and stares at the door? There are toys that could be played with, squirrels that could be chased, but this dog just sits and waits. Ours howls at the same time, but it’s a howl of longing.
- When I read the Boy Scout preparation, to be prepared for everything, it made me think of a doctor who has learned so much – some perhaps she will never see in her practice – but that earnest preparation could perhaps be what Jesus is talking about. But, honorable as that preparation is, it is not the preparation that Jesus calls us to. That kind of preparation happens after the doctor has done his work, finished the surgery. What a relief it must be to pull off the mask and gloves and collapse into a chair next to the husband or mother, giving them news of how things went. If the doctor had to clean up what a temptation it

would be to leave it til morning. But, that's when a team of people enter the operating room and prepare it. They clean all the surfaces, remove the used instruments and cloth. They scrub the whole room and then they replace the items that have been used with sterile ones. They do all that work and then they close the door and go on to other chores.

- And the operating room sits there, ready, prepared. Perhaps it will not be needed for days, perhaps a new surgery will take place in just minutes. The room