

*(Lively hope, vigilant and ready)*

<sup>35</sup> "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, <sup>36</sup> like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. <sup>37</sup> 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. <sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>40</sup> You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (NIV)

INTRO - One of the lessons that must be learned when driving is how to keep one's focus. Yes, a driver needs to focus on what is coming, what is in front. But, a driver also needs to know what is behind, in case you want to change lanes, or in case someone wants to pass you, or in case there is an emergency vehicle coming from behind. So, if a person's attention as a driver is always to the front, you miss out on what you need to know is happening behind you. But, if you try to drive forward by always looking backward, you are sure to have an accident. Having the right focus is very important when driving.

I. Some call life a journey, and tonight we have the opportunity to look backward at the past, or to look forward at the future. Where should our focus be?

A. We can look backward at the past.

1. In the past we see God's love and blessings.
2. In the past we see our failure and our sin.
3. Looking backward calls for thankfulness, and for repentance for our sin.
4. Is that where our focus should be?

B. We can look at the future in our journey of life.

1. We know that for all who believe in Jesus God promises eternal life in heaven. It is important to remember that is our ultimate destination.
2. But if we only focus on the future, what about our past blessings, what about our past sin?
3. While we need to keep the future in mind, do we only look in that direction?

C. The Gospel lesson for tonight, along with our other readings, gives us the location of our focus and our attention tonight as we stand at the end of one year and the beginning of another year.

1. <sup>35</sup> **"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning,**
2. We aren't only looking at our past lives in the Lord.
3. We don't wait for the future and then act.
4. God calls for us to be ready right now, **ready for service with your lamps burning,**

II. Let's look more closely at what Jesus is saying.

A. First, Jesus does say there is a coming judgement.

1. <sup>40</sup> **You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."**
2. When Jesus comes as judge, we must be ready.
3. We want to be in the eternal future with God in heaven, not separated from Him in hell.
4. But, before this lesson Jesus tells the story of the man with the large barns. He prepared for this life, not for God. You can't wait till Jesus comes and get ready, it is something that must happen now.

B. So Jesus says, <sup>35</sup> **"Be dressed ready for service**

1. One way to be ready is to watch ourselves.
2. Instead of living selfish lives of sin, God says as we await the future we live in service now.

3. Service happens whenever we put our faith into action, whether that is work in the church, or helping a person on the street.

4. We show our faith in God, when we love others. That is the service God calls for now.

C. Jesus also says, "**Be dressed ready for service AND KEEP YOUR LAMPS BURNING,**

1. We keep our lamps burning because we are looking for something, looking for God in our lives.

2. You see, God is not just in our past blessings.

3. God is not just in our future.

4. God is in our lives today, forgiving, guiding, strengthening, giving opportunities to serve.

III. Please consider how God is here right now.

A. He is here tonight in His Word and worship.

1. By the Lord's supper He is forgiving us for past sins, and strengthening us in the reality of His love.

2. By His word He is guiding us for the future.

3. But, God is not just in the past, or future, but here right now, exactly what we need.

B. God is here in the people around us.

1. Everyone here tonight is created by God, and a child of God, and an opportunity for us to show our love for the Lord, by loving others.

2. But this is true at all times. Whether we are with a loved one, or an enemy, God is present, giving us an opportunity to serve.

C. God is also in the situations we face.

1. Are you going to a party tonight. God is there? Keep your lamps burning and look for an opportunity to serve Him, and His people.

2. Will you go to work this week? Believe it or not, God is there, giving you an opportunity to witness to him with words and actions of faith and love.

3. Will you spend time at home with a family this week? It may seem impossible, but God is there giving you opportunities to live in His love by faith and love and service.

CONCLUSION - When you drive, it is important not to just focus ahead, or behind, but to keep your focus on where the car is, in relation to what is in front, and what is behind.

As we journey through life, it is important that we see God's forgiveness, and love, and presence in our lives now, so we are ready for the future of heaven. Jesus says, <sup>35</sup> "**Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning,**