

Monday Morning Rewind – October 6, 2008

Good morning! As you begin your weekly routine today, I've got two words for you...*keep watch*. The words aren't mine. They come from Jesus and are directed to those who are waiting and determined to be ready for His coming.

On Sabbath we began a new series entitled, "Parables of Preparation." In the gospel of Matthew Jesus gives us five parables about His coming. It's clear that He gave these stories to teach us what He meant when He said to be ready. The parables, each one building on the ones before it, teach us how are we to live prepared and ready for Jesus to come whether His coming is five minutes, five months, five years, or five decades from now. Whether there's catastrophe or calm, terror or tranquility, panic or peace—we who believe can know how to live prepared and ready to see Jesus.

Before He launches into the parables, Jesus establishes two foundational facts about His coming and the end of the age: 1) Only the Father knows *when* it will happen (see Mt. 24:36), and 2) It will come as a surprise.

It is the surprise nature of His coming that Jesus will emphasize again and again in the parables. First, He compares the days of Noah to the days of His return (see Matt. 24:37-41). Though Genesis 6:5 speaks of great wickedness characterizing the days of Noah, evil is not the focus here. Instead, Jesus calls our attention to the *normalcy* of Noah's time. What were people doing in the days of Noah? In addition to being wicked, they were carrying on life as normal. "Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark" (verse 38).

Life was going on as usual then and life will be go on as usual at the end of the age. People will be working when Jesus comes. People will be earning a living, and going about their household chores. And the danger, even for Christians, is that our "hearts will be weighed down with...the anxieties of [normal] life, and that day will close on [us] unexpectedly like a trap." [See Luke 21:34]

In light of this, Jesus issues His two-word counsel to "Keep watch" as He begins the first of the five parables about preparedness. The counsel is right on target as He talks about a thief breaking into your house.

Rewind to Matthew 24:42-44 and consider these Five Tips for Burglar-proofing your Spiritual House:

1. **Know where you're vulnerable spiritually.** Do a personal spiritual inventory. Where can Satan gain easy access to you? Anger and unforgiveness are like unlocked doors to Satan. "Do not give the devil a foothold." (Eph. 4:27)
2. **Turn on the Light** (of God's Word). Protect the entrances or avenues of the soul—eargate, eyegate, smellgate, touchgate, and tastegate. Let the light of God's World illuminate what comes and goes from these entry points to your soul.
3. **Get solid doors.** (Sound doctrine) Hollow or vain philosophies can easily be kicked in by the thief. Glass-door Christianity is also dangerous because you can see right through it. See 2 Tim. 4:3 and be sure you are learning and establishing your faith on solid doctrine, not pop culture.
4. **Get organized.** Just as neighborhoods are safer when they form a neighborhood block watch, we as believers need to come together in Homes of H.O.P.E. (Houses of Prayer Everywhere) to form a spiritual neighborhood "watch." If you're not part of a small group ministry, prayerfully consider joining one now.
5. **Protect your valuables.** We can pray for our children. Pray the prayer of blessing (Numb.6:24-26). Keep photographs handy and "mark them" with prayer. You may not be a perfect parent, but you can be a *praying parent*. In this way, we are building an ark of safety.

The bottom line message of the first parable is: Don't let your spiritual house be robbed. As you go about your "normal" routine today, *keep watch*. Be alert spiritually. Be aware of what's happening around you. Despite the normalcy of life, Jesus *is* coming. Only the Father knows when, but in the meantime...*Keep watch*. –Pastor Randy

p.s. On Sabbath I challenged myself and all of us to keep watch at least ten minutes a day with our families. It used to be called "family worship." Is this too much to handle in our busy schedules? Can we give ten minutes to read a verse or two from the Bible (why not start with these parables?), say a prayer and "keep watch"? I'm challenging you again. Do it tonight. Don't worry about tomorrow. When tomorrow comes, do it again. But for now, just commit to tonight. It shouldn't be difficult to watch for Someone you love.