

Luke 12:35-40

Active Waiting

I remember as a child the absolute joy of Christmas. I was fortunate to have grown up in a family where Christmas was a time of joy, and though there wasn't abundant or even expensive presents, there were always a few special things. As December came upon us, the first thing my dad would do was get the Christmas tree and decorations up. I think my mom probably was the instigator, but I have to say some of those memories have faded. What I do remember is many times over the years where my sister and I spent the night in sleeping bags on the floor in front of the Christmas tree with the colourful lights gently wooing us. These days if I don't have a pillow topped mattress I wake up stiff and sore, but not in those days. When I was young it was all awe and wonder, and I think it was the waiting for Christmas that made it all the more exciting.

Now my parents didn't do Santa Claus, stockings, advent candle lighting, or other traditions that families may have, but that never bothered me. I knew that whatever presents I received from my mom and dad had come from their love and provision. The presents almost never got under the tree much before Christmas Eve, so there would be a lot of anticipation waiting for that to happen. But we had Christmas music playing, our little town would get the special Christmas lights out that absolutely glimmered and gleamed with snow softening the glow at night. In that time, most every one put up Christmas lights so going for a drive around town to see the lights was another tell tale sign that Christmas was coming.

Then there was the food. We knew Christmas was coming near when the Montreal smoked meat that had been specially ordered for sandwiches came into the house. I really don't know why that was a thing but it was. Also, we knew that our favorite Dutch treat "oliebollen" would be made at some point in the season. And when I was very young, we knew that Christmas Eve meant the special Christmas treat bag from my grandmother and time with many of my uncles and aunts.

As a child it seemed that every day in December we waited for Christmas to come, but we didn't just sit there and wait, all the things we did made the waiting interesting, fun, at times very peaceful, and all of it was done in a way that one might describe as actively waiting. This is the kind of waiting that the scripture from Luke is describing. Now I just recently clued into the fact that this short passage contains two separate scenarios. I think I always lumped the master and the houseowner together. But these are two examples of actively waiting.

First we have the joyous story of a master coming back from his honeymoon and the house servants are awake and ready to greet him. And surprise surprise, he not only

arrives home late but becomes the host, sitting the servants down at the table, serving them, sharing his wedding feast and treating them as honoured guests. They were ready, awake and alert, and because of that and the generosity of the host, they were blessed.

The second story as we noted, is that of the house owner who was burglarized, and his story might resonate with any number of us. Some of you may have that experience and so you can relate to this. Ken and I had an entire cargo trailer stolen from a yard site that had a padlocked gate. The trailer itself had special locks on the doors and hitch. We thought it was pretty secure there and as we were storing the trailer outside of Toronto, we rarely ended up out there to check on it. Imagine our surprise when we learned that someone had stolen it. Our sense of grief and feeling of being violated was more profound than I had anticipated. The trailer held our almost new washer and dryer, a number of Ken's tools, but most dear to us were the many Christmas decorations and special items we had left in the trailer when we moved across Canada, as our little apartment just could not hold it all.

I tell you that if we had known what night or day the burglar was coming, we would have been there, we would have made things even more secure, checked on it more often, maybe found a different way to store those things precious to us. But we thought it was secure. We became comfortable with how things were and where the trailer was at. But when we did not expect it, Ken found out in a conversation with a co-worker that the trailer, with the many things that were important to us, was gone.

Both these stories from Luke are about waiting, but not just waiting in a passive manner, biding one's time as you get lost in a rabbit hole of social media, binge watching television series, working endless hours, gossiping about the neighbour or family member, or sticking their head in a book. Not that these should be avoided, but maybe done in moderation.

These stories are about active waiting, the servants are ready and waiting, doesn't matter how late it is before the master, the bridegroom shows up. It is also about being vigilant against the burglar that comes unexpectedly. Most importantly these stories are about how we expect Jesus to show up, or even if we expect Jesus to show up.

And at one time I only read these stories in light of what is often referred to as Jesus' second coming. I still believe that will happen in some way, but it really doesn't matter when. What I think may be even more significant is that Jesus showed up in the first place and through the work of the Holy Spirit continues to show up in our lives and in the world everyday. This may be of value to consider and take some time to look at. More and more I am coming to understand and believe that God is showing up every day, at all times of the day, and we are so complacent, so unaware, so wrapped up in our things to do and places to be, whether it be taking care of children or going to your fourth doctor's appointment this week, that we just don't pay attention or take time to notice God.

We are not waiting for Jesus to show up in the smile of a child, the warm embrace from a loved one, or even in the compassion of a nurse who took a little time to make sure you were comfortable. We forget that sometimes Jesus shows up in us as we recognize that a doctor has just spent hours away from their family to care for others and we say a kind word of encouragement, or make the day for a teacher with a small token of appreciation on a regular Monday morning. We don't see Jesus in the toothless grin of a person living on the street, or how we might be the face of Jesus to them as we greet them with a smile and hello.

What I am trying to say is that if we are expectantly waiting for the Christ child, God come to us in the form of a little baby at Christmas, then we can begin right now to see Jesus in others, from the person in the pew beside you to the one who hands you your Timmy's or Starbuck's coffee through a serving window. We can look for God at work in organizations, in our church, at our work place, or place of residence.

God shows up everyday. It is our task to pay attention, to wait attentively, expectantly, and actively, for God to present God's self in our interactions and relationships, in nature, and in people, in nations, and in families. So don't be lazy or careless, complacent or self-satisfied. Stay alert and watchful, for God has always been present, is present, and will continue to show up day after day after day. Pay attention, actively wait and then when you see God, see Jesus in others or in yourself, experience the Holy Spirit at work, you will also be blessed, not with more possessions, or money, prestige or power but with hope, joy, love, and grace. Thanks be to God. Amen.