

*32“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. 34It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, 36or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”*

We were driving on highway 2 last Monday. Katie and I were on our way to see my grandmother who is in a nursing home in Clyde. I saw the sign for Route 101. I intended to take the exit. But there was construction – a lane closed – I was busy talking – and the next thing I knew we were a mile beyond our exit. How could I have missed it? One moment ready to get off – the next forgetting completely.

Keep awake.

She went to visit her son and his girlfriend. On the way she gave herself a little lecture. I won't criticize her. I won't say a word about the stud on her tongue, the rings on her eyebrows. I won't say a word about their having no medical insurance. I'll keep quiet about the messy apartment. But once she arrived the criticisms flowed. All through the visit hardly a kind word came from her mouth.

Keep awake.

I hardly know my children, he told me. They were growing up and I was working and playing and going and they were gone. I don't know where the time went.

Keep awake.

“But about that day or that hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware - keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

So what should we think about here today? The end of the world – Jesus' coming again – or about keeping awake through all the moments of a day - a week - a life? If Jesus' keep awake is really about the end of the world then everyone who has heard this warning up to now has kept awake in vain. Jesus has not returned. For almost two thousand years the watchman has stood by the door and that master has not returned.

So maybe it is a warning not to lose track of where you are on life's highway. You get rolling along and you forget what you have intended. The gathering is about love but all the preparations and worry about the food left you frazzled. The day was over and you had taken no time for listening and laughter.

The activity is for the kids - for their good, their growth. Then suddenly you are pushing and they are rebelling and everything is a burden. And a game for a child is no play at all.

Your daily work is a means to make a living – but like a cancer it spreads until it is consuming all of your life. If you just let one day follow another your job will grasp more and more.

Keep awake.

Jesus said, “A person's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

Jesus said, “What does it profit a person to gain the whole world and lose her soul?”

Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom of God.”

Keep awake.

Like that woman visiting her son, so often the very things we want to avoid are what we do. We are past the exit – another opportunity lost.

Keep awake. You do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn. What I say to you I say to all – keep awake.

Peter and James and John listened that day. Would they keep awake?

In the next chapter we read: When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And they sat at table, and he told them that one would betray him – all would abandon him – that Peter would deny him. He took the bread – gave it to them and said, “Take, this is my body.” He took the cup, gave it to them and said, “This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many.” Were they awake?

Later in the garden when Jesus pleaded for them to watch and pray – they slept. About midnight they slept until Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

Just before cockcrow Peter was swearing he never knew Jesus - three times and then the cock crowed a second time.

And at dawn they were taking Jesus to Pilate and the disciples were huddling in fear.

And no one had kept awake.

Not one. They all missed the exit – did the very things they did not intend to do – found themselves swept along by the events – out of control.

When it happens to me I feel like everything is lost. Every good deed and moment of faith wiped out by the moment of failing – of sleeping – of sin. Everything lost.

But keep awake and you will see another dawn. Women will come to the tomb and hear that he is risen. All the sleeping in the world could not hold him in the sleep of death.

Go tell Peter and the disciples. Go wake up sleepers with the news. All their fears and failings will be swept away by this news.

And all your fears and failings too.

Even when everything is lost God can save. Not even your sleeping can keep God from saving.

When the end of all things comes we will all be talking about God's saving. Eternity will not be the time for remembering the missed exits and the words that would have been best not spoken. You will be talking of how God has saved every sleepy one – every hopeless one – every sinning one.

Keep awake to that. Amen.