

Last Sunday of the Church Year  
November 20, 2022  
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church  
Luke 12:35-40

## **The Last Day: Be Prepared to Be Served**

Dear Friends in Christ,

I want you to use your imagination this morning. Imagine that there is a big holiday approaching during which many families will gather together around piles of food and give thanks. Not hard to imagine, is it? Now imagine that you are hosting and the guests are to arrive on Thursday morning. You have a plan to get ready for the guests to arrive. The shopping list is made and you have a plan for the days when you will start on the turkey and sides and pies. Part of one day is set aside for cleaning the bathrooms, vacuuming the rugs and dusting. You'll need to make up the guest rooms by Wednesday night. Maybe you will get out the good dishes and clean them up for a fancy meal. You'll need to set up extra tables and chairs too. There is so much to do, but at least you still have three days to get ready.

Monday morning arrives and there is a knock at the door. Surprise! Your guests arrive early! But the house is a mess. There is no food. Nothing is ready! Panic begins to set in. But these guests come into the house with dusters, cleaning brushes and a vacuum and clean everything better than you ever could have. They make the beds, bring out the extra seating, and bring out the good dishes. They've also brought food and lots of it, all prepared and ready to eat. You haven't done anything but stare in disbelief at what is happening. Someone leads you to the table and sets a plate of delicious food in front of you. And your guests continue to serve you the rest of the week.

Jesus is the guest whose arrival date is unknown to us. But when he arrives, he will serve his believers. Hear the Word of God from:

### **Luke 12:35-40 (EHV)**

*Be dressed, ready for service, and keep your lamps burning. Be like people 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. Blessed are those servants, whom the master will find watching when he comes. Amen I tell you: He will dress himself and have them recline at the table, and he will come and serve them. Even if he comes in the second or third watch, they will be blessed if he finds them alert. But know this: If the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. You also be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you are not expecting him.*

### **Jesus Will Serve His People When He Returns**

The servants waiting for their master to return should be the ones to serve when the master arrives. This is the natural order of things. This is what we expect. But our God rarely does the expected. For our Savior God is the God of mercy and compassion and grace. Jesus himself tells us that he will serve us when he returns on the Last Day. We've heard recently how Jesus will judge the living and the dead on the Last Day and how Jesus will bring trouble on the Last Day to those who troubled his believers in this life. And now Jesus reveals another aspect of the Last Day. Jesus comes to serve us, his believers.

It is against the natural way of thinking and certainly against our human minds that have been corrupted by sin. Outside of Christianity, this way of thinking is clearly stated. You must serve whatever so called

god in order to receive anything good in this life or the next. The better you serve and the more you serve and the more you give to your so called god, the better it will be for you. Your service is most important.

That way of thinking still clings to our sinful nature as believers in the one, true God, the Triune God. If I serve Jesus, things will go better for me now and forever. If I do enough, more than others, God owes me something good. My service to the true God is what is most important.

Of course, this is a backwards way of thinking about our service to God. For the Bible clearly tells us that God's service to us is primary. We serve because he served. We love because he first loved us. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden, God promised to send a Savior for them before they even asked to be forgiven. The Lord, in grace, chose to save Noah and his family. Noah's service in building the ark followed God's promise to save him and his family. The Lord promised to give Abraham a new land and a son before Abraham served the Lord by obeying and going to a land he did not know. God brought his people out of Egypt and through the Red Sea because he had promised to do so, not because his people had served him so well. The Old Testament is a record of how God served his people again and again, sending judges to rescue, prophets to rebuke and encourage, and kings to provide and protect. It should be no surprise that Jesus will serve us when he returns on the Last Day. Our God has always been serving us.

Jesus Christ, the one and only Son of God, is the clearest demonstration of God's service to us. The Father gave up his Son for sinners. Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, left his place in heaven to be born of Mary and live among sinful people. The One through whom all things were made allowed himself to be subject to human authorities. And he came to serve. He healed the sick, drove out demons, raised the dead and preached the good news to all. He washed his disciples' feet, served them his true body and blood with the bread and wine, offered his back to those who beat him, willingly suffered and died to pay for the sin of the world. He even uses some of his last words on the cross to make sure his mother was taken care of after his death. Jesus always serves. He will do so again when he returns, bringing all believers, body and soul, into the new heaven and earth to dwell with our God forever.

### **Be Prepared By Being Served Now**

In addition to the amazing promise to serve us when he returns, Jesus warns believers to be prepared for his return.

*Be dressed, ready for service, and keep your lamps burning. Be like people 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. Blessed are those servants, whom the master will find watching when he comes.*

Of course, we don't know when Jesus will arrive. We are supposed to be ready at any time. The wonderful thing is that being ready for Jesus to return is more about him than about us. It is not about us cleaning up our act or preparing lots of service for Jesus. Instead, preparing for his return is about being served by Jesus now.

For example, think about what happens on a Sunday morning at church. Some call it going to worship or going to the service or even the worship service. Others call it the divine service. Our hymnal calls the order we use for most Sunday mornings simply "The Service." This is an ambiguous term. Who is providing the service and who is receiving the service? Often Christians think of worship as something that believers do for God. We thank him, praise him, exalt him, pray to him, sing hymns to God. We

serve Christ in worship by telling him and showing him what he is worth to us. This is most certainly true for part of what happens in “The Service.” But the main service in “The Service” is from Christ to us.

He serves us with forgiveness of sins in the absolution at the beginning of the service. We give him our sins and he takes them all away. We pray “Lord, have mercy” and he serves us with his mercy. The Holy Spirit serves us as the Word of God is read and the Spirit enlightens our hearts and minds with faith in Christ. The hymns we sing are not only praise to the Lord but are even more singing the Word of God to comfort and encourage us in our lives of faith and keep us in faith even in the dark days of trouble. When we confess the Apostles’ or Nicene Creed, we are confessing all the ways God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have served us with salvation. Today he served a child by washing sins away in Holy Baptism. Next week we will be served with forgiveness in Christ’ body and blood. “The Service” is mostly God’s service to us and secondarily our thankful response of service to our Savior.

If you want to be ready for Jesus’ return on the Last Day, put yourself in situations where Jesus is serving you now. Sunday morning service is one of them. Bible class is another. Personal Bible reading and listening to an audio version of the Bible are more. Being around fellow Christians who encourage with God’s Word is still another. Jesus has promised to serve us when he returns. But why wait until then? Jesus has promised to serve us with his Word and Sacraments now. Be ready for his return by being near his Word and Sacraments now.

I don’t know if you will have a big or small gathering or any celebration this Thursday. I don’t know what kind of food you will be having. But if my relatives are watching today, I do know that I won’t be arriving early to clean the house.

I also know how our Savior serves us with the best blessings now and will bring to completion all he has planned for us when he returns. Isaiah gives us a beautiful picture of how our Lord serves his believers a feast of blessings now and into eternity. It even includes food! Let us rejoice in Isaiah 25:

*On this mountain the LORD of Armies will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food, a banquet of aged wines, with the best cuts of meat, and with the finest wines.*

*On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that covers all peoples, the burial cloth stretched over all nations. He has swallowed up death forever! The LORD God will wipe away the tears from every face. He will take away the shame of his people throughout the earth.*

*For the LORD has spoken.*

*On that day it will be said, “Look, here is our God! We waited for him, and he saved us! This is the LORD! We waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!” (Isaiah 25:6-9, EHV)*

Amen.