



(Year C) Luke 12:32-48

35 Jesus said to his disciples: 'See that you are dressed for action and have your lamps lit. 36 Be like men waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks. 37 Happy those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. I tell you solemnly, he will put on an apron, sit them down at table and wait on them. 38 It may be in the second watch he comes, or in the third, but happy those servants if he finds them ready. 39 You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what hour the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house. 40 You too must stand ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

Other readings: Wisdom 18:6-9 Psalm 32 (33) Hebrews 11:1-2,8-19

The passage given above is the shorter version of the gospel reading. The theme of readiness for the coming of the Lord is generally to be found towards the end of the gospel story. This is clearly so in the gospels of Mark (chapter 13) and Matthew (chapters 24 and 25). In Matthew's gospel the parable of the wise and foolish virgins describes the readiness of the wise virgins, who have brought oil with their lamps, to welcome the bridegroom. Here in Luke Jesus is still journeying to Jerusalem when he encourages all disciples to be ready with their lamps lit to welcome the return of the master from the wedding feast.

The disciple-servant must be ready for the return of the master, who will come and knock at the door. Such servants are declared blessed, but, in a surprising reversal, it is the master who puts on an apron and waits on the servants. This recalls the story of the washing of the feet of the disciples by Jesus in John's gospel (chapter 13).

Jesus is described as the servant throughout the gospels. In Luke's gospel he says to the disciples at the Last Supper: 'Yet here am I among you as one who serves!' (Luke 22:27).

The theme of constant readiness is developed by reference to the watches of the night. The second watch is from 9 p.m. until midnight, and the third watch from midnight until 3 a.m. The lateness of the hour underlines the sacrifice required of the servant in staying alert to welcome the master. A further short parable follows: the idea of a house being plundered once again encourages watchfulness.

The reading from the Book of Wisdom describes how the Israelites waited for deliverance on the night of the Passover. Christians have already experienced the saving death and resurrection of the Lord. Now we await his return.

Would it be accurate to say that I have my lamp lit to go out and meet the Lord?

Am I prepared to persevere in the life of faith with joy and hope?

We pray for courage for Christians who struggle with their faith.

We pray for the coming of the Lord.

