

32 “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **33** Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.

34 It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

35 “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. **36** If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. **37** What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

Stay Caffeinated, Stay Focused on Christ

During any commute it is essential that you stay awake. Anything can happen in the middle of the night, a deer may try to kiss your windshield, another vehicle may cross the centerline, or a tire may blow out and then you’ll really be awake. It’s generally a good idea to stay awake, stay focused and ready while driving. So how do you stay focused? Some people stop regularly, get out stretch and exercise. Others turn to food and sugary drinks. And still more resort to extremes and anti-sleeping apps on smartphones. But me, I trust the tried and true method that works for so many: coffee. Caffeine.

Jesus isn’t so concerned about what we do behind the wheel as much as he is worried about us falling asleep or falling away from the Christian faith. His concern is that in failing to keep watch will lead to our greatest regret and in the end we find judgment and not deliverance. That is worse than falling asleep while driving.

But what does being alert look like in the life of a Christian? Does that mean busy? Jesus is coming! Everybody look busy... No, but faithful and fully caffeinated we focus on the road. When it comes to the finish line we don’t worry about **when** it comes but we are more interested in **who** is coming. Stay Caffeinated - Stay focused not **when** Jesus comes but **who** comes and **how** he came the first time.

It’s nearing the end of Holy Week, the end of the trip to Jerusalem, and the disciples think they are there as tourists. They’ve just commented on the size of the stones, the size of the temple and how great it is to which Jesus responds, *“Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”*

It’s as if the engine has just started to sound like a ball bearing rattling around in the cylinder head. They don’t like what they’ve heard. All of the emergency lights are on.

They've gone from a comfortable position to standing on the side of the road in negative temperatures. Just think of the destructive forces necessary to level the temple. Moreover what will happen to the people? What will happen to them? Peter, James, John, and Andrew pull Jesus aside and ask, "When?"

Jesus responds, *"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Not even Jesus, in his state of humiliation knows the time of his arrival. Instead of when all of these things will take place they are instructed on how they are to wait, "Be on guard! Be alert!" It's like a man going away; he leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch."* Stay caffeinated. Stay focused on who is coming. Just as servants keep at it even if the master isn't watching or aware of what they are doing. Even if there is a long delay they are to wait and watch. Jesus then gives four watches of the night, When? That's not important. At a time when you don't expect it. Jesus doesn't answer the question when but he does tell them who is coming. That is all the when that you need to know to stay caffeinated and focused on him.

When we hear of the great tribulation we too might be concerned. The temple has already fallen but the world still goes on and we wait. We grow impatient along the way and like any child on a long car ride we begin to ask, "Are we there yet?" After long we ask again, "When are you going to come?" We grow tired, exhausted physically and emotionally. As we grow impatient we may even question, "Well, what are you waiting for?" When will you come? **It's the height of arrogance to assume that because we've arrived, since we are now on the scene, God should come and deliver all people.** But, that's how self-centered and selfish we behave when we only think of ourselves and our little world. When will he come? He doesn't answer.

And if we did know we'd probably go out and live like it's Mardigras (the day before Lent, the day before we have to stop sinning). In the meantime those who are well off and still have their health are hoping he delays just a bit. Heaven can wait. Because we get so caught up (especially this time of year with Christmas Chores) in serving ourselves that we become indifferent about who is coming and may even believe, "He won't come in my lifetime. I can do whatever I want."

Jesus reassures us, "I'm coming. Like it or not. Keep watch." He then instructs us how we are to wait. And as we look around and see more and more of the signs of the end we may even wonder, "Well, what are you waiting for?" We're ready. We're waiting. We're caffeinated. Are we there yet?

Just then God turns around and asks us, “What are you waiting for?” Don’t you understand the life of a pilgrim? We have a destination, a direction, a home and there are so many more who still haven’t heard or seen what God has done for them. So many fall asleep, grow careless, and remain unaware of what God expects.

Driving demands attention to maps, road conditions, luggage, tires, gauges. While we worry so much about the “When” - he’s more concerned “How” we wait, knowing “Who” is coming on the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

But that’s not intended to instill fear but comfort for those who are in Christ.

Jesus’ message to his disciples came on either Tuesday or Wednesday before his crucifixion. Jesus is preparing them for the road ahead as life is about to get bumpy. **He’s not here to instill fear but to provide hope.** Jesus will be arrested, imprisoned, falsely accused, and every one of them will jump ship. Jesus worked day and night to prepare them for what was about to happen but in the very next chapter they won’t be able to stay awake. They are drowsy, sleep deprived, and strewn about Gethsemane. In spite of the repeated warnings. *“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn.”* They fell asleep. **In the evening** - Jesus reassured them with the Sacrament. **At midnight** - they were all found asleep in the garden. **When the rooster crowed** - Peter denied Jesus and they all fled from him. **At dawn** - Jesus was handed over.

They couldn’t even make it past the second watch and that with the caffeine that Jesus provided. But Jesus’ didn’t fall asleep at the wheel even when they did. It didn’t depend on them. This didn’t depend on their ability to stay awake, their ability to do anything, but on Jesus and his work for them. Jesus was going to the cross. There he not only suffers for the sin of the world but he gives his perfectly obediently life. He was going to make them ready and prepared for the fall of Jerusalem and even their own death.

Jesus prepares us for the rough road, roadside problems. A road both young and old travel. It shouldn’t be a surprise to us. We know that in this world we will suffer. But we also have a deliverer, one who will come and take us to be with him. He wants us awake and focused on him and his work for us. There on the cross Jesus took the sin of the world - the sin of selfishly ignoring God’s Word, failing to take it seriously, and then looking at judgment day as just another burden that God has placed on us. Jesus is the one we wait for.

We wait for a God who never sleeps, a God who watches over all. He gives his Word and Sacrament to strengthen and equip us along the way. The caffeine we need to stay

awake, alert, and alive as Christians in this world. Knowing what he has done enables us to **live now as we will when he does return.** That means, we keep watch. The house in this brief parable is beginning to sound a lot like the church. We look out for one another. We look forward to his return.

Life may be bad. It may get worse. It does not mean that God has abandoned you. Whenever he may return, whether suddenly or in the distant future, our preparation is formed by his first coming as an infant and as a man crucified on a tree.

Stay Caffeinated. Stay Focused on who comes. You may be awake and ready for a tire to give out or an animal to kiss your windshield but you will never know when Jesus will return but you do know who returns and you do know for what purpose. Stay Caffeinated and focused on Christ. The one who stayed awake for you. The one came in a manger to die on our cross. The one who comes in his word. The one who will come again to deliver. Amen.