

Stay Awake

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[0 : 00] All right, Mark 13. If you have your Bible, open up there to Mark chapter 13. I'm thankful to be with my church this morning.

The verses we're looking at are Mark 13, verses 32 through 37. So let's read this. This is the words of Jesus.

He says, to my wife, of course, and I've even warned Mike in the past, if you're ever up here and you look out and you see me dozing off,

I promise it's not you, it's me. Sometimes, you may not fall asleep as much as I do, but sometimes falling asleep feels like the easiest thing in the world, doesn't it?

And sometimes staying awake feels almost impossible. It feels like I just cannot keep my eyes open. We've all experienced that. Our King, Jesus, is calling us here in this text to stay awake.

[3 : 06] To stay awake in anticipation of the day of his return, which is a day that we do not know when it will be. And he says, you don't know when it is, so stay awake.

In Mark 13, Jesus is speaking to his disciples because at the beginning of Mark 13, he said something that caught them by surprise.

As they're coming out of the temple one day in Jerusalem, one of his disciples said to him, look, teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings here in this temple complex. And Jesus said to him, do you see these great buildings?

There will not be here left one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. He says this temple is going to be destroyed.

So that got his disciples' attention. And they come to him and they ask him, hey, tell us when will these things be and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? So in chapter 13, Jesus is teaching his disciples and he's telling them about the signs of these things.

[4 : 11] Now the temple was destroyed in the year 80-70. So we know when that happened. That's a historical occurrence that Jesus was predicting at this time.

And so as Jesus is going through in chapter 13, he's telling them, hey, what are going to be the signs that tell you that this time is approaching? But he goes beyond that even.

And as he goes through in chapter 13, he also starts talking about a day even beyond the destruction of the temple in AD 70, the day of his return when he sets up his full and final kingdom on earth.

And there's a lot of debate about where in chapter 13 is Jesus talking about the events surrounding the destruction of the temple and where is he talking about the signs and events surrounding his full and final return?

There's arguments about where he's talking about what. But when we come to verse 32, and he says concerning that day or that hour, there's pretty solid agreement that when he says that day and that hour, he's talking about his full and final return.

[5 : 20] And as we think about Jesus talking about future events, there's a word, a term that he uses over and over again in chapter 13.

He says either, it's either translated be on guard or see to it. Either way, but it's the same word. In verse 5 and verse 23, he says, be on guard because false Christs are going to come.

Try to lead you astray. In verse 9, he says, be on guard because persecution is going to come. And then in our text in verse 33, he says, be on guard because you do not know when that day will be.

So as Jesus is teaching about coming events and he keeps saying, be on guard, be on guard, be on guard, another way you could hear this is Jesus saying, hey, heads up. Heads up, disciples, I'm telling you what things are going to be like.

Because here, as in most places in the New Testament, when we're learning about future events, the point is not that we can construct a perfect timeline so that we know exactly what is going to happen when and what corresponds to what and who should we be watching out for.

[6 : 31] The point is that we get heads up about what things are going to be like so that we know how to live faithfully. So chapter 13 is a big heads up from King Jesus to us as his disciples.

And in verses 32 through 37, he's saying, heads up, you don't know the day of my return. So stay awake. Stay awake.

Stay awake. Stay awake. Be on guard. Don't be found sleeping. Stay awake. So if it's so important to Jesus that we stay awake in anticipation of his return, what does that mean?

What does staying awake mean to Jesus here? Obviously it does not mean that none of us ever sleep physically. So what does staying awake mean?

In these verses we see three things about what it means for us to stay awake in the way that Jesus is calling us to. Staying awake in obedience to Jesus means that we live expectantly, means that we live diligently, means that we live in the fear of the Lord.

[7 : 42] Live expectantly, live diligently, live in the fear of the Lord. First of all, Jesus is calling us to live expectantly. Look at verses 32 and 33. Jesus says, concerning that day or that hour, no one knows.

Not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard. Keep awake, for you do not know when the time will come. Now one caveat to make here is that as I'm talking this morning and I talk about the unknown nature of that day or the uncertain nature of that day, I mean from our perspective, we don't know when it will be.

But when we say that it's unknown or it's uncertain, we don't mean that we don't know whether or not it's going to happen or that we're not certain that it's going to happen because one person does know exactly when it's going to happen.

It's the Father. And he has fixed a date on when Jesus will return and set up his full and final kingdom. He knows when it's going to be. And so as we talk about, hey, we don't know when this day will be, it does not mean that it's not going to happen.

It doesn't mean that it's up in the air. We just mean that we don't know. So the unknown timing of that day should make us people of expectation.

[9 : 03] We should be living expectantly. Our minds should be always oriented towards living appropriately in light of our King's return. The return of Jesus should always be in the background of our thought process, in our mental landscape as we're thinking about our lives and where we're at.

The return of Jesus is the sunrise that's always just about to peek over the horizon. And living expectantly in this way doesn't mean that we can't make long-term plans.

It doesn't mean that we don't think about future generations. But it means as we think about our lives, if we're living expectantly, we acknowledge that all of our plans are always provisional.

There's an old-fashioned saying that some people still say in conversation. They say, should the Lord tarry? As they're making plans and thinking about, hey, we're going to do this or that next year or this is what we're hoping for.

They say, should the Lord tarry? Now, of course, with all sorts of kind of Christian phrases like this, we could go overboard. You know, my wife asks, hey, what are we having for lunch today?

[10 : 19] I say, well, should the Lord tarry, Janie, we're going to go to La Fogada. No, we're just trying to have a normal conversation here, right? But there's wisdom in keeping that phrase in your vocabulary.

As you're sitting with your family, as you're making plans for your future, as you're thinking about the growth of your children, as you're thinking about career moves, as you're thinking about education, just always keeping that phrase in the back of your mind.

Hey, should the Lord tarry? Because there's a chance He might return before these plans come to fulfillment. So we live expectantly. When we live expectantly like this, it frees us from being ruled by the world's terms.

We're not always running the calculus of, okay, well, hey, is this a time where kind of we're in the clear and we're safe to pursue our own ends maybe? And then later, as we approach that day, we'll start thinking a little bit more about the kingdom.

Jesus explicitly wants us not to know when He will return so that all of our lives will be lived in readiness and expectation. We know what specific due dates tend to do for a lot of us.

[11 : 29] It gives us a date so that we can procrastinate for a long time and then the week before that due date, we're hitting it hard. And so Jesus says, hey, I want you not to know because I think when you don't know, it's going to affect the way you live in a certain way and that's exactly the way I want you to live.

He thinks there's something good that happens for us when we're living with expectation of His return. And for us, the return of Jesus is the amazing thing that's always about to happen. Every day is a day of anticipation.

So we live expectantly. You know what a super simple way to say that is? We think about that day more. That's what it means to live expectantly.

We think about that day more. So this requires of us that we give time and thought and mental headspace to anticipating that day. Staying awake isn't just kind of a feeling that comes and goes. Staying awake means that we're doing something with our minds intentionally. We're asking ourselves, what does that day mean for my life now? And you have to do this for yourself.

[12 : 44] Other people can't live in expectation for you. What does that day mean for my life now? If Jesus' return could happen on your drive home from church today, and if not then, perhaps on your way to work tomorrow, and if not then, then maybe when you're doing laundry in the afternoon, what does that do to your life?

How do you carry yourself? How does it impact your priorities? How does it impact the way you live with the people around you? Living expectantly means we think about that day more and we ask ourselves, okay, if that day really could be right around the corner, what does that mean for me right now?

Living expectantly thinking about that day more also means imagining what will it be like?

Practically, what will that day be like?

Have you ever imagined what that day will be like? You should. We imagine everything that we're looking forward to. If you have a vacation coming up in the weeks leading up to it, you're looking forward to it, you're thinking about it, you're daydreaming about it, when you're at work and you're thinking about how nice it's going to be to get away from some stress and if you're going to a place that's kind of far away, you might be thinking about some enjoyable weather or a great destination that you're going to.

You're just imagining, oh man, that's going to be so great. You're running it through in your head anticipating it. We imagine everything that we're looking forward to. So if you never imagined what that day will be like, it might indicate that you don't really believe that's going to happen, at least not in your lifetime.

[14 : 28] So my challenge to you this week is someday this week as you're driving around Kenosha, maybe you're on your way to work or school or maybe you're dropping the kids off somewhere, maybe you're on 75th Street or Green Bay Road or Sheridan, as you're driving around Kenosha, take a few minutes and ask yourself, what would it be like if Jesus returned right now?

Like right now as I'm driving. So maybe you're thinking to yourself, okay, so there's going to be a trumpet blast, right? So you imagine as you're driving, boom, there's a trumpet blast. You're like, what is going on?

And you're, okay, what is that like? And then there's light shining from the sky and you're like, what's going on? You're trying to look through your windshield to look up into the air and you see heavenly armies in the clouds and a rider on a white horse and you're like, oh, it's happening. It's happening. But what do I do? Should I call my family? Should I try to get home really quick? I think at some point I'm going to be like caught up in the air to meet the Lord, so should I get out of my car right now?

And right now you might be sitting right there thinking, Caleb's like, talking like really specific here. Yeah. We imagine what we look forward to so I challenge you this week to imagine what is it going to be like on the day that the Lord returns?

[15 : 59] You don't know exactly. You can imagine. You can read the Bible and get a few ideas and say, okay, what's that going to be like for me? How am I going to feel? How am I going to respond? And it's going to help you think through, hey, how should I be living right now?

In 2 Timothy chapter 4, Paul is writing to Timothy near the end of his life and he writes these famous words that we've all heard.

He says, Paul says, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. And then right after that, Paul says, henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

You see what Paul is saying there? Paul never saw that day. He died in faith but what he's telling us is that he lived his life loving that day.

Loving the appearing of his king and Paul says, God has a reward for me because I lived my life loving that day. And not only that, Paul's saying, there is a crown for all of you who live your life loving that day.

[17 : 26] All who have loved his appearing. So staying awake for our king means that we live expectantly. It also means that we live diligently.

Working at what God has placed before us. Look at verse 34. Jesus gives us a little mini parable to kind of help us think about, hey, what is it like for us to be staying awake? He says, it's like a man going on a journey when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.

We are the household of God. That's what the Bible calls the church. And our master Jesus has given each of us work to do. You see what it says there?

He puts his servants in charge, each with his work. He has delegated his authority and Jesus has delegated his work to us. So if you are a follower of Jesus, he has placed in front of you and around you good, meaningful, life-giving, eternally relevant work to do.

And it's not just your job where you're employed and it's not just any ministry you might do here at the church. It's comprehensive and it's unique to you. He has placed you in your workplace.

[18 : 42] He has placed you in your family, in your school, in your church, in your neighborhood to be doing good work. His work. He's entrusted that to you and to be awake in light of the day of the Lord is to be fully engaged in that work, in those areas of work.

Because just because they're before us and around us does not mean that we are engaged with them. So to be awake in the light of the day of the Lord is to be fully engaged in these areas of work.

Because our master has left us so much more to do than to just punch in and punch out at a workplace and then zone out on football highlights and hope for the weekend. He has given us friends who need us to check up on them, children who need full care and attention, spouses who need our support, co-workers who need to be shown what it means to work with honor and dignity and integrity and all of these are people who He has entrusted to us for us to pray for and to share His Word with.

So you don't need to wonder, hey, what work does God have for my life? You just need to look around at where you are because He has entrusted things to you in His household for you to do.

And the unknown timing of that day means every day here counts.

we have limited time to do what God has given us to do. No day is promised to us.

[20 : 16] We can't always put things off to the future. When Jesus tells us you don't know the time, when the time will come, He's also saying you've got to get busy.

We don't know how long we have to do the work that God has given us. And to be honest with you, for me right now, if that day is today, I don't think I'll be satisfied with what I have done with the work that God has entrusted to me.

There have been too many wasted days for me. And so in light of Jesus' words to us this morning, I'm saying, hey, I want to be awake.

I want to be working diligently at what He's given me because one way or another, my time is limited and I want to make it count. So we live expectantly.

We live diligently. Thirdly, staying awake means living in the fear of the Lord. Look at verse 35 and 36.

[21 : 26] Jesus has just told this little parable about the man who goes on a journey and so now He's applying it directly to His disciples and He says, therefore, stay awake for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening or at midnight or when the rooster crows or in the morning, lest He come suddenly and find you asleep.

So Jesus focuses in, He makes it really clear, He emphasizes the master can return at literally any time and you must stay awake because you absolutely do not want to be found sleeping.

But here's my question. Why not? Why does it matter if the master finds you sleeping? I don't think Jesus is here suggesting that being found sleeping equates to eternal condemnation. Jesus tells other similar parables that do have some of that kind of warning but I don't see it here. I don't think that's His point. So what is our motivation that would make us say, hey, no way do I want to be found sleeping?

[22 : 42] Well, it has to be that pleasing our master, our king, matters to us very, very much. His opinion, His assessment of us carries weight in our hearts like no one else.

In other words, we live in the fear of the Lord. Fearing the Lord means taking God seriously in your life. Taking God seriously in your life means living as if God actually is who He says that He is and living as if He actually is going to do all the things that He says He will do. Fearing the Lord means taking God seriously. So to live a life of wakefulness means living for the approval of your king. When someone is insignificant to you, their opinions and their instructions are insignificant to you, right?

It's just like, I don't care what you think. But when you have someone in your life who you really respect and you really trust and also maybe they happen to have a lot of influence and authority, you never want to let them down.

We've all had people like this in our lives, right? Maybe it was a teacher, maybe it was a coach, maybe it was a really great boss, but someone who we said, their opinion really matters.

[24 : 15] And if they entrust something to me, I never want to let them down. Can you think of people like that in your life?

To live a life of wakefulness means living in the fear of the Lord. We take Him seriously and His approval on that day matters more to us than anything else.

We say, man, He could come at any time. I do not want Him to find me sleeping. I want Him to find me awake because what He says about me matters. I want to finish this morning with a few specific warnings.

We've all heard of sleeping pills, sleep aids. In the pharmaceutical industry, these are sometimes called hypnotics or tranquilizers. tranquilizers. I'm going to go with tranquilizers.

I like that word. I want to warn us about three day of the Lord tranquilizers that will put us to sleep very quickly. Three things that deaden our expectation of that day, that distract us from the work that God has given us to do, and that trivialize the things of God so that we do not live in the fear of the Lord.

[25 : 40] three tranquilizers, three things that will put us to sleep that we need to watch out for. I gave the first one a funny name.

I'm calling it algorithmic online activity. So we all know, right, that social media and YouTube and Netflix and pretty much a lot of the things we do online, they're based on these different algorithms that these companies concoct, and their sole purpose is to identify what it is that gets us most engaged on that platform and then to feed that to us over and over and over again so that we are perpetually engaged.

The goal is that you always keep scrolling, always keep watching, always keep clicking no matter what it takes. so they'll feed us little funny videos or things related to our hobbies or interests or things that we're looking to buy or stories about celebrities that we're interested in.

And they for sure will feed us two of the most potent forms of this content, sexual content or political content, so that either on the one hand we keep coming back to feed our lust or on the other hand we keep coming back to get more and more agitated and worked up to feed our disgust and our outrage at our political opposites.

Algorithmic online activity will put you to sleep if you're not careful. It will deaden your expectation of that day. It will distract you from the good work that God has put right in front of you for you to do and it will kill the fear of the Lord in your life.

[27 : 23] Make everything else seem more important or more interesting. The second tranquilizer to watch out for is known, ongoing, protected sin.

When there is something in your life that you keep coming back to you that you know is direct disobedience to your king but you are not willing to address it, you're already asleep.

And now here's the truth, right? We know this. We all sin. We all have things that we struggle with for a long time. And really the truth is when Jesus returns, he is going to find plenty of Christians in the midst of some sin at that moment.

sin. But if there is sin that you know about in your life that you keep returning to and that you are protecting from repentance, it will be impossible for you to stay awake in the way that Jesus commands.

It will kill your expectation of his return. It will keep you from the work he's called you to do and it is the opposite of the fear of the Lord. So watch out. Stay awake. The last tranquilizer I want to highlight is the pursuit of wealth.

[28 : 47] And I said the pursuit of wealth because you don't have to have much money to be caught up in the pursuit of wealth. Now working hard and saving and providing for yourself and for others are all values straight from the Bible, but we know that we can get carried away.

We can always feel like we need a little more. We can start to feel like our security and our happiness is based on achieving some level of financial accumulation.

And we can sacrifice a lot to achieve that. And so we keep working and planning and maneuvering like crazy without realizing that we've totally fallen asleep.

And Jesus' return has no place in any of our plans or calculus and we have no time to engage with the various work that God has given us and numbers carry more weight in our hearts than Jesus' approval.

It's a tranquilizer and it'll put you to sleep. So be on guard. Stay awake. You do not know when that time will come.

[29 : 55] Live expectantly. Live diligently. Live in the fear of the Lord. I want to read the Lord. I want to read the Lord. I want to read the Lord.

I want to read the Lord. I want to read the Lord. To close, I just want to read two texts about that day to help generate some expectation in our hearts to wake us up a little bit as we leave this morning. The first one is 1 Thessalonians 4, 15 through 17. For this we declare to you by word from the Lord that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord will not perceive those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, with the sound of the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

Stay awake. Revelation 19, starting in verse 11. Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse.

[31 : 09] The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.

He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is the Word of God. And the armies of heaven arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

That's worth staying awake for. Let's pray. Father, some of us are wide awake, loving, appearing. Some of us are kind of dozing off and starting up once in a while, realizing we've fallen asleep, and some of us have been sleeping for a while. I pray that Christ the King Church would be a church that's awake.

[32 : 29] Father, by your grace, help us to see that day, help us to believe that day, help us to love that day. in the name of Jesus, amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Fingres CREAMS