

Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Some people like to live in the past, remembering the good old days. Some people spend their time worrying about what the future will hold. The really fortunate people are those who live each day to the best of their abilities. Most people go to bed each night expecting to get up in the morning. And that's OK, but we know our journey on earth is limited. One day it will come to an end.

Some of you know I go the Branson each fall because I love going to the music shows there. One performer, a banjo player by name of Buck Trent is in his 80's and always opens his shows by asking the audience how they're feeling. He wants them to appreciate life and being there for his show, and then he will say, "Well, You 'all woke up this morning on the right side of the grass!"

This morning's gospel is going to teach us how to be ready for our "journey" that we have before us when we leave this earth. Let's look at what Jesus is saying in Luke Chapter 12. "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men 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. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

The great American poet Dr. Seuss writes, *How did it get so late so soon,
It's night before it's afternoon. December is here before it's June.
My goodness how the time has flown. How did it get so late so soon?*

We know that life is short and yet we spend our lives as if we have nine of them to spend. We act as if life is always about to begin.
Life is too short to keep waiting for a vacation, a special occasion, or a better day.
Life is too short to sit around moping, choosing despair, worrying what people think.
Life is too short to complain about those you don't like, look for revenge, or try to change someone's opinion about you.
Life is too short to be bitter over things you can't change, want to go back to what was, or always do the same thing.
Life is too short to be bored, to always blend in, or to sit in the corner while the band is playing.
Life is too short to skip church, leave good words unsung, or be afraid to pray.
Life is too short to intend to live a new life, but never get around to it.
We shouldn't give ourselves to things that are less than God's best or surrender ourselves to the world values, because life is short.

Jesus' disciples hadn't figured that out. They act like they have forever. They worry about the wrong things, they chase what's unimportant. They run around

preoccupied with details, forgetting why they started doing what they're doing in the first place. But Jesus knows the time is short. He's on his way to Jerusalem to die. There's a crowd of thousands gathering, but Jesus says this to his disciples, "Don't be afraid. You've been given the Kingdom. God has given you life itself. You don't have to be frightened. Be generous. Give to the poor. Get yourselves a bank that doesn't need a bailout, a bank that can't go bankrupt, a bank you can bank on. "Earthly possessions don't matter much when you realize that your whole life is in God's hands."

"Stay awake. Keep the lights on. Listen to this story. Some servants are busy running around doing unimportant stuff, not giving a lot of thought to the master who's gone off to get married. But when he comes back, even if it's the middle of the night, what a celebration they'll have. He'll put on an apron, give them a seat at the table and wait on them hand and foot, because he'll want them to see how happy he is. He'll want them to share his joy. Are they ready? Do they remember why they work in the master's house? Do they understand the whole point is to share in the master's joy? To live in the master's love? Or are they busy with other things that keep them from seeing what matters? Don't be distracted. Just when you least expect it, God will show up."

God's pleasure is to give us God's presence. God wants this gift to be celebrated. God wants us to understand that through sorrows and trials, whatever comes, we're going to be okay. Christ calls us to amazing lives. Jesus tells the disciples to give up wanting more, share the wealth, be constantly awake for God's presence.

God invites us to live in Christ's way, knowing that our sins are forgiven, knowing that despite what we might think of ourselves or what others might think about us, we are deeply loved by the one who created us. The value of our lives is not to be measured by our bank account, not by how we look, not by our standing in the community, not even by the amount of good we've done, but simply by this: that God values us highly enough to give us joy.

I borrowed part of today's message from pastor, Brett Younger, who is a seminary professor and author.

Be ready. Wake up and understand that when we look for God, we hear the ticking of the clock and understand that every minute is filled with possibilities. Our job is to stay awake to everything that life brings us--so that we don't miss it when God comes.

Be ready. Pray for the ability to discern the presence of God, because life is short and you're old before you know it.

--Be ready and live every day as if it were your last, because some day you'll be right.

--Be ready, so wake up, stay alert, be prepared, light the lamps, get ready. Listen for the knock, answer the call, serve where you're sent.

--Life is short, so do what you love to do and give it your best. Whatever it is, if you don't love what you're doing and can't give it your best, think seriously about getting out of it.

--Life is short, so recognize that today is the only day you have, eat dessert first, read good books.

Be ready. So go to church and worship, stay awake, and sing.

Be ready. Life is short, so listen to the people you love, tell them how much they mean to you.

Be ready. Recognize that every day is a special occasion, do something interesting, have some fun, and choose to be happy.

Be ready. So forgive. Look past the faults of others just like you hope they will do for you.

Be ready. Life is short, so be courageous, take a chance, live so that when your life flashes before your eyes, you'll have plenty to watch.

Be ready to celebrate God's eternity, make time for the things that matter, don't leave yourself regretting things you didn't do.

Be ready, so be an evangelist, tell a friend how God's love has changed your life, be a person who talks about Jesus.

Be ready. Pray hard, believe in Christ with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength.

Celebrate the love of God, get a life, because it's later than you think and life is short.

Let us pray. God, you have given us life to cherish and celebrate. You take pleasure in sharing your presence with us. Show us what we need to do to accomplish your great enterprise of love. Let us always be ready to follow you. Amen.