

Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris at Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 29th March 2026.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility.



Don't Get Caught Napping

In a world where waiting can quietly dull our faith, Jesus calls us to stay awake and to live with purpose, expectancy, and active trust. This message explores how what we believe about Jesus' return shapes how we live right now, in the ordinary moments of life. And at the centre is a surprising hope: the master we're waiting for is the one who serves us.

RECAP: SERIES CONTEXT

Last year Jo & I watched the British crime thriller series, *Dept. Q*, which kept us in suspense right to the end of the 9th episode. The British really know how to do that genre well, so much so that we tend to binge watch a whole series because you just want to know what comes next.

We're currently in a series a bit like that, being deep in our journey through Lukes Gospel. Luke, the physician, the careful historian, the only Gentile writer in the New Testament, has been walking us through the most extraordinary biography ever written. What we're seeing is that his Gospel is the "unlikely" Gospel; it just keeps throwing up unexpected twists and turns — the poor are blessed, the rich go away empty, tax collectors become apostles, Samaritans turn out to be the heroes, and a baby born in a barn turns out to be the Lord of the universe. Luke is

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constantly surprising us. Every time we think we know who the good guys are, Luke taps us on the shoulder and says, "*Actually...*"

For the last several weeks we've been in a section looking at a few chapters where Jesus is in full flow as he walks towards Jerusalem. He's talking to massive crowds, warning about hypocrisy, greed, and anxiety. He's told us not to worry about food and clothes. He's told us the Father delights to give us the Kingdom. And now, after Aidan took us through a provocative section in Chapter 12 last week where the rich man was called a fool and we were given the challenge to be rich toward God, something most of us would rather avoid, Jesus continues with the radical nature of living in the kingdom of God by saying, "*Right. Now stay awake.*"

And what Jesus says comes like a good Netflix series, with a typically surprising twist.

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM WITH WAITING

We're looking today at Luke Chapter 12 Verses 35-48, and the theme of this section is one of waiting, and for many of us, waiting is hard.

I don't mean the thirty-second wait for your toast to cook. I mean the *long* wait. The waiting that stretches from weeks into months into years. The waiting where you can't quite see what you're waiting *for*, and life keeps moving, and the days blur together, and eventually you stop waiting and just start ... living your normal life.

I imagine we've all been there. Waiting for the perfect job; waiting for a relationship to happen; waiting for a diagnosis, waiting for the traffic to clear going through Greenlane, or waiting for some sort of breakthrough. At some point the waiting stops feeling like waiting and starts to just feel like *that's just how things are*.

In the story we're looking at today you have to imagine that you're a servant in first-century Palestine, and your master has gone to a wedding banquet. In that culture, wedding banquets didn't have RSVP's and a neat 6–10pm schedule with a dance at the end. They could go for

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days, so as a servant in a household you don't know if your master is coming back tonight, tomorrow night, or next week. Your job, as Jesus says, is to stay dressed, lamp trimmed and burning, ready to open the door the *moment* he knocks.

But, you're tired. It's the third watch of the night; somewhere between midnight and 3am. The lamp is flickering; your eyelids feel like they've been filled with wet sand. And you think, *"He's probably not coming tonight; I'll just have a quick nap."*

This is the moment Jesus is talking about.

THE TEXT: LET'S WALK THROUGH IT

Let's walk through the text as Jesus starts in verses 35 & 36, ***"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶like servants 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."***

The phrase ***"dressed ready for service"*** literally means to have your belt tightened, and to have your robe hitched up so you can move. It was a very different dress code back then. There was no active wear. In the ancient Near East, you couldn't run in your normal flowing robes, you'd trip over yourself. Being ready for service meant being prepared to *move fast*. Jesus is essentially saying: *"Don't be the person still looking for their car keys when the moment comes. Or worse still, in the group chat debating whether to go."*

And then comes the surprising Luke-ish twist that no one was looking for. Jesus says in Verse 37, ***"It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them."***

Stop. What? Let that linger.

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The master comes home. Finds his servants awake. And then, he puts on the apron. **The master serves them.** In any first-century context, this is absolutely scandalous. Masters don't serve servants. The rich don't serve the poor. The powerful don't serve the powerless. That's not how hierarchy works. That's not how *anything* works. But Jesus, who will go on to kneel with a towel and wash his disciples' feet, who will describe himself in ten chapters time as *one who serves* (Luke 22:27) is painting a picture of a master unlike any master anyone has ever known.

And the reward for the servant who is faithfully waiting and watching, well, it's almost incomprehensible for the audience to whom Jesus is speaking to, they will ***“recline at the table and [the master] will come and wait on them.”***

Luke is doing what he's done so many times. He's flipping the script.

THE THIEF ANALOGY: A BRIEF BUT IMPORTANT AWKWARD MOMENT

Jesus then, and I love this, throws in what might be the most unusual metaphor he's ever used in Verses 39-40, ***“It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. ³⁹But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”***

Jesus compares himself to a burglar.

Let's sit with that thought for a moment, because it's a bit disconcerting. Jesus, Son of God, Lamb of God, Prince of Peace, and apparently, a guy who cases your house. I want you to know I didn't choose this metaphor. Jesus did. I'm just the messenger.

The point isn't that Jesus is sneaky or threatening. The point is simply about *unexpectedness*. You can't schedule readiness. You can't decide to be alert for a specific unknown time. A homeowner who knew *exactly* when the burglar was coming would be ready.

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After spending considerable time identifying that he is the Messiah, and now as he points toward Jerusalem and all that has been prophesied about what that means, Jesus is here talking in the future sense of his eventual return, the kingdom of God fully coming to earth as it is in heaven; Jesus is planting the seeds of thought that he will elaborate more on in Chapters 17 & 21. And he's saying, we must always be ready.

This is not meant to fill us with anxiety. It's actually the opposite. Jesus is saying that the solution to not knowing is simply staying awake and being alert. He's telling his audience to live in the fullness of everything he's already said to them about who he is that we've read in Chapters 4, 9 & 10. That's it.

PETER'S VERY RELATABLE QUESTION

We then come to one of the most human questions in the Gospel. Verse 41, ***Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?"***

Peter is doing what we all do with uncomfortable teaching. He's trying to work out the scope. *Is this aimed at me specifically, or is this more of a general public announcement? Because if it's general, I can probably relax a little.* We ask similar questions. We hear a sermon and think, *Someone in this room really needs to hear this.* We read a verse and mentally forward it to the person sitting next to us. We are world-class at biblical re-gifting ... heard the sermon, didn't need it, forwarded it on.

Jesus doesn't answer Peter's question directly, but indirectly, he's saying, *"Yes. This is for leaders, this is for everyone."*

THE TWO SERVANTS: A TALE OF TWO CHOICES

⁴²The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? ⁴³It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. ⁴⁴Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My

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master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk. ⁴⁶The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷“The servant who knows the master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows.

Verses 42–48a gives us a parable within the teaching. A manager is put in charge of the household while the master is away.

- **Scenario One:** The manager does his job faithfully. The master returns, is delighted, and promotes him. Good ending.
- **Scenario Two:** The manager, and notice the word Jesus uses in verse 45, ***“The servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’*** He doesn't announce it. He doesn't put up a poster. He says it to *“himself”*, quietly, internally, and then begins to beat the servants and eat and drink and get drunk.

Jesus is using strong imagery not to scare us into faith, but to show us that what we do with what we know really matters. For the servant, taking his eyes off the master begins in a thought, a private, unspoken adjustment to his understanding of God: *“The master isn't coming anytime soon. I've got time.”* And then the master comes, Verse 46 tells us, ***“The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.”***

The faithful servant and the unfaithful servant are waiting for the same master. They have the same information. They're in the same house. The only difference is what each one decided to *believe* about when he was coming back — and that belief changed everything about how they lived.

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THE UNCOMFORTABLE BIT: MUCH IS REQUIRED

And then Jesus concludes this twisting section; in Verse 48 he says: ***“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”***

This verse gets quoted a lot, usually in contexts of giftedness and stewardship of money, and it is absolutely about those things. But in context, it's specifically about the knowledge of the Son of God who has been so powerfully revealed in everything that precedes this section in the Luke's Gospel. The servant who knew the master's will and didn't do it gets a heavier judgment than the one who didn't know.

And this is deeply challenging because as I'm generally preaching to the converted, we who sit in churches, who have heard the Gospel, who own multiple Bibles, who have access to more theological content than any generation in the history of the world — we are the people who *know*. It's an incredible privilege, and it carries responsibility. And I put myself in that category.

The responsibility is not just to put it aside in the *'I'll do faith on Sunday'* basket; it's the responsibility to be active in our waiting ... in words that are familiar to those of us who are part of Windsor Park, to do life and faith together. Or as someone said to me this past week after the last fortnight that we've travelled, to do life and death and faith, together.

APPLICATION

So what does this *'staying awake, or staying alert'* actually look like?

The disciples waiting for their master weren't meant to be sitting staring at the door, motionless, barely breathing, paralysed by expectation. We go back to the start of this passage where Jesus says, ***“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning.”*** They had work to do. The posture of readiness is not passivity. We wait faithfully in the ordinary things of life, knowing that Jesus is with us in the Spirit, but is coming back to fully redeem us at an unknown time. Think of

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it like binge-watching a great series ... you know the resolution is coming, you just don't know which episode. So you stay fully engaged.

Staying awake looks like living out in action what the knowledge of God tells us.

The question isn't, *What should I do while I'm waiting?* The question is, *Who am I while I'm waiting?* Because the faithful servant doesn't stay awake by willpower, he stays awake because he actually knows and loves the master. The behaviour follows the belief, so what we believe about the master shapes how we live while we wait.

So the real application isn't a to-do list. It's a question we ask ourselves, *Have I let the wait quietly convince me the master isn't coming?* Has that shifted, even slightly, towards asking ourselves, *How do I love, how do I pray, how do I treat people when no one's watching?*

What does that look like at 4pm on Thursday?

- Staying awake could look like choosing integrity when no one's watching at work.
- Staying awake could look like forgiving when it's inconvenient.
- Staying awake could look like showing up for community when you'd rather withdraw.

The unfaithful servant's problem wasn't laziness exactly. It was a shift in *belief*. He stopped trusting that the master would really come. And that shift changed him from the inside out.

Our wakefulness is not fundamentally about behaviour management. It's about belief. Do we actually believe that Jesus is Lord? Do we actually believe that he is coming? Do we actually believe that how we live in the meantime matters?

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If we do, and the vast majority of us would say we do, then we dress for action. We trim the lamp and keep active in living out the words of Jesus so that we're ready to open the door when the master knocks.

CLOSING: THE MASTER IN THE APRON

I want to close where Jesus begins, with that extraordinary image of the master coming home and serving his servants. The whole passage is framed by that image. We're not staying awake out of fear of a harsh master who will catch us sleeping and punish us. We're staying awake because *we know what kind of master this is*.

This is the master who left the banquet to come home to us. This is the master who puts on the servant's apron. This is the master who, in the fullness of time, washed feet and broke bread and said, "*This is my body, given for you.*" This is the master who, on a cross, served us in the most impossible and complete way imaginable.

The reason we stay awake is not obligation. It's love. It's longing. It's the posture of someone who has met their master and can't wait to see him again. It's aligned with what Jesus has been saying to the crowds over the last few weeks:

- Keeping the lamps burning is allegiance.
- Keeping the lamps burning is stewardship.
- Keeping the lamps burning is prioritising the things of the kingdom.

So: belt tightened. Lamp burning. Eyes open.

Because He's coming.

Amen.

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Reflecting on Sunday 22nd March 2026:

Last week Pastor Aidan spoke about what Jesus said about prayer in Luke 12:13-21.
In the past week, how has the challenge to be “rich toward God” worked out in your life?

These questions help you think more about this message. We hope they might be a conduit for conversation and reflection, encouraging us to wrestle with how this message might practically work itself out in our lives.

1. When it comes to waiting for God to act, how do I usually respond? Do I stay alert and active, or do I let life distract me?
2. In what ways does my belief about Jesus shape how I live while I’m “waiting” for him?
3. How can I keep my “lamp burning” this week in ordinary moments ... at work, at home, or in my relationships?
4. What does it look like for me to reflect the servant-master relationship Jesus describes - serving out of love rather than obligation?

If you’d like to chat with someone about your spiritual journey or anything else going on in your life, please contact us at care@windsorpark.org.nz; **we’re better together** and **no perfect people are allowed.**

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Below are some further resources that may take the message further and deeper and enable you to explore other viewpoints on the same theme. We also encourage you to engage with the preacher if there are further questions you have or if you'd like clarification on anything. Email info@windsorpark.org.nz and we'll direct your query to the appropriate person.

1. This message talks about the second coming of Christ, which is a significant topic of discussion, and often debate! In the link below, pastor and author John Piper addresses the question, **How do we prepare for the second coming?** This is also a transcript of the audio. <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-do-we-prepare-for-the-second-coming>
2. There are many views on end times (called eschatology in more theological language!). Below is an article that articulates the main views in the evangelical church. There are links to other resources at the bottom of the article, but be warned, this can be quite a rabbit hole for some people!
<https://corechristianity.com/resources/top-questions/what-are-the-main-views-of-the-end-times>
3. Matthew records a similar story to Luke in Matthew 25:1-13, The Parable of the Ten Virgins. Similarly, trimming their lamps was the sign of actively waiting for their bridegroom. The article linked below is called, **How can we "trim our lamps" daily?** and gives some thoughts about daily discipleship.
https://biblehub.com/q/How_can_we_trim_our_lamps_daily.htm