

Watch and Pray

"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." – **Mark 13:33**

Summary:

Christ calls his people to combine watchfulness with prayer because the times of duty, temptation, trouble, and death are unknown. Watchfulness requires spiritual wakefulness, attention, and discernment; prayer acknowledges that vigilance alone is insufficient without God's help. Since opportunities may pass, temptations may arrive unexpectedly, trials may fall suddenly, and death is certain though its hour is concealed, believers should live continually prepared and dependent upon God.

Outline:

1. **Receive Christ's warning**

- The believer welcomes the Saviour's commands and admonitions as well as his promises.

2. **Join watchfulness with prayer**

- Spiritual attention must be accompanied by humble dependence upon God.

3. **Be ready for opportunities of duty**

- Unexpected occasions to help, comfort, correct, or serve must not be neglected.

4. **Be prepared for danger and trouble**

- Temptation and affliction may arise suddenly, especially when we feel secure.

5. **Be ready for death**

- Death is certain, its time is unknown, and it brings every person before God.

Text

It is the language of Jesus, to whom we should always respond like Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." The Christian listens not only for His promises but also for His commands. He welcomes His words both when He offers encouragement and comfort, and when He reproves and admonishes. In doing so, He instructs us to be attentive.

We should first consider how to exercise caution—by 'Watch and pray.' Watchfulness means being wakeful, attentive, and perceptive, as opposed to being asleep, neglectful, or inattentive. Prayer is an essential complement to watchfulness; mere vigilance isn't enough.

We should be both proactive and humble. We must rely not only on our resources but also on the influence needed to make them effective, seeking it from Him who has never told Jacob's descendants, 'Seek ye me, in vain.' Additionally, consider the timing, which serves as both preparation and reinforcement, reminding us that 'ye know not when the time is.'

Watch and pray, because you do not know when your duty will call. Who can predict, when leaving home for a journey or just for a day, what chances might come up before he returns—chances to help those in trouble, comfort the weak-minded, oppose falsehood, or correct wrongdoers? These opportunities may never come again and should never be missed. Therefore, David said, "On Thee do I wait all the day," because he understood he might not know what the Lord had planned for him.

Keep watch and pray, as the time of danger is uncertain. Considering the enemy of our souls, the world we live in, and the sin within us, we can confidently say we are always near temptation.

Joseph, while in Pharaoh's court, grew accustomed to swearing by Pharaoh's life. Moses, the meekest man on earth, once spoke impulsively when irritated. Even in old age, Solomon's heart was drawn away from God by foreign women. Peter, right after serious warnings and heartfelt professions, denied his Lord with oaths and curses. Barnabas was influenced by the Jews' dissimulation. Paul, likely to be overly exalted, was bolstered by an abundance of revelations.

We are always at risk when we feel overly secure, since pride precedes downfall and an arrogant spirit leads to a fall. Happy are those who remain cautious all the time. Stay alert and pray, because the exact time of trouble is unknown. We are born for this purpose, so we shouldn't be surprised by our hardships. Who can predict what a day might hold?

An accident, illness, or loss—such as a family bereavement—can happen suddenly and without warning. As scripture says, “For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.” What then, if we are caught unprepared?

Watch and pray, because you do not know when death will come. The day of trouble might arrive, and the day of death is certain—it's the most solemn and significant day of all. Death does not end our existence but transforms it, shifting us from a mortal to an immortal state. Then, the dust returns to the earth, and the spirit returns to God who gave it, being judged based on our character in this life; for after death, comes the judgment.

God knows exactly when our end will come, and it could be any moment. Each of us must acknowledge, like Isaac, that we do not know the day of our death. It might happen in the evening, at midnight, during the cockcrowing, or in the morning. What is the wise response? Be prepared, for the Son of man arrives unexpectedly, at an hour you do not anticipate. Teach us to count our days carefully so that we can focus our hearts on wisdom.

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, *Morning and Evening Exercises* (January 5, Evening), first published in 1854.