

“Why Sleep Ye?” — A Question of Vigilance

Luke 22:39-46 (text: v. 46) [Questions Jesus Asks]

This is the night before Christ’s crucifixion. It is the night He is betrayed by a so-called “friend” and forsaken by His disciples.

1. **A night of CONSPIRACY.** While Jesus is praying, Judas is leading a band of soldiers to arrest Jesus.
2. **A night of COURAGE.** If you knew your enemy was coming to betray you, what would you do? Jesus was no coward. Knowing He is about to be arrested, He does not run and hide—Jesus goes out to meet them (Mt. 26:46). He offers no resistance or retaliation. As Isaiah prophesied 700 years earlier—*“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth”* (Isa. 53:7).
3. **A night of COMPASSION.** Even being betrayed the love of Christ shines forth.
 - To Judas— While Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss, Jesus still calls him *“Friend”* (Mt. 26:50). He still loved Judas.
 - To Malchus—After Peter cuts off the ear of the High Priest’s servant, Jesus heals him.
 - To Peter—If Jesus had not healed Malchus’ ear it was likely Peter would have been killed on the spot.

But, before His arrest, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him to pray in the garden. Notice **five things that occurred before His arrest...**

I. The WARNING to watch—*“Tarry ye here, and WATCH with me”* (Mt. 26:38).

A. The exhortation to *“Watch and pray”* is repeated in Scripture:

- Neh. 4:9— *Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night...*
- Mark 13:33— *Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.*
- Eph. 6:18— *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance...*

- Col. 4:2— *Continue in prayer, and watch in the same...*
- 1 Peter 4:7— *be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*
- 1 Thess. 5:6— *let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.*

About the only *watching* most people do today is *watching* television. We think nothing of watching “one hour”—According to the *New York Daily News* most Americans spent 5 hours a day watching TV in 2014.¹

- B. The “watching” Jesus calls us to is to wakefulness and vigilance—Be alert as you pray! Keep your spiritual eyes open, for the enemy is near! (1 Pet. 5:8).
- C. The disciples failed to recognize the dangers that were soon to come an hour later.

II. The WOEFUL rebuke— “*Why sleep ye?*” (Luke 22:46). “**WHAT**, could ye not watch with me one hour” (Mt. 26:40).

As a pastor is it interesting to watch some people trying to stay awake while I am preaching. Someone once asked me, “Does it bother you when someone falls asleep during your sermon?” No, as long as they don’t snore too loud! Even Paul had someone fall asleep during his preaching (Acts 20:7-11). There are people in our church who work hard all week... have children to raise... some work the night shift. I’m just glad they make it to church at all!

In a Jubilee service I attended down south, Evangelist Billy Kelly was sound asleep on the platform while his friend Joe Arthur was preaching. Brother Joe thought he’d tease Brother Kelly. He stopped preaching and called out, “Hey Billy, wake up!” Brother Kelly open his eyes and yawned. Brother Arthur asked, “Brother Billy, how can you sleep while I’m preaching?” Billy smiled casually answered, “Because I trust you!”

➡ Christ issued a “wake-up” call!

¹ <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/average-american-watches-5-hours-tv-day-article-1.1711954>

- A. A word of ASTONISHMENT— “**WHAT...**” Peter had vowed that he would die with Jesus—yet here he is sleeping. He could not even watch one hour with Him!
- B. A word of ADMONITION—“*Could ye not watch with me one hour?*”
1. While Jesus wrestled under the weight of the world’s sin—the disciples slept.
 2. While Jesus agonized in prayer sweating great drops of blood—they slept on.
 3. While Jesus prayed and the traitor Judas was advancing to do his devilish work—they slept on.
 4. It was the darkest hour of the world’s greatest crisis—but the disciples slept.
 5. This was the disciples greatest opportunity to prove their faithfulness to Christ—but they slept on.

➡ We are admonished to WAKE UP spiritually!

- Wake up to the nearness of Christ’s coming. Rom. 13:11
*Knowing the time, that now it is high time to **awake out of sleep**: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*
- Wake up to the plight of the lost going to hell. 1Cor. 15:34
Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

- C. A word of ANGUISH—“*for sorrow*” in Luke 22:45 means “to **His** sorrow.” Jesus was saddened to find His disciples sleeping when they should be praying that they won’t “*enter into temptation.*”

III. **The WISE admonition**—“*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*” (Mt. 26:41).

➡ They did not realize the temptation that was lurking before them!

➡ Jesus taught them to pray, “*Lead us not into temptation.*”

- A. Prayer is not only for provisions, but also for protection. Prayer is not simply asking for things you need or want—but also to protect you from things you don't need or want.

B. *Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*” The temptation in this case was to fear and be offended because of the Lord and to desert Him at His arrest (Mt. 26:31).

- But, because they were sleeping instead of praying, they were offended (Mk. 14:27) and fled when Christ was arrested (Mt. 26:56; Mk. 14:50).

IV. The WILLING spirit— *“The spirit indeed is willing...”* (Mt. 26:41).

- This should be a spirit of willingness in every Christian.
- If there is no willingness to engage in communion with Christ, there is a serious problem in your spiritual life.

V. The WEAK flesh— *“...but the flesh is weak.”* (Mt. 26:41).

➡ *“Their eyes were heavy”* (Mt. 26:43). They were tired and physically exhausted from the activities of the day. It was late at night.

➡ Three times Jesus had to wake them up!

➡ Before you are quick to call them unspiritual and lazy, consider yourself!

- How many of you have ever fallen asleep while you were praying or reading your Bible? Don’t be too hard on yourself— These three men were Christ’s closest human companions— His “inner circle”—The “cream of the crop.” If these three men could “nod off” while Christ is praying, it can happen to anyone! I’m not excusing them—Just empathizing with them.

I remember the years I was in Bible College. I went to work at Dikar Tool from 3:30pm to 1:30am. I got home about 2:00 in the morning and slept till about 6:00. By 6:30am I was on my way to school to be in classes from 7:00 till noon. I was back home about 12:30. I ate lunch, did my homework, and then went to work again at 3:30. I got about 4 hours sleep a day. During class it was all I could do to keep my eyes open. One morning on my way to school I fell asleep and rear ended a car stopped at a traffic light on Telegraph Road.

➡ **My spirit was willing, but the flesh is weak!**

Some people have a difficult time staying awake because of a sleep disorder called Narcolepsy. I have a friend who is afflicted by this illness. He falls asleep at the drop of a hat—He can't help it. He just nods off anytime or anyplace—Sometimes even standing up. One time I was at his house helping him assemble a pool table. He was under the table securing the legs using a screw driver while I was working on top. After several minutes I said something to him, but he did not answer. I looked under the table and he was laying on his back sound asleep while still holding the screw driver on a screw he screwing in. I tapped him on his foot and he suddenly woke up like nothing happened.

HUMOR: I heard about one pastor who was annoyed by one of his elderly members who fell asleep during his sermon every Sunday. After a service one Sunday, this pastor made a deal with the old man's grandson. He told the boy if he could keep his grandfather awake he would pay him a dollar each week. This worked for two weeks—the old man stayed alert and listened to the sermons. However, on the third Sunday there he was again, sound asleep during the sermon. After the service the pastor called the boy aside and asked, "Didn't I promise you a dollar a week to keep your grandfather awake?" "Yes, but Grandpa gives me two dollars not to disturb him."

➡ Why is it so hard for us to “pay attention” when it comes to spiritual matters? **BECAUSE**—The flesh wars against the things of the spirit—True in prayer... service... Bible study... witnessing... etc.

SUMMATION: There were two men in the group of 13 that night who saw no sleep—Both Jesus and Judas were wide awake. What kept them awake? Both had stimulus to keep them awake—They were both on a mission!

Jesus asks, “*Could ye not watch with me one hour?*” How much time are you spending in communion with Jesus each day? How does the time you spend watching TV compare with the time you spend watching with Jesus?