
Festival of Christ the King Message
Mark 13:32-37
November 25, 2018
“Working the Night Shift”

When I was in college, I worked the night shift at a Super 8 hotel – weekends from 11:00 PM to 7:00 AM. The job didn't pay much but it saved me a lot of money because for two years it pretty much eliminated my social life! By the time I arrived most people had checked in and nestled all snug in their beds. So the hardest part of the job was staying awake for it. My official title was “night auditor” which meant I had to summarize the day's transactions and get things ready for the start of business the next morning. Some nights that might take 3 hours – others less than 2.

So if you have 8 hours to get 2-3 hours work done – and you're working when your body is telling you it wants to be sleeping, you better have a good supply of “No Doz” tablets on hand. I'd start the accounting about 1:00 AM and pray it kept me awake - good luck with that though given the stimulating nature of bookkeeping! Unless there was a late night pizza delivery it was me and the adding machine till morning's light.

The only time I remember not struggling through a shift is when I would arrive and be told the owner of the hotel was staying overnight. Then I'd do most anything - pace the lobby, sort magazines or check the room key inventory – to stay awake. The even remote chance said owner would check up on his hired hand or was a night owl and might come in the front door at 2:00 AM had an enlivening effect on me.

Enlivening is what Jesus the King – the owner of the house in our story from Mark is after. Jesus is portrayed an owner who might come through the door at any time. I could accept this cautionary tale about being ready in your faith life, or ready for the end of your life, minding your spiritual p's and q's so to speak, if I hadn't known how hard it was to stay awake for long stretches in the middle of the night. I would get it if Jesus said pick up the house in case you get an unexpected guest or have things in order for the next morning before bed– clothes picked out, coffee grounds measured out, etc. - but not stay up all night waiting for that potential guest.

What does Jesus have against sleep? What does this lesson of the householder mean? Live well, and by well Jesus means compassionately, usefully, and yes, expectantly. Solace can be had in the fact that even Jesus doesn't know when he will come – sent to *“judge the living and the dead”*. What I take that to mean is we don't wait and watch by ourselves much as long nights of the soul might want us to believe – Jesus the King is up too, watching and waiting and praying with us. If the owner of the hotel I worked at was in the next room working with me instead of out on the town or in comfortable slumber content to pay me a few bucks to keep his property running, that would have meant something to me.

Jesus the King is the like a householder, yes but also like the one of whom the Psalmist wrote when he said *“he who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep – the sun will not harm you by day nor the moon by night”*. The King is coming, but the King is kind and very good.
AMEN

