

Holding On for the Win

Luke 12:35-40 (12/31/21)

Introduction

Woody Hayes, who coached The Ohio State football team from 1951-1978 and won 5 National Championships, 13 Big 10 Titles and had a record of 205-61-10, was known for his “three-yards-and-a-cloud-of-dust” style of play. In other words, they were going to line up, run the ball right at you, and rely on their strength to get them down the field to score points and win the game. This worked well in the 50’s and 60’s, but in the 70’s the game of college football began to change. The forward pass became more widely used and winning teams relied on the big play to score points quickly. However, most coaches still recognize that a conservative running game is safer, and once they get a lead, teams tend to get more conservative to “protect the lead.” If they start this too soon, many times, they end up losing the momentum, the lead, and the game. Can this shed some light on what Jesus is saying in our text (**Luke 12:35-40**)?

Waiting & Being Ready

When we think of “waiting”, what comes to mind? For most of us, it would be something like sitting in the waiting room of the doctor’s office or being put on hold on the phone. Waiting seems to be trying to find ways to pass time before something important occurs. When a team is trying to “protect the lead”, they are waiting for the clock to expire and the game to be over. In our waiting for the Bridegroom’s return, are we merely passing time, waiting for the clock of history to expire? It seems that way when we use the “Glory Train” analogy. We have our tickets punched, riding the train bound for glory. The train is doing all the work and we are sitting comfortably in the coach, waiting to get to the end of the line.

Attitude & Lifestyle

The first phrase of our reading tells us that’s not what Jesus is talking about. Jesus says, “*Stay dressed for action*” or in older translations, “*Let your loins be girded*” (**Luke 12:35**). Cyril of Alexandria said, “The girding of our loins signifies the readiness of the mind to work hard in everything praiseworthy. ... The lamp apparently represents the wakefulness of the mind and intellectual cheerfulness.” Waiting is an attitude of being ready to serve cheerfully and joyfully. In this respect, a better picture of “waiting” would be a waiter or waitress ready to take your order and serve your meal. Waiting on the Lord is an attitude and lifestyle of cheerful service.

Victors’ Mindset

We can also get an idea of what kind of mindset we are to have as we “wait” from St. Paul’s words in **Romans 8**. *If God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)*? He wants us to have the mindset of a champion. He doesn’t deny bad things happen, such as *tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword (Romans 8:35)*. But, because God justifies us through Jesus Christ, and Christ mediates for us, none of these things can separate us from the love of Christ. In fact, because of His love for us, *we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37)*. We have nothing

to fear in this physical world or the spiritual world, either now or tomorrow (**v. 38-39**). We can have the mindset of champions because in Christ, we are champions.

Play Like a Champion

At the end of the tunnel where the team comes out onto the field at Notre Dame, there is a sign overhead and all the players reach up and slap that sign as they run by, signifying that they believe it and will live by it. The sign reads: “Play like a champion today.” No team has ever won every game, but the attitude with which you play determines how you will play and, to a large part, the outcome of the game. If you go into a game thinking you will lose, you’ll play like you expect to lose, and most likely, you will be right. But if you play like a champion, your chances of winning improve dramatically. How can we “play like a champion?” What are some things we can do?

Ready for His Return

We play like a champion when we are ready for His return. Those who believe in Jesus as their Savior and Lord are ready. There is no second-guessing, no wondering if you’re “good enough.” By the way, you aren’t good enough—no one is. To be ready is to be clothed in Christ’s righteousness, which is made available by His blood shed on the cross of Calvary and received through faith in Him.

Dressed for Action

As we mentioned earlier, we are to be dressed for action, or prepared for battle. If you underestimate your foe and think it’s going to be a cakewalk, you’re setting yourself up for failure. We are dressed for action when we spend time in prayer, confessing our sins to God, receiving His absolution, thanking Him for all He’s done, and taking our needs to Him. Another part of being dressed for action is spending time in His Word, listening to His voice.

Means of Grace

God has chosen a way to make us ready. He has given us His means of grace—Word and Sacrament. This is how He gives us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. God communicates faith to us by His Word. When that Word is added to the water of Baptism, that Baptism becomes the means by which God creates faith in us and makes us His children. When His Word is added to the bread and wine of Communion, He gives His body and blood with the bread and wine, giving us forgiveness of sins and strengthening our faith. When we deny ourselves these gifts, we despise His grace and are losing our grip on the game. When we gather to receive these gifts, we are **HOLDING ON FOR THE WIN**.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
