

Text: Jude 20-25

Theme: No Sleeping on the Job

November 25, 2018

Growing up on a farm, I remember times when my Dad would give me a job and then disappear. A while later, he would come back and check on me. If it appeared that I had made very little progress, he would say, "What have you been doing, sleeping on the job?" Although we're not working for our God in quite the same way, our Gospel lesson reminds us of the need to stay awake and Jude, in our Epistle, tells us what we can do instead of sleeping on the job. So, today we focus on our theme: No Sleeping on the Job.

I. While we wait for the Last Day, God expects us to be prepared, to stay awake. A. However, it's easy for Him to find us sleeping on the job. 1. It's easy to be sleeping because everyone else seems to be doing it. If the person on either side of you this morning started yawning, how easy would it be for you to start yawning? All around us, people are yawning; they're sleeping on the job. In their minds, there's no reason to stay awake because the Last Day isn't coming any time soon. But what if the crowd is wrong? What if Christ returned on Tuesday? We may like to follow the crowd, to take the comfortable route, but our Gospel makes it clear that staying awake is a necessity.

2. It's easy to be sleeping because we're tired of waiting. When a co-worker promises to get important information to you by Wednesday and it still hasn't arrived on Friday, when that same promise has been made repeatedly with the same outcome, isn't it easy to give up, to get tired of waiting? For centuries, God's people have been told that Christ could return at any moment, but we've almost become deaf to their reminders and warnings because it still hasn't happened. It's almost like someone has been crying "wolf" for so long that we simply ignore them. When we ignore the reminders, we find ourselves sleeping instead of living wide awake.

B. Instead of sleeping, God calls us to action. 1. As He calls us to action, He says, "Build your faith!" Some of you may remember the movie, "Field of Dreams" or may have visited the movie site in Iowa. The basic premise behind that movie was, "If you build it, they will come!" Today, our God says, "When you build your faith, you will be ready when I come!" Building our faith is much like building a house. If you only work on it a few hours a month, will it ever get built? To build our faith, God says, "Look for opportunities. Make the most of every opportunity I provide. Believe what I say in My Word because as you do, you will see your faith-house grow."

2. He also says, "Pray with fervency." How many of you have ever seen a fervent, frenzied Christmas shopper? How many of you have been that shopper? Fervency calls on the Holy Spirit to intercede for us, to help us with our prayers, to keep us prayer-focused in a material-focused world. As we pray with fervency, we pray like we mean it; we pray with the conviction that God is listening and God is responding to our prayers. Fervent, Spirit-filled prayer believes anything is possible, prays for the impossible, expects the unexpected, and declares to our hearts with our "Amen," that God can do it and that we're ready and waiting for His next set of instructions.

3. As He calls us to action, He says, "Stay connected to your God of love." Jude writes, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." A couple months ago, a construction company cut a Verizon tan line which provided cell phone service to our area. While

the line was being repaired, people flocked to the Verizon store in a frenzy of silliness all because they were disconnected. Remaining connected to God's love keeps us communicating with God, in touch with God, and, best of all, we don't even need an iPhone to make it happen! To be wide awake, God says, "Stay connected because you never know what fantastic plan I have just around the corner!"

4. He also says, "Wait anxiously for Me to act." How anxious are parents as they wait for their son to step off the plane following a three-year deployment to Afghanistan? How anxiously did the father of the prodigal son wait morning after morning for his son to return? That's the kind of anxiousness we need as we think about God's next move. Rather than sleeping or daydreaming, God says, "I need you sitting on the edge of your seat; I need you ready for action because I have great things planned for you. Be ready for Me to act, to answer your prayers because, when you least expect it, I will step onto the scene and it will happen!"

5. As God calls us to action, He says, "Overflow with compassion." Twice in this short text, Jude mentions mercy as he says, "Have mercy for those who doubt" and "To others, show mercy." During the years of Jesus' ministry, how often was He accused of showing excessive mercy? How many of those who understood the parable of the Good Samaritan criticized the man for showing too much compassion? As God calls us to action, He says, "Be merciful. Be kind. Overflow with compassion because the more compassion you offer, the more others will see Me working through you and the more you will realize that your purpose for being in this place at this time is to offer compassion."

6. God also says, "Focus on getting the message out." Jude describes it as "save others by snatching them out of the fire." When Dr. Al Barry was President of our church body, he frequently repeated the motto, "Keep the message straight. Get the message out." As God calls us to action, He calls us to get the message straight, to know the message found in His Word. As we learn that message, He then calls us to action, to get the message out to our broken, hurting world. So many today need to hear and see the message, the right message, and our task, as one of God's people, is not only to get it right, but to bring another person along with us to heaven.

7. As He calls us to action, He says, "Believe in the 'Amen'." "To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." Believing in that Amen is to believe we can do what God calls us to do, that we can do what looks impossible when we believe God is with us. Believing in the Amen also says, "It's all about God. Your life. Your dreams. Your goals. They're all about God. Believe God is in control, that God is calling you, that God is preparing you right now for your next great task."

8. When you believe the Amen, you'll find that sleeping on the job is the furthestest thing from your mind! Then, as Dr. Oswald Hoffman would say at the end of each of his messages on the Lutheran Hour, you, too, will say with great boldness, "And all God's people said, 'Amen'."