



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH
FAIR OAKS RANCH

Day 18: Keep Watch

Matthew 24:42–44 *Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming... Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (ESV)*

DEVOTIONAL

Jesus gives one command more than any other about His return, and it is not “calculate the date” or “predict the season.” It is simply this: stay awake. Be ready. He deliberately withholds the day and the hour, and He does it on purpose, because the uncertainty is what keeps us watchful. If we knew the exact date, we’d be tempted to live carelessly right up until the final week and then scramble. The same way kids hurriedly clean up right before mom and dad are expected home from work. Not knowing means the only safe posture is constant readiness.

The Greek word behind “stay awake” is *gregoreo* — to be alert, vigilant, wakeful, like a watchman on the night shift who cannot afford to fall asleep. It’s the same word Jesus used in Gethsemane when He asked the disciples to watch with Him, and they fell asleep. That’s the danger He’s warning against: not open rebellion or disobedience, but drowsiness. Spiritual sleepiness creeps over us so gently we often don’t notice. We do not wake up and decide to abandon Christ one morning, we just slowly stop watching for Him, until the things of this world fill the whole horizon and eternity fades from view.

John MacArthur often observed that this expectation of Christ’s imminent return is meant to be one of the most practical, purifying doctrines in all of Scripture — not a subject for endless speculation about charts and timelines, but a summons to holy living right now. That’s the point. Jesus doesn’t tell us to watch a calendar with a sharpie; He tells us to watch ourselves with vigilance. The question isn’t “Can I predict when He’ll come, so I will be ready the moment He arrives?” but “If He came today, would He

find me awake, living the way a servant lives when the master might walk through the door at any moment?"

This is expectancy doing its quiet, cleansing work. A watchful heart is a holy heart, because the person who genuinely expects Christ at any hour simply lives differently. He keeps shorter accounts with sin. He's quicker to repent. He doesn't let things linger that he wouldn't want to be caught doing. Readiness isn't panic; it's the settled, alert peace of someone who has nothing to hide and is glad the Master is on His way.

TAKE AWAY

Jesus didn't say watch the calendar — He said watch yourself. Live today as a servant who'd be glad, not ashamed, if the Master walked in right now.

PRAYER PROMPT

Ask the Lord to keep you spiritually awake today, alert and ready, rather than drifting into the sleep of a distracted heart.