



EVE OF THE CIRCUMCISION AND NAME OF JESUS

New Years Eve

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

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Collect of the Day:

Eternal God, we commit to Your mercy and forgiveness the year now ending and commend to Your blessing and love the times yet to come. In the new year, abide among us with Your Holy Spirit that we may always trust in the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Introit:

Psalm 98:1-3 (antiphon: Psalm 124:8) – *Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

Psalm:

Psalm 90:1-12 (antiphon: v. 17) – *Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us.*

Old Testament Reading:

Isaiah 30:8-17 – *In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength*

Gradual:

Psalm 90:12, 14 – *Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Satisfy us in the morning with Your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*

Epistle:

Romans 8:31b-39 – *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*

Verse:

Psalm 103:17a – *Alleluia. The steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him. Alleluia.*

Luke 12:35-40 ESV

Author and Date:

The Holy Spirit caused St. Luke the Evangelist to write this gospel around AD 55. This discourse takes place as Jesus is making His way toward Jerusalem, where He will finally suffer, die, and rise for our salvation.

³⁵ [Jesus said,] “Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning,

- In the previous verses of chapters 11 and 12 Jesus casts out a demon, teaches a large crowd, and rebukes lawyers and Pharisees. Then, beginning in 12:22, He turns His attention to His own disciples to instruct them specifically. First, He tells them not to be anxious about the things of this world, for He will provide for them. Now, Jesus turns their attention to things with which they must concern themselves.
- Jesus knows that for His disciples the coming days of His passion and their lives leading the church after His ascension will not be easy. The Devil, the world, and their own sinful natures will constantly assault them in hopes that they will abandon the faith. Therefore, they must be made ready to face these coming trials. The simple picture Jesus gives them is of a man who knows he’ll be called into action soon: robes girded and lamp lit. In the same way a soldier would gird up his garments in order that he could run swiftly into battle, so the disciples must repent of their sins, cast off the old self, and receive forgiveness – the robes of Christ’s righteousness. So too must the disciples light the way of their lives by the Word of God.

³⁶ and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.

- Jesus words of readiness here echo what He says many other times: be ready and waiting for my return. This is of special comfort to the disciples who will see Jesus crucified and taken from them, only to have Him return three days later. As surely as He returned once, so will He will come back on the last day for.
- These words are not only for the disciples, they are for all the faithful. God is our Lord and master, whom we are privileged to humbly serve with our life and every gift He gives. The command, then, is to faithfulness, that we might “believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.” (Small Catechism: Explanation of the Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer)

³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.

- In a stunning reversal, the master becomes the servant. This is the nature of our blessed Lord Jesus. He, the very Son of God, humbles himself, taking on the form of a servant by becoming man, and gives us His very life as a sacrifice. All the while we recline at His table and receive the benefits of His atoning sacrifice.
- Jesus serves us with His body and blood for our life and salvation every Lord’s Day in the Holy Communion. He, both host and meal, comes to the faithful as their humble, yet exalted and risen Savior, and bids us recline at His table and receive again His holy body and precious blood for our salvation.

³⁸ If he comes in the second watch, or in the third watch, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!

- The night was broken down into three four-hour segments, beginning at 6:00 PM. The second and third watches are late into the night when those called to be on guard would get tired and prone to fall asleep.

- As we wait for the Lord’s return and the world comes undone around us, blessed are those who keep the faith and receive the crown of eternal life. Of course, this does not happen by accident. As Jesus has already said, we must be prepared for this wait. Yet, this is not some work of our own. He is the one who makes us ready by creating and sustaining faith in us by His holy Word and sacraments. Knowing this, the faithful of God are those who cling to these gifts and seek them where they may be found in the Divine Service. This is how God makes us ready for His return and keeps us awake as we wait for it.

³⁹ But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

- Here, the master of the house no longer refers to Jesus, but rather all those who are watching for His return.
- Although we watch and wait for His return, we do not know when Jesus will come to us. If we knew exactly the date He was to return, it is likely that we in our sinfulness would neglect our faith until the last moment and only then seek to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Almighty God in judgement.
- Instead, because we do not know when the Son of Man will return, we are called to be in a state of constant readiness; repenting and receiving His gifts at every opportunity.
- While is good that we would resolve to be healthier, read our Bible more, and be a more faithful neighbor, our hope is not in this world. No matter how great or terrible the last calendar year was or how good things are looking for the next, we focus on the hope we have in the life that is to come, through our Savior, Jesus Christ.

