

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 1st January 2023 10 am

2023 New year motto service – ‘Being ready’

Welcome to all.

Opening Scripture

Hymn CH 821 (867NCH) Another year has now begun

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Scripture Psalm 101

Children’s talk Being ready

Covenant Shared reading

Chorus MP 27 Almighty God we bring you praise - Choice.

Notices

Prayer time

Communion

Reading Proverbs 31:10-31 (page 667)

Luke 12:35-40 (page 1045)

Hymn MP 52 God sent his son, “Because he lives”

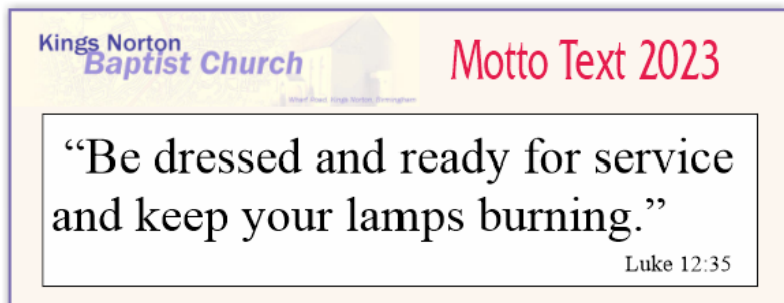
Sermon ‘Being ready’

Hymn MP 498 O God our help in ages past

Closing Prayer

Close

995 Jesus Christ I think upon your sacrifice



Exordium and Prayer

- What were the key events of 2022? The 24th Feb and the invasion of Ukraine? The Commonwealth Games, the Queen’s death - and a new King or maybe the World cup in Qatar?

So were some of the national and international events of 2022. But what about you? What were the key events for you? And as the page of the year turns, what will the New Year bring for you?

A new child into the family - as Dan is to expect, a baby sister, yes another! Will there be deaths, yes certainly, and someone in this room, maybe, me?

Will there be tests of your faith, certainly, yes both trials as well as joys. Did last year’s trials make you stronger in the faith?, did the Lord use them to train you towards Godliness?

Was it a year of growing in your love for the Lord? -or a year of distraction?

Did you **run with perseverance the race marked out for you?** Heb 12:1 the motto text of last year. Or did you falter, did you lose your focus and pace? It is **‘the race marked out for us’** for us as a church for no-one can live the Christian life on their own.

For us as Christians we are waiting, and longing for the Lord to return to take us to share in His heavenly Glory. It is better by far. That is our focus and our hope. When we think that way it makes us determined to make the most of the time while we are here, to serve our Saviour and the master we profess, to see others saved from hell and damnation and remade into disciples of Jesus Christ. That is our urgent business. That is it. Before all else, yes all else. In fact ‘all else; work, families etc is to that end as well.

So we read: **Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.**

‘Be dressed ready for service’

The picture is easy, you are a servant in your master’s house, he is away and is coming later, when he arrives will he have the door opened to Him, the meal prepared and all things ready?. Or has that servant not waited up, he or she has slipped off to bed. They are not dressed, no they are in their pyjamas, in their onesies and gone off to bed. They haven’t waited for him, they have felt tired, and gone on up. He comes home and all is quite. Nothing is ready, the food is not ready, the servants are not ready, they’re nowhere to be seen.

And the other picture **and keep your lamps burning,**

When the master returns the house is in darkness. The lamps have not been attended to and one by one they have all gone out. All is dark. The lamps have not been maintained, not been refilled with oil, not been kept going, and left to themselves they have faded away to darkness.

It is easy to see what this means for v40 says **You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."**

This is about the Lord's return. He is current in heaven - as at a wedding banquet, - but he will return. Because he hasn't yet don't be caught out - don't think he won't - and be found not ready - He has already said it will be when you don't expect, it could be late **even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.** The second watch is 9pm - midnight, remember they went to bed at dusk, the third watch was from twelve o'clock to three, which is late. So you will need to stay up, stay attentive.

■ 2000 years and he aint come yet go the lyrics of a 10cc song.

Peter says the world will mock, of course, but not the church, we must be expectant and ready for unlike the world for us it is the great news of Glory.

Why don't we hear much about Christ's return in our complacent, comfortable western church? Through the centuries and in persecuted countries God's people have longed for it, sung about it, heard sermons about it. [Valerie Barinov](#) It's almost not mentioned now.

So what causes us as Christians, those he has chosen and appointed to be servants of the kingdom to so slip back from our responsibilities and readiness? What causes us to no longer be watchful, be vigilant, to long for His return? What distractions are there? what is it that steals our hearts away causing us to take our eyes off the Lord?

Jesus gives the answer there in the previous verse: **for where you treasure is, there your heart is also** v34. You could say *where your heart is - there is your treasure.*

Is your heart, your first love, your prime love directed to the Lord Jesus? Do you love God above all else? Is He your treasure? is He? It is a heart issue. He is the God who made you, and who died for you to recover you from your sins, is he now your treasure?

■ Or do you really treasure your family more? Your health more? Your comforts more, Your status more? Your life more?

2a

Jesus makes it clear: "**If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.** Luke 14:26

Didn't Jesus say to Peter **do you love me?** In fact he said **Do you truly love me more than these?** John 21

Peter who had boldly proclaimed he would die for Jesus soon had his heart laid bare. He loved his life, his status, and his safety more. It was in the third watch that the cock crowed, and he broke down and wept. Does not Jesus now say to you and I "**do you truly love me?**"

If the answer is yes then we will be ready and waiting and longing for His return. Is that the truth of the matter?

Don't be a Peter. - Actually do be a Peter, - for he changed his ways and lived to love His Lord - and die for His Lord - (see John 21:19)

Interestingly it is Peter who pipes up at the end of our passage see v.41

✚ Yes His change of heart brought with it a change of priorities.

I wonder if you will make that change today, this New Year's Day.

A number have come to the church over 2022. Why did they come? Why have you come this morning? A visit for an hour may make you feel better, but if there is no evidence of saving faith with accompanying deeds, then don't think your presence in a church will make any difference whatsoever in how God sees you. It is not a weekly hour in Church but a love for Christ that he is looking for. If you have come to hear God speak, to seek peace with him and his power to change you to godliness that's good.

Let's be clear about this, unless your life and actions show that Christ is in you then you remain in your sins and will be treated accordingly. If that is you then seek Him for your salvation, turn in repentance to the cross this moment and seek forgiveness for your sins. Those who do show it by bearing the fruit of Christ-likeness. Something He can see - and so can we.

"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." John 15:8

God's desire is that you display the fruit of Christlikeness in your life. That is how you show yourself to be one of His disciples, His servant, that's it.

Dressed ready for service

Jesus says the mark of a servant is to be **dressed and ready for service.**

2b

Malachi makes it clear: **you will see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.**" Mal 3:18

It is clear to me that some here have seen the Lord's disciplining this last year. I trust it is clear to you too. You know who you are.

If you do know the Lord and have slipped back then there is but one medicine. It is repentance, change. Seek that and the Lord will help you.

If you will not - Jesus says: **"The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers."** Luke 12:46

There then is the strong warning from the Lord. That is why in his love he brings **hardships** to His people and tells us **to treat** them as **discipline** Heb 12:7. And why? So that your faith may be proved genuine. Remember the Lord disciplines those he loves. Jesus said **"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent."** Rev 3:19

What does that mean in practice? Firstly, give Jesus time in the morning.

- Seek Him each new day. Put that phone away, turn the TV off. Read His word – so He speaks to you - and then pray in response -speak to Him. A man or women of God should have knees like a camel!
- Put away all those other things, don't say to the Lord "I will as soon as this is done" No stop and give him your time now, he will then give you time enough for what you need to do. He will sort that important thing out. Him first. If you say 'when I have finished this', the Devil will have some other 'important' thing for you to attend to and so on.

The more you pray the more you will see things differently. The more you dwell with the Lord the more you will be concerned for the things of His Kingdom. That concern becomes 'what can I do'? The more you pray the more you will be in a state of preparedness to action.

Our translation has **dressed and ready to serve**. The AV has **let your loins be girded about**, it is very helpful. In the east they wore long garments; and gathered them up. They girded them about themselves that they might perform their service with greater ease, and with less hinderance be ready for business. In other words, they tucked that long and cumbersome tunic up into their belt so they can work, it doesn't then hinder or get in the way.

- It reminds me of sac races at school, so with a long dress or coat

The Lord has placed us here at KNBC for a reason. There is a work to be done here. We serve the Lord by maintaining His house.


3a

- Every true disciple should have an avenue of service. - There is the preparation of the Chapel: tidying away, cleaning, put out the chairs, preparing communion break and wine. Operating the PC. Those candles we've just had don't put themselves out and then back again.

Some are serving – and some are not. I have had the comment "Is it right that non-church members should be doing more than members" Quite.

- The church has secretarial/administrative work to be done, there are legal obligations to be met. We need to find church house insurance. We need to find new contracts for gas and electricity. DBS to process. There's ongoing maintenance and repairs. Can you oversee the rotating posters of outside? Or catalogue and promote the library. We need a new Webpage, more help with Crusaders, more help with BapChap Youth, Can you drive the minibus?, Playgroup is that your gifting? But what gifting do you need to leave leaflets and GN papers at the West Heath hospital, the Library etc. none but a servant heart.

We serve the Lord by obeying the call to make disciples. To give time to befriend those around, to visit, particularly to visit the family of believers, especially the elderly. This is for all of us. This is our reasonable service.

As Christians we are no longer like those around who are busy feathering their nest, and then while away the time punctuated with shopping trips. No, we, and we alone are those entrusted with the message of salvation - the Gospel of salvation the key  to heaven. Let us get on with it in 2023.

- ✚ May there be none of us who 'wait for his return' as if sitting in a station waiting room awaiting a train to Glory.

True God honouring service comes from love in the heart. It is from a settled conviction that my short life here on earth is to be given over to my redeemer. The Lord is the best of masters, and we should serve him gladly.

- ✚ Gladly – and Joyfully. This has been my experience in serving.

If the Lord was to come back today what would he find you doing? What about tomorrow morning? Or the afternoon? What will he find you doing?

- ✚ As someone has said: "Set your hearts upon the other world, and your expectations from that world. Provide yourselves bags that won't wear out and are never empty, not full of gold, but of grace in the heart and good works in the life; these are the bags that will last."

So more briefly - how do I keep the lamps burning?

It is important to keep the lamps burning in the Lord's house.

3b

Attention is needed for the light of God's truth must - and will shine out. The Vulgate Latin version says, "**lamps burning in your hands**"; as the word means portable torches that were held in the hand: What is this?

Is it holding onto, and holding out the word of life? As Paul says to the church in Philippi. The word of God is often spoken of as light or a lamp. Peter speaks of having **the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place**, 2 Peter 1:19 To do this we need to know it and stand by it.

The lamp could be my profession, which should be kept clear and bright. Jesus links your good deeds with your light when he says: **let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven**. Matthew 5:16. Through your good deeds there comes light, that all may see them, and glorify God.

Remember in proverbs that active lady **saw that her lamp did not go out at night**. Through her endeavour she **she can laugh at the days to come**. Prov 31:25

✚ Live like this and you can *smile* at anything the world has to throw at you - for you are ready for the Lord when he comes.

Jesus finishes this section by saying :

But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. Luke 12:40

In other words be constantly on the look out.

■ If you knew there was a burglar in your area you would stay up and be looking out of the window. I've been burgled, have you? Did you then go out and buy extra locks - 'afterwards' !

What you don't do is turn off the lights and head to bed.

You must be ready, says Jesus, be constantly expecting My return - **because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**" Luke 12:40

'Keep looking out' says Jesus 'I could come back at any time.'

Or as we read in Revelation Jesus says: **"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him."** Rev 16:15

So to conclude - 'Have your eyes on the future Glory'

If you are dressed for service now, then you will be dressed for Glory later.

✚ Grace will go with us into another world, for it is woven in the soul; and our good works will follow us, for God is not unrighteous to forget.

There is a wedding banquet coming, will you be there? In Rev 19 the angel says to John **"Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"** Rev 19:9 Are you? will you be there?

This is not to observe, but as the bride. In the roar of the heavenly host we read: **"Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear."** Rev 19:7,8

■ Married ladies here: How was your wedding dress? How much time did you have to select the perfect, best one, how much discussion? How much altering and tweaking to make it just right. Or did you find any old dress hanging in the back of the wardrobe? No not at all!

This bride is prepared for we read later she is **beautifully dressed for her husband**. Rev 21:2 See how she is dressed! What does all that bright and clean clothing represent? The righteousness of Christ in which all true believers are clothed? That would be a good guess but no, we are told **Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.**" Rev 19:8 These are the good works done while here in the body, in this world, serving the master.

Jesus says it is good to do this: v37 **It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes**. He repeats it in v38 **It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready...**

Did you notice in the middle is that bombshell verse? **I tell you the truth**, i.e. listen up, listen to this he is saying **he will dress himself to serve**, x2

The Lord God will serve you, - He will readily and cheerfully administer to you his joy, and you will share in all the glories of the other world (Mt 8:11, Lu 22:30)

will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. He, the bread of life will feed us himself, He, **the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be our shepherd; he will lead us to springs of living water**. Rev 7:17

The Arabic version renders it, "he shall stand to minister unto them": the phrase expresses the posture of a servant; who, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, is 'walking,' and who goes round about the table, whilst others sit.

The New Year starts today. Here is your New Year's resolution! **Motto**.

This is what you are to do in 2023, and 2024, and 2025...What will you be changing to make sure you are: **dressed and ready for service - and you are keeping your lamps burning?** (Luke 12:35) Do this and you will be ready for heaven.

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