**Coronado Community Church**

“Ready for Action”

Luke 12: 32-40

A sermon by Pastor Eric Smith

August 7, 2022

From 1962 to 1967 my family lived at 926 10th Street, just a couple blocks from the beach. That house was built in the same year as the Hotel del … in 1888. The house no longer exists, it went the way of many historic homes in Coronado. My parents didn’t own it, we rented it from Coleman Gray, a former mayor of Coronado.

Like many kids in town, I wanted to surf. So I bought a board… a 9’8” Greg Knoll (which would be an antique and worth a lot today) from Paul Free whose family owned Free Brothers Market - which was located at the corner of 10th and Orange – the present location of Chase Bank.

I was 9 years old, and a 9/8 surfboard was a lot to lug around. Coleman Gray heard of my plight and decided he could help and we (or I should say *he*) built a carrier - sort of a trailer with wheels in the back. It attached to my bike and it carried the board. Off to the beach I went.

I discovered that surfing involves a lot more than just catching waves. There is preparation and there is waiting.

Acquiring some foreknowledge of whether there are waves is helpful… you don’t want to load up, get there, and find out that there are no waves. Then you load up the board and whatever else you are bringing and ride to the beach. Then unload, hike across the sand and head for the water. Wax the board. Get into the water and paddle out. Then wait.

When a potentially ridable wave shows up, you paddle to catch it, which, for the novice, is not a certainty. After a few tries you catch a wave and ride it… if you don’t wipe out on the take-off (again that’s never a certainty for a novice) you stand and ride the wave. *For a few seconds.*

All of that anticipation and preparation to ride for a few seconds. But it is great! We’ll come back to this later.

**In our scripture passage** Jesus used an illustration about a wedding.

He frequently used wedding images to picture the coming of the kingdom of God. Weddings were (and are) about celebration and feasting, an event of celebration in the course of people’s lives in ancient Gallilee.

A wedding reached its zenith with the new husband bringing his wife home. The household slaves stayed up as late as needed, waiting for when the party would come.

In this illustration there is an extraordinary behavior by the bridegroom. *He comes and serves the slaves as if they are the masters and he, their slave.* Thislikely refers to a tradition we don’t know about that was tied to wedding celebrations. We just don’t know. But it fits the image of the kingdom of God.

Whenever Jesus used a parable or a story like this there are multiple themes and points of emphasis presented to his listeners. We say *a picture is worth a thousand words.* Jesus knew that too, and he created verbal images whose implicit and explicit meanings go far beyond the few sentences he spoke.

Our focus today is in this phrase…

*Be dressed for action… be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks.*

When the wedding party arrived you didn’t want to be waking up or looking for some clothes to put on. You wanted to be ready *right* *then*. So this informs us about spirituality.

We’re going to make several background assumptions…

First off – the Kingdom of God is not somewhere else. It’s there (it’s here) for us all of the time… accessible. Jesus affirmed it this way…

*it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom*

It’s not hidden. We don’t have to go looking for it. It is available to us and for us in every moment.

Next… there is awareness required on our part. We can be oblivious to the spiritual realm… and are often out of touch with it. Some of us are oblivious to it much, if not most of the time. But we can also be aware of it, really in touch, and cultivate our ability to recognize it, and embrace it, and live in it.

Now, given that, with us both recognizing and participating in the ongoing awareness of God’s realm, there are moments of spiritual opportunity that present themselves: call them windows… or doorways… a portal or a passage… we recognize and get it when we see it. (we see it using what Jesus called our *eyes to see -* our spiritual *awareness)*

*If you’re not ready you won’t see it.*

If you are ready you will see it and we can participate in the moment at hand in whatever manner seems best. Like the surfer who spends all kinds of time and effort getting to the right place at the right time so she or he is ready to ride the wave when it shows up. And when that happens it’s satisfying, thrilling, exciting, and brief. But that surfer experiences a connection with the movement of God’s creation that the mystics call spiritual ecstasy. We want to be riding waves in the ocean of God’s awareness.

That’s what can happen when we’re spiritually tuned in and ready. And since the kingdom is always there, these blessed moments can come one after another after another. Like waves at the seashore. There are unending waves for spiritual surfers to catch, should we be ready to catch them.

**Let me tell you another story.** I have shared this before, but we’re going to look at it from a different angle.

As a child I loved my Dad. I always wanted to be closer to him. Among the times that I felt closest with him were when we went fishing together.

For my 13th birthday, he took me fishing. Not just any fishing, this was deep sea fishing out on an albacore boat. We left port at midnight and would sleep while the boat went far out to sea … and then began fishing early in the morning.

Well, who could sleep? The roar of the engine, the pitch and sway of the deck, the salty spray as the boat chopped through the swells. It was the ultimate.

Dad stood beside me on the deck and said, *“Eric, I have something for your birthday.”*

Well, I thought the fishing trip was it, and I was glad for it… so I said, *“Dad, I thought the fishing trip was for my birthday.”*

He said, *“It is, but I have something else for you.”*

Then with his left hand he reached to the ring finger of his right hand and took it off. The Ring.

I had admired this ring my whole young life. It was beautiful. Solid gold. Big. Not like a wedding band, this ring was thick and had a simple but manly design on the surface. It was my father’s ring.

He gave it to me. I was blown away. It was without a doubt the absolute best gift I had ever received.

It was a bit too big for me, but I didn’t mind. I decided to put some tape around it when I got home so that it would fit better.

When we got home from that trip, I showed everyone The Ring. I was very proud. I always meant to wrap that tape around the inside so it would fit my finger.

Several days later I went to the beach with my friends. We always had a great time, and one of the top three things for a group of 13 year olds to do at the beach is to have a mudball fight. And we did.

We were slinging ‘em. Chasing each other… hootin’ and hollerin’. Running out to knee deep, reaching down, getting a big old glob of mud… packing it tight… and throwing at the kid who was running away.

That’s what I did… I reached down in the water, I got a big old glob of mud, and I threw it at him. And as I did I watched The Ring sail off my finger and fly along with the mud. It landed about 20 feet from me, in about three feet of water.

I raced over there as fast as I could go. But the little waves kept the sand churned up and you couldn’t see the bottom. So I dropped down on all fours and felt with my hands and feet all over the place where I saw the ring land.

But I couldn’t find it. My friends helped for a few minutes, but they got tired of looking. I stayed and looked for a long time.

I reported my lost ring to the lifeguards and left my name and address so that when it was turned in they could call me. I went back to the beach every day, for the next week to check. But it was gone.

In the meantime, I had to go home. I sure didn’t want to tell anyone that I had lost The Ring. So I put my hand in my pocket. And I kept it there all the time I was around anyone at home. I even ate left-handed so that I could keep my right hand out of everyone’s sight.

Ten days passed, and I was as miserable a 13 year old boy as you could imagine.

Then, one evening, my father came to my room. He said, *“Eric, can we talk?”*

We sat on the bed, and he said, *“Do you have something you want to tell me?”*

I blurted it out*, “Dad… I lost the Ring… I’m sorry, I was really stupid, I feel really bad, I…”* He stopped me.

He put his hand on my shoulder and said, *“Eric, I know you loved that Ring. Why don’t we think about it this way… just imagine how wonderful it will be for the person who finds it.”*

**That’s what my dad did to me**. With a few wonderful words, he gave me a gift of grace, to experience and to share for the rest of my life. It was a very great gift.

Here’s the thing I want you to get… *he was ready for that moment.* He saw the opportunity to say the right words at the right time. Even if he didn’t know the full impact of that moment, he knew it was a moment. I’m sharing it with you 55 years later!

That’s the message. Be ready for those moments. No one recognizes them all. Sometimes they pass right by and you ask yourself, *was that a moment? I think I missed it.*

No worry, there will be another… and another… and another.

You can be riding waves in this ocean of spiritual awareness… living the dream that God has for all of God’s children.

When you’re *ready* you are God’s chosen person to bless the world.