

“Stay Ready”
By Ken Avellino
Sunday, January 29th, 2017

This is a place that you can get loud. I get loud at home, and my family says, “Why are you screaming?” “I’m not screaming!” I was in Fox Lake this week-end; I was talking with a mechanic, and he was telling me, “Oh, when I go to my wife’s family’s house, they’re all so loud!” And I’m thinking, “He’s going to say these are Italians.” And, he says, “They’re all Italian.” I said, “Yep. I know, I know how it is.”

But, as I was thinking about the sermon, and, you know, I sent a text message to a friend of mine, and her and her husband have had a really rough year this year. She was injured years ago, at work, and her husband injured himself. They were having some bad financial times. So, I sent them a little text message just to encourage them. She responded back, to me, “2017 will be a better year for me, if I have to stay on my knees and pray 24-7. I have a great God and He’s not going to let us down.” I was so blown away by that, and I thought, “What do I want from God this year?” You know, for years, I’ve joked with the Paine family, and the brothers down there, Pastor Saniatan, and I’d say, “God’s called me to a warmer climate.” The colder it got out, I’d say, “God’s called me to a warmer climate.” I don’t know if that will ever happen. For that were to materialize, and, if God was to call me somewhere else, I don’t want to just go to go. I want to be ready to go. I want to be ready to preach the Word. I want God to use me. Savannah’s going to come up, and she’s going to share a Scripture that God gave me this morning. This message, you know, this week, I probably wrote about ten sermons, and I scrapped them all, threw them over my shoulder. And, it was good for that time, and it seemed relevant, and, “That’s good,” and I threw it over my shoulder, and every day, God would give me something new. So, this is what God gave me this morning. And I just wanted to:

Matthew 25:1-12 *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

So, this is what God showed me this week. God woke me up. He grabbed me by my shirt; He said, “What are you doing? Where are you? Are you awake? Are you alive?” He put His thumb in my eye, and He put a flashlight in there, “Is there anybody there? Are you awake? Are you real? Are you still with Me?” And I said, “God, I’ve been right there all the time! God, I told You, just give me a call if You need me. I’m right here.” I was a foolish virgin, and God showed me this: That I have to wake up. If I have a calling, and I know I have a calling, wherever I’m going to be, I’ve got to wake up. I’ve got to be excited. You know, I’ve have a guy who works for me, and, if he went any slower, he’d be walking backwards. And, I have to be ready. People love energy. They love to see people with energy, and if I don’t have that come out of my life, energy to teach God’s Word. Have you ever been in a study, and they were talking about some Scriptures, and you say, “You know, I used to know where that was.” Or,

you ever been in a conversation and you didn't know what they were talking about. Every time I talk to my accountant, I'm more confused than when I even first asked the question. God wants us to be prepared. And, you know what? It takes a made-up mind. My pastor said that to me a long time ago. By faith, it takes a made-up mind. If you're going to do something for God, if we're going to see anything done in ministry in our lives, if God's going to use us, it's going to take a made-up mind. A made-up mind to study His Word, to seek His face, to be willing to give of yourself, to give it your time. Like I was telling you, these sermons that I would write, and then throw them away, I learned a lot. I learned a lot this week because I became alive again. Because I was studying, I was praying, instead of putting something on the radio, that... This may or may not be relevant for some people, today in life: In order to learn something, I put on something spiritual, a sermon, a song, and it changed me, it strengthened me, because, I knew that, to me, this sermon is more important than it is to anybody else here. But, we have to have motivation; we have to trust God.

Now, the part of the sermon that was mine to share today was a Scripture, I'm going to use:

2 Timothy 2:15 *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

The Holy Ghost can't bring something back to our remembrance if we didn't know it to begin with. And, if we're going to rely on God, then we have to study, and we have to know God's Word. We have to be faithful. It just can't be once in a while, it has to be all the time. If God is the center of our life, we're going to be strong. I don't want to be weak. I don't want God to say, "I need to use you right now," and me to say, "Well, wait a minute, God, I'm not ready, I'm not prepared," because ministry goes by, opportunities go by, and we may never get that chance again. You may never see that person again.

So, there's a lot of things that, really, God shook me up this week. He made me realize where I was at. And, where I want to be in the future—not exactly sure where my feet will be, but I know that my heart has to be right, it has to be ready, it has to be strong. I have to be prepared all the time.

There's another Scripture that I just wanted to read real fast; it says:

1 Peter 3:15 *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*

And we have to have hope. We live in a world that, really, there is no hope. It's everything that is seen around them is the only hope they've got. We may hope in a new president, a new congress; we may hope in a sports team, but that can only take you so far. What are the things that are going to last, the eternal hope? I want to be saved. We can go throughout this life, and we can accomplish great things. We're made in the spirit and likeness of God. We have the intelligence. We can do a lot of things. And, so, we think we can do them without God, but, we did them because we are in the image and likeness of God. But that can only go so far, because, when it's time to meet God, when our life is over, there's some things you just can't do by yourself. You couldn't be that sacrifice; you couldn't be righteous enough, God had to be the sacrifice for your life. And, if you live your life godly, and let God take control, instead of taking it back, instead of being that foolish virgin. If you're a wise virgin, God's going to use you; He's going to spend you. It's all about your faith, it's all about the willing and made-up mind. And it takes a made-up mind. Jesse, it took a made-up mind for you to say, "God, I want to live," and, it's going to take a made-up mind for Jesse to say, right now, "I will walk again some day." And we know he will. So, we live in a world today where there is a famine in the land, and it's a famine of hearing the Word of God. They don't even know what they need, but we have that answer. And I want

to be where I need to be in God. I learned a lot, I was convicted a lot, and it was just a real blessing to me, and it showed me, I've got to be prepared every day.

God bless you. Thank you for your time.