

Be Dressed for Action, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 11070812
Isaiah 1:1, 10-20 and Luke 12:32-40
Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 12 August, 2007

Today is “Football Sunday,” a tradition here at Elon Community Church. It is a day when this congregation says, “We support you! We are behind you, we hope you win, and we hope you don’t get hurt!” Many of the people sitting in this sanctuary will be there rooting for you, not just when you play at Rhodes Stadium, but when you’re on the road too.

What Jesus said can be applied to football and to all of life. He talked about a thief coming in the middle of the night and breaking into a home.¹ That’s a scary thought, to be invaded. What if you were sleeping and heard something stirring in your home? It’s not a cat and not a dog. In Jesus’ day there was no 911 telephone. Jesus said that if the homeowner knew at what hour the thief was coming, he would be up and ready to handle a thief.

Jesus was talking about the end time, a day of death, a day when your soul will be required of you. Will you be ready? Is there someone who needs to hear that you’re sorry for something you did? Do the people you love the most know that you love them? Does God know that you have tried your best each and every day to live by God’s rules of justice and kindness and love?

My wife’s family has just experienced the untimely death of her brother David. He was sixty-three years old. That may seem like a ripe old age to some of you, but not to me. I’m sixty-three! David found out three weeks ago that he had two to four weeks to live. He had lung cancer that had spread into his bones. There was no way to treat it. Cancer in the bones is a very painful way to die.

My wife and my mother-in-law and I flew out to Chicago the next day to be with him and his family. David asked me to gather all of the twenty people who were in the home at the time to have a prayer. We all held hands in a circle, and we went around telling him what he meant to us, and he was able to respond. It was a beautiful and intimate time, but a time that reminds us of how short life is.

David lived a total of two weeks from the time he was told of his cancer, but he was ready for death. He knew what time the thief was coming! He had said his goodbyes and he knew he was surrounded by the love of his family and of his God.

Jesus was trying to get his listeners prepared. If a thief comes in the middle of the night, will you be prepared? “You also must be ready,” Jesus said.² If a wide receiver comes your way, will you be prepared? If a linebacker comes at you, will you be prepared? If a temptation comes your way, will you be prepared?

Jesus said, “Be dressed for action.”³ You know that you have to wear a helmet, shoulder pads, thigh pads, and good shoes. That’s being dressed for action. To be dressed for action means you have to be physically ready. You’ve got to keep your body in good shape by eating right and exercising and getting proper rest. That goes for all of us, not just football players.

To be dressed for action means you have to be mentally ready. That’s why you have all this pre-season practice in the heat of a Carolina summer. You have to know the plays in your head. You also have to know and anticipate the moves of the other team. That’s why you watch videos

¹Luke 12:39

²Luke 12:40

³Luke 12:35

of the opposing team. You learn what you can, so you're prepared. That's why you look for little signals, the eye movements, the body positions, so you can anticipate where your opponent is heading.

To be dressed for action means you have to be emotionally ready. Do you care about your teammates, your coaches, and your school? If you're out there only for your own glory, you're not going to be of much use to the team. There is too much me-ism in our world today. When a star gets a huge contract, the rest of team can become disheartened. You have to put the team ahead of yourself. Your decisions and your actions affect the whole team. For the sake of the team, you may have to confront another team member about what's right and what's wrong. Encourage and support one another.

To be dressed for action means you have to be morally ready. The Old Testament Prophets were not afraid to speak out about the behavior they saw around them. Prophets are not foretellers of the future as much as they are truth-tellers. They warn their listeners about the consequences of peoples' actions. Isaiah the prophet was a man who cared about God's law. He cared about oppression and he cared about the needy, the poor, the widows and orphans, because these are the ones God cares about most. Read your Bible and you will find that time after time. The behavior that God finds most offensive is behavior that hurts others, especially the poor and powerless.

Isaiah spoke out against hypocrisy. He spoke for God saying, "Don't come and worship me, and then go out during the week and cheat other people. I want to see justice. Take care of the poor and the widows and the orphans." Don't go singing and shouting "Jesus, I love you," and then turn around and go to war, and kill people who are God's children. Don't sing, "Jesus loves me," and then demand "respect" from others by acting tough. That's hypocrisy. God wants honesty from us, and God wants us to treat others the way we want to be treated. That's respect.

Learn to do good and seek justice! That's being dressed for action.

When you play football, you work together as a team! There are no individual stars. The glory for one recedes into the glory for all. Pride for the team gives way to pride for the school. This is a great school with a great football program. There are not many programs in the US that can boast a 98% graduation rate for their football players. You know that your coaches and teachers are expecting the best of you in the classroom and library as well as on the field. That is because they are training you to be well-rounded human beings– the kind of human beings that God created you to be.

Be dressed for action.

Life is short. Live your life so you make a difference for God.