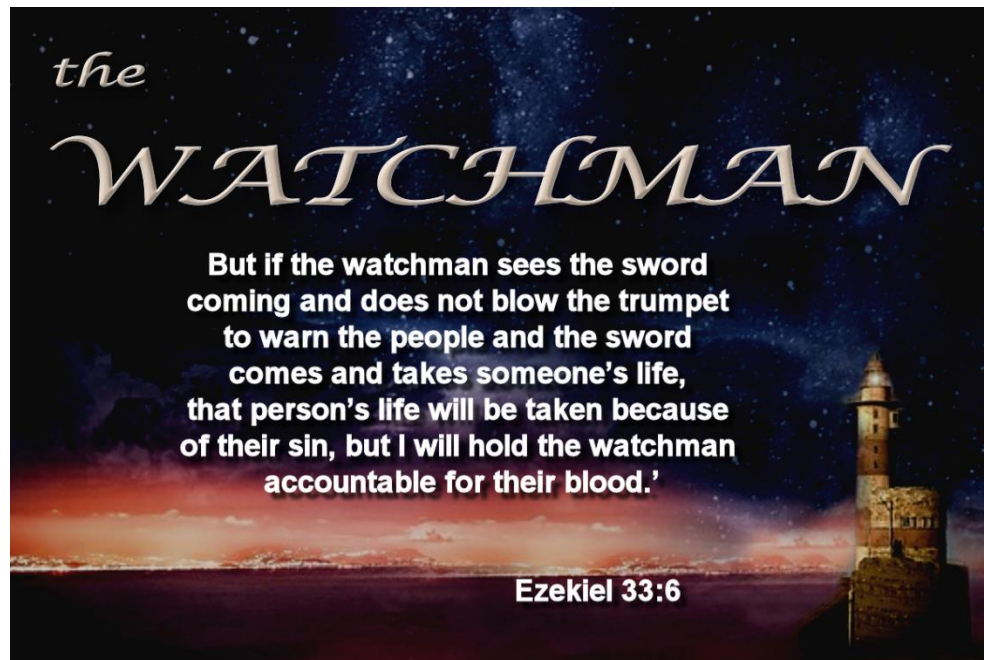


## THE WATCHMAN



Ezekiel 33:1-6

1 The word of the Lord came to me:

2 “Son of man, speak to your people and say to them: ‘When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman,

3 and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people,

4 then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not heed the warning and the sword comes and takes their life, their blood will be on their own head.

5 Since they heard the sound of the trumpet but did not heed the warning, their blood will be on their own head. If they had heeded the warning, they would have saved themselves.

**6 But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes someone's life, that person's life will be taken because of their sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for their blood.'**

SPECIAL MUSIC: “Watchman”

Josh Garrels

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoLhjmQY4-8>

## **THE NEW WATCHMAN**

Doug Stillwell and Sheriff Thom Ballard sat across the desk from Mayor Cora Henderson in her office located in City Hall. Cora was following through on her promise to discuss a job that she believed might fit the bill for the young man. Doug wasn't sure why the sheriff needed to be there and found it a bit unusual, but considering his current state of affairs, he could hardly protest.

On the wall behind the mayor's desk was a large map of the county, with the city limits of Parable drawn in red. The town of Parable didn't take up a lot of space on the map. While it was small, the town was starting to grow on Doug. The people were kind and gracious, and everyone seemed more relaxed than in larger cities.

"Amanda? Would you bring me those notebooks you put together for me and these gentlemen?" Cora said to her administrative assistant.

Almost as if she had read her mind, Amanda walked through the door with three notebooks, giving one to Cora and the others to Doug and the sheriff.

"Thank you, Amanda."

"Not a problem. Do you need anything else, mayor?" said Amanda

"Not at this time," said Cora. "I'll let you know if something else is needed."

Doug looked at the notebook in his hand. The cover read 'Watchtower Project.' That sounded interesting and maybe a little mysterious. Neither he nor the sheriff opened the notebooks since Cora hadn't opened hers yet. Cora took

her copy and laid it on the desk without looking inside, so the men did the same by laying theirs on the small table between them.

Cora started the meeting by saying, “Project Watchtower has been on my ‘to do’ list ever since I took office eight years ago, but there wasn’t much I could do about it until now. Up until twenty-five years ago, this area had a Forestry Lookout. I think they call them forestry technicians now. But the name really doesn’t matter. The Forestry Service built a lookout tower in the 1960s at the top of Jacob’s Hill and it was up to the Service to hire and pay for the lookouts. People around here took comfort in knowing that someone was watching in case a fire broke out or some other kind of trouble was spotted. Several things happened in 2000 that put the kibosh on the lookout tower. First, the watcher that was hired had a family emergency and had to leave. The Forestry Service couldn’t find anyone to fill the job when he left. After a couple of years, the funding dried up. As time went on, there was no attempt to hire anyone. So, the tower has been abandoned... until now.”

“Go on, Cora,” said the sheriff.

“The government had no intention of hiring anyone which is why I started working on Project Watchtower. I came up with a plan but hadn’t been able to work out the kinks for several reasons, the biggest kink being that nobody wanted the job. Last year, I hired Forrest Blankenship to go out to the tower and clean it up. He also took inventory. The tower belongs to the Forestry Service, but I couldn’t stand seeing it there and serving no purpose. When Forrest got there, the lock had been broken, but most of the equipment was still intact, even

if it was outdated. Some of the supplies were gone, so I imagine some hungry person decided to get out of the cold by breaking in and helping themselves to some of the canned goods. Forrest put a new lock on the door and I have him go check the tower on a monthly basis.”

“What’s that got to do with us, Cora? Shouldn’t this be something handled by the Forestry Service?” said Sheriff Thom.

“I’m getting there. Just hold your horses. This project has been on the back burner for a long time, and you can just bide your time and listen, Sheriff. Now, as I was saying, the tower has been abandoned all these years, simply because there has been no one to accept the responsibility of manning the tower, nor were there any funds for paying someone. The Forestry Service, the county, and yes, the city council here in town all agree that something needed to happen. So, I spoke with the ranger for the county and also the county judge to see what we could do. We had a meeting last month and discussed a proposition. We all agreed that there was a need, but no funding to meet that need.

“Go on, Cora. Tell us about your plan and what it has to do with us,” interrupted the Sheriff. He knew Cora well enough that she would drag the story out as long as she could.

“My goodness, Sheriff. You have all the patience of an obstinate mule,” said Cora. “I’m getting there. The takeaway from the meeting was that if I could find someone to man the watchtower, we would split the salary three ways, each paying a third. That way, it wouldn’t take as much out of our individual budgets.”

**“And who do you think you are going to sucker into living in that watchtower, Cora?” asked the Sheriff. “Ahhh... I see. You think you can get Doug here to do it. Right? What makes you think Doug would want to live up in that watchtower by himself?”**

**“I’ll do it,” said Doug. “I’ll do it. I want to do it. It sure beats sleeping on the streets and I can’t stay at the Bent Tree Motel for much longer. Yes, I’ll do it.”**

**“But Doug, there are other ways...” said the sheriff.**

**“I want to do this, Sheriff,” said Doug, interrupting him.**

**“Well,” said Cora, “I might have made it sound more simple than it actually is. There are some other conditions. Although the position still falls under the Forestry Service and they are partial to hiring vets, Doug will still have to go through a training program. And in order for this to work, Doug will need to report to someone locally, which means you, Thom.”**

**“I don’t know about that, Cora. I’m pretty busy,” said Tom.**

**“It wasn’t a request, Thom. We are going to make this work for the sake of the town,” replied the mayor.**

**“Well, then, I guess I will just have to make the time.”**

**“When can I get started?” said Doug.**

**“Doug, even though this position has been unfilled for a long time, it is an extremely important job. The Watcher’s job is to keep watch over the town and its surroundings from above. They watch for fire, flood, and anything else that**

might threaten the town. The Watcher works in all weather conditions and is the town's first line of defense against disaster. It is not a position to be taken lightly. It is not the job of the Watcher to fight the fire or hold back the flood. The job entails watching for the problem and then reporting it as quickly as possible so that the right team can be dispatched to handle the situation. It may also be the catalyst for evacuating the town if necessary."

"Now don't go scaring the boy, Cora," said the sheriff.

"I'm not trying to frighten him. I just want Doug to realize how important this job is. You understand that, don't you Doug?"

"Yes, mayor. I do. And I am grateful for the opportunity."

"Sheriff, why don't you grab Dusty and take Doug up to the tower and help him get situated? Find out what supplies Doug will need. And while you are up there, check out the radio and make sure it's working."

"Will do, Cora. Come on, Doug. Let's get started."

As they left the mayor's office, Doug was thinking about how much faith the mayor had in him. He liked this town. He liked the people here and was going to do his best to protect them. This was an excellent opportunity to serve the community of Parable and its surroundings. It was his way of paying them back for their kindness and acceptance, as he relished the thought of a new start in life.

**But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes someone's life, that person's life will be taken because of their sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for their blood.'**

**Being a watch person can be one of the loneliest jobs on the planet. Many serve at towers where there isn't a major city within a hundred miles. Often, watch-people have to hike to the towers that will be their home for months at a time, because there are no roads nearby. Most people are not cut out for a life of isolation. The job isn't easy and requires a deep sense of dedication. In most cases, you have to do more than just watch for fires. Because the watch people have a birds-eye view of the surrounding area, they also watch for other dangers like floods or stranded hikers. They are trained in first aid techniques to help those who may be injured on the hiking trails, plus they report dangerous animal sightings so that people can know which areas to avoid. The pay isn't great, but the responsibility is ginormous.**

**If a watchperson fails in their duties, disaster can easily follow. People can be hurt or killed, forests decimated, wildlife destroyed, and the local ecology disrupted. The responsibility can lay heavy on the shoulders of someone who is also struggling with the lack of interaction with other people. But the community feels safer when they know that a watch person is on the job and is able to warn them of approaching danger.**

**In early history, those warnings were more geared toward approaching foreign armies. Every moment counted as a city prepared to meet the oncoming force by locking the gates and preparing the defenders for battle. A delayed response meant the invading army could use the opportunity to catch a city unprepared in its defenses. In such a case, if the watchperson failed to give the alert in a timely manner and the city managed to escape destruction, the watchperson would be held accountable and usually paid for it with his life.**

**Okay, preacher, enough with the history lesson. What does that mean to us? How does this have anything to do with our relationship with Jesus Christ? Are you telling us that we need to pay attention to the watch people warning of coming perils?**

**The easy answer is ‘yes, you do.’ The more complicated response is determined by who we consider the watch people to be in our lives. Not every preacher is a prophet and not every leader can read the signs of the times. Sadly, many interject their personal opinions and commentary into their warnings to promote agendas that are not based in truth or on Christian principles.**

**As Christians, we have a tendency to seek out a ‘Watchperson du Jour’, someone who aligns with our own thinking and values, so we don’t have to stretch our understanding too far before we step into a support role for their message. News Flash: Not every watch person is dispensing truth. And some have alternative purposes that have nothing to do with protecting their charges. Too many people get fixed on one barometric measure and don’t take the time to consider the ramifications before jumping on a boat of half-truths just because**



they align with one or two of those biased truths. We will take that leap long before we discern where the boat is going to take us and what will be expected of us once we are in the boat.

But we don't have to be like that. Jesus gave us a measure by which we can examine what we are getting into. Maybe he doesn't want us to get into a boat at all. Maybe there aren't any boats available that measure up to the standards of Christ. Maybe Jesus has a better boat and we need to patiently wait for it. I tell you folks, if the boat isn't up to Christ's standards, we have no business climbing into it. A boat that is built with worldly values and a smattering of Christian planks here and there, will eventually sink. We are called to a higher standard than any boat the world has to offer us. If we climb into a boat because we like the human captain, then we are following human motivations. We are not of this world and the only captain that we should be looking to is Jesus Christ.

There is a passage of scripture in 1 Corinthians that addresses this very idea and brings it home:

**10 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.**

**11 My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.**

**12 What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.”**

**13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?**

**14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius,**

**15 so no one can say that you were baptized in my name.**

**16 (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.)**

**17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.**

**Do we understand the depth of this passage? Let’s bring it current so that we can put it in context:**

**What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Donald Trump”; another, “I follow Kamala Harris”; another, “Billy Graham, Warren Buffett, or Elon Musk”; still another, “I follow Christ.”**

**Is Christ divided? Was Donald Trump crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Kamala Harris?**

**Do not confuse our relationship with our Creator with our politics or religion. We are not called to worship any politician, religious leader, content creator, media personality, entertainer, or any other outspoken person. We are called only to**

worship our Creator, his Son, and his Spirit. There aren't any other choices when we accept God's gracious invitation of redemption! When we choose to follow Jesus Christ, there is no human leader or influencer who has greater authority in our lives than Jesus Christ.

I want to read another passage to give us even greater context:

**1 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:**

**“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.**

**2 For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.**

**3 Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.**

**4 I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.**

**5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.**

**6 “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.**

**7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.**

**8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.**

**9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.**

**10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.**

**11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.**

**12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.**

**13 “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.**

**14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.**

**15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.**

**16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.**

**17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.**

**18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.**

**19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.**

**John 17:1-19**

This passage shows us Jesus as our Watchperson, the voice in our ear, our protector. Jesus wants us in his boat. His sanctified boat. His boat of truth. His boat in which we intentionally follow his example in a world where we will be persecuted and treated with disdain if we truly step into the teachings of Jesus. There isn't any wiggle room here. Jesus knows that we are going to fail, and he loves us anyway. He always provides us with a path back to him when we fail.

But here's the kicker, friends. If we do intentionally follow Jesus' example, guess what happens? We become watch people ourselves. We become responsible for the people we encounter. It becomes our responsibility to provide protection for people by warning them of the dangers we see coming. Dangers from the outside where leaders and influencers attempt to pass off their own truths in contradiction to the teachings and example of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

“But preacher! That isn't my calling! I like my little niche where I can follow who I want and remain in my box of self-validation!” That is not what Christ calls for us to do. When we become children of the Most High, we become limitless in what we are called to do. Our only boundaries remain in our relationship with our Savior. Anything else is superficial and worldly. We are called to love our neighbors unconditionally. We are called to love our neighbors

**when they slap us on the cheek. We are called to love our neighbors when we are threatened, coerced, and harmed. We are called to love our neighbors without any regard to their skin color, their sexual identity, their own foundations of worship, their age, their gender, the way they dress, their wealth or lack of it, their status, or any other material values placed on them by this world.**

**Stepping into a relationship with Jesus Christ is not for the faint of heart, just as becoming a watch person is not to be taken lightly. We are the keepers of God's children, and we are responsible for delivering his message to them as well as meet their needs as the hands and feet to Jesus, all while letting the light of Jesus shine through us. We are the watch people for God's children, a role that we chose to step into when we accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The question then is: Are we engaged with our responsibilities as watch people?**

**God bless you all!**

**AMEN**

**Copyright © 2025 Rev. Walt Wellborn**

**Scripture references provided under copyright by:**

**THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION©, NIV© Copyright © 1973,  
1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. © Used by permission. All rights reserved  
worldwide.**