

The Gospel According to Luke

Luke 12:35-48

Reading: Luke 12:35-48

Sermon #56
November 3, 2019

Return of the Master

Are You Prepared?

Last week we looked at various causes of anxiety, fear and worry. We saw clearly that anxiety leads to fear and fear to irrational thought and these are the results of seeking wrong things. The rich man thought he was prepared for this life and was not and he certainly was not prepared spiritually and his life ended in eternal tragedy. Even seeking just the necessities of life should be second to seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Seeking God comes before all things. As we seek the Kingdom, God sustains our life because, as Jesus said back in Luke 12:23, *our lives are* “**more than food, and the body more than clothing.**” Living one’s life seeking the Kingdom of God is something that every believer is to do and maintain by the power of the Holy Spirit. We must seek it and seek it immediately for we do not know the hour of the Lord’s return and he is the only eternal treasure. The problem is for many who claim Christ they make God small and themselves big and will not surrender the right to their lives – they do not want to surrender to the Holy Spirit, they want to be in charge.

Pray

In our text this morning, which brother Garth read, we observed another motivation for believers to seek the Kingdom. This reason to seek the kingdom is Jesus’ second coming. The Second Coming is a vital doctrine for the Church and one we must understand. The second coming of Christ will be the climax of history and therefore effects everything the prince of the world attempts and a broken

world does as they deny Christ. Let me read some scripture and see how it frames, warns and tells believers how to prepare for Christ's return.

Jesus tells believers to ¹⁵“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ... ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ... ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” (Matthew 7:15; 24:42 & 44) If we hold pastors, teachers and prophets to the standards of God's Word it is not difficult to determine those who are false and are working to damage Christ's church and derail believers in their pursuit of a life that honors God and on the other hand the scriptures will also reveal those holding fast to God's Word. Every sermon, teaching and prophecy must be consistent with the Word of God. We also need to remember it is all about the glory of God, not those he uses as his messengers.

Luke wrote of the disciples, “While they were gazing into heaven as he *Jesus* went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:10-11) Jesus ascended and he will return in the same manner – we should not just be sitting around waiting for his return but working to advance his kingdom until he returns.

Paul wrote to the early church this advice “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:30) It is by one surrendering the right to direct their own life to the Holy Spirit that enables one to live glorifying God. Those who call themselves Christian but refuse to submit indeed do grieve the Holy Spirit. Yet, for those who submit Paul gave this

promise, “I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6) Jesus gives believers everything they need to serve him until his return, “the day of Jesus Christ” if they truly seek Him above all else.

Paul also wanted believers to understand until the return of Jesus the world would struggle with corruption and those faithful would be his witnesses and some would be martyrs. Believers are to live for the return of Jesus. Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) Until Jesus’ return believers are to live “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:13) We are to live each day, as if, it is the day Jesus will return for we do not know the day nor the hour. When we live with this anticipation and surrender our lives and focus on Jesus, we will naturally live “*considering* how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24-25) Meeting together, encouraging each other and worshipping together builds the true church and these remnant churches are a mighty witness to the world and a blessing to each other. This and other verse make clear that one cannot be a Christian as God defines in his scriptures without being part of a church community. As Christians, we can observe the world spinning out of control all around us, we are called to live in the world but not be part of its broken system, we are to keep our focus and locality on Christ, knowing, as Peter said, “The end of all things is at hand;

therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.” (1 Peter 4:7) One’s prayer life molds one’s life and prepares us for spiritual battle every day and for the “end of all things”.

Peter also gave instruction to believers, to ⁸“not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.” (2 Peter 3:8-10) Live today as if Jesus is coming, do not lose your hope for he will come at exactly the right time. Be every ready for this will bring you peace the world does not understand. God will not let any he has called perish. The return of Jesus will be an amazing cataclysmic event; a great blessing for those who believe and are prepared and the greatest of tragedies for those who do not believe.

The Apostle John said here is the secret to have the peace of Christ in you, “abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.” (1 John 2:28) If we abide in Jesus, this life will have no regrets, no shame and if one is still alive when Jesus comes, they will be prepared. John tells what it will be like. ⁷“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. ... Jesus adds to this, saying, ¹¹“I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. ... ¹²Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.’ ... ²⁰He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’” Along with John I say, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation

1:7; 3:11; 22:12, 20) Are you and am I living daily with the expectation of Jesus' return? If so, we are to hold fast to Jesus and the gifts of God's Word and his Holy Spirit!

Those Prepared

In our passage this morning found in Luke chapter 12, verses 35 to 48 Jesus begins by giving two examples of being prepared and ready for his return. Please open your Bible to Luke chapter 12 and follow as I begin reading at verse 35, "Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning,³⁶ and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.³⁸ If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!" Jesus says we are to stay dressed and ready for action or literally we are to have our loins girded. The phrase "*girding up your loins*" is a Hebrew phrase that was a typical saying to encourage someone to be ready. The Hebrew would take his long robe and roll it up and tuck it in his belt in order to be able to run and maneuver in battle. Paul explained to the church in **Ephesus** what it meant to be dressed or to have your loins girded and ready for spiritual battle in chapter 6 verses 10 to 20; believers are to wear the whole armor of God: belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit and keeping alert and ready for battle against the evil one. The armor of God is designed for offensive battle there is no armor to protect one who is retreating. God instructed Moses to put the lesson of the Passover ever before the people by becoming the tradition observed every year. Moses told the people, "In this manner you shall eat ~~it~~ *the Passover: with your belt*

fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand.” (Exodus 12:11)

Here Moses is telling the people to be prepared for physical battle against enemies and Jesus is telling us to be prepared and be ready for spiritual battle. So, just as the Hebrews were to be ready at all times for battle because they were surrounded by enemies, we too, live among many enemies, so we, are to be ready and prepared for spiritual battle until Jesus’ return.

Another sign of readiness was the servant would have the house in order and greet the master at the door with a lamp to help him into the house. The servant placed the lit lamp in the window as a sign to the approaching master that everything was in order and ready and the servant was waiting to greet his master. Once the master knocked on the door it was too late to fill the lamp with oil, trim the wick and light the lamp. A faithful servant kept things ready. My beloved, are you ready for our Master’s return? Have you put your spiritual house in order, is your lamp filled with oil and your wick trimmed, are you a light in the dark night of this broken world? At the time of Jesus, a wedding lasted for days; people had to travel and everyone had to be cared for. So, with this amount of effort the people took time to celebrate for a few days to a week. If the master was married in another village the servants of his house did not know when the master would return. As Jesus says, they were to be “like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast.”

As our passage continues, we see a reversal in verse 37, “Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.” The watching and prepared servants will be rewarded when the master returns. Jesus says, the master will return and prepare himself and serve his servants and they will feast together. We are to serve Jesus our Lord and Savior until we die or he returns and then we will feast together. I am so looking forward

to being in his presence. The question is, am I and are you prepared, are we watching and serving; if we are – the result is as verse 38 says, “blessed are those servants!”

Those Unprepared

Jesus began with the household that is prepared and ready and is therefore greatly blessed. He now speaks about the unprepared household. Reading verses 39 and 40, “But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” Here is the household where the servants do not have everything ready, wicks are not trimmed and the lamp is not filled or lit. Because they are unprepared these servants will suffer loss.

As we consider these two situations, we see that in both cases, the master’s return and the thief’s arrival were unexpected. However, one meant a blessing because the servants were ready. The other meant loss because the servants were not ready. There is no middle ground.

My beloved, we must understand Jesus is coming. However, we do not know when He will come. The most serious question is, “Will you be ready when it happens or will it take you by surprise?” Jesus said there will be both blessing and cursing, “Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.” (Matthew 24:40-42) We must also acknowledge that if one is not prepared when the Lord returns, there will be no time to get ready. It will eternally be too late. Now is the day to prepare, watch and serve.

Now in this passage comes Peter's question, I love Peter, I relate to Peter. I have heard it said, there is no stupid questions, but really. In verse 41 Peter asks, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" Jesus is teaching and preparing the disciples to birth his church and lead people from damnation to salvation. So, the answer to Peter's question is of course - it is both for the disciples and all the others listening and for all those you, my disciples, will meet and teach when Jesus is gone! Maybe because the answer to Peter's question was so transparent Jesus does not answer but continues with his teaching; what does a faithful servant look like. Peter probably reflects, saying, Wow, the was obvious – how did I miss it? I can relate. We did to listen the our Lord through both the scriptures and prayer before we move ahead and step into trouble.

Prepared and Faithful

Reading Jesus' description of those who are wise and faithful beginning in verse 42, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions." I have owned and managed a number of companies. I always made my expectations clearly known; both when I was interviewing someone and when they were hired and worked for me. I was hard on those who bent the rules or disobeyed. I knew if I let them break the rules or disobey and do a substandard job that over time the standards would no longer exist and all our work would be poor. I had little patience with those who lied to me or were lazy. One thing I tried to determine during interviews was did the person want to be paid a fair wage for a good day's work or did they want a paycheck for the lease amount of effort. My companies out performed our competitors because we did what we said we would do, when we said we would do

it and we did it with quality. As believers the quality of our lives is a testimony to the world how those who believe in Jesus are different. Quality – do we live the scriptures? Are we honest and do good quality work for our employers? My dad was an honest hard-working man, but an unbeliever. I told my dad gently about Jesus for several years. Finally, when he was terminal and we were finally at a point where serious things could be discussed and he commented how my life had shown him there is a difference and as we spent hours in discussion he came to understand who Jesus was and is, and my dad gave his life to Christ 6 weeks before he died. His preparation began later than it should have, but not before it was too late.

Jesus tells us he will richly bless his faithful servants when he finds them working and prepared and serving. Jesus says a wise master will be placed over the entire household. This is a very serious notice to fathers, as the spiritual leader of your household you have an important role and are responsible for the spiritual welfare of your household. Remember how Joseph served his master Potiphar well and was elevated, but also how he fled from Potiphar's wife even though he paid a price. Because of his faithfulness he was ultimately greatly rewarded. Fathers and mothers hold true to Christ even if there is a price to pay – for your children are watching. Hold fast to Jesus even if children rebel, even if an employer deals with you wrongly and even if the world treats you harshly. When one hold fast to Christ, like Stephen at his trial, it is a great witness to the word. All so understand that Jesus' churches are the household of God, our church is the household of God. As Paul instructed Timothy, whom he sent out to oversee the planting and growth of churches, ¹⁴ "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, **you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.**" As a

church we are to live the truth of Christ and together, we say of the Lord to all who will listen, ¹⁶“Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.” (1 Timothy 3:14-16) This is the truth the world needs to hear and as his church, his household, we are the stewards of this truth. Let me ask, “How has God gifted you and how are you using your gifting to serve his church?” We must recognize the connection here; the church is the household of God and this is where servants will be found faithfully serving or there will also be found some who are unprepared and not of service the Lord.

Fate of the Unfaithful

Jesus now gives a final warning in verses 45 to 48, “But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.” Here is the consequences of not being a faithful servant. For those who know the Master’s will and do not do it, they will suffer great loss and they will miss the blessings God wants for them. The sign of true faith is one understands the will of God and has surrendered their life to live out God’s will and bring him glory. We must share the gospel of Christ with others; for if they do

not come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior, they will suffer the greatest loss of all – eternity without God.

It is my prayer for myself and for each of you and for us as a household of God, that we would grow in our knowledge of God through the study of his Word and prayer and as we do this we would grow in spiritual maturity and we would surrender to the Holy Spirit. My beloved, we need to daily live in anticipation of Jesus' coming, being prepared and serving both Jesus as King and our brothers and sisters in Christ. Prepare your household, trim your wicks, fill you lamps and be a light to this dark world with the life changing truth of Jesus! May this be said by others about us and may it be who we are! Amen!