

Message #64

Luke 12:41-48

Honolulu, Hawaii, has always been a beautiful tropical island and seemingly a serene place to live. All of that changed on December 7, 1941 at about 8AM.

About 200 miles north of Pearl Harbor, from the decks of six Japanese aircraft carriers, a surprise attack was launched that in less than two hours destroyed two U.S. battleships, demolishing 140 planes and damaging 80 others. 2,330 Americans were killed and 1,145 were wounded. This attack ended up being one of the most humiliating defeats ever suffered by American forces because we were totally unprepared for the attack.

Make no mistake about this; there were signs that something was going to happen. One historian said, "In spite of all the evidence that an attack would come, people were amazed when it did."

We are living in a time when some demonic person takes some gun and opens fire on innocent, unarmed people. In many of these instances there were signs that something was wrong with the person. But those signs were ignored and, as a result, there are deadly consequences.

These things say to all of us, when you see warning signs of something, take it seriously because if you don't the results will be disastrous.

There are some warning signs right now that point to the fact we are nearing the return of Jesus Christ. Things that are happening in Russia and Iran, China and North Korea, indicate there is political turmoil on the horizon. The condition of the church is one of promoting pleasure-seeking entertainment rather than a reverence for God and His word. The arrogance and the evil of those who are speaking out against leaders and the promotion of abominable sin all says we are nearing the return of Jesus Christ.

The problem in our day, which was also a problem in Christ's day, is that most people ignore this and don't take it seriously. Some who claim to be a believer don't sense or see the prophetic truth of where this is all headed.

Jesus Christ wanted His people to always realize that He was soon coming back. He wanted them to use this reality as impetus for serving God. When Jesus Christ returns, He will reward every servant; but not all rewards will be positive. What we see here is this:

WHEN JESUS CHRIST RETURNS, BOTH FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL SERVANTS WILL BE REWARDED AND WISE IS THE SERVANT WHO FAITHFULLY SERVES GOD IN VIEW OF THIS REALITY.

When Jesus Christ returns, He will find two types of servants. One type will be faithfully serving Him and the other type won't be faithfully serving Him. The Apostle John said one type will be confident when He returns and the other type will be ashamed (I John 2:28). Jesus Christ will return and when He does, all servants will be paid for what they did or didn't do.

Now the context starts in **verse 41**. The Apostle Peter had just listened to Christ give a lengthy teaching that began in Luke 12:1. Thousands of people were there listening to the teaching which included the fact that He did not want people hypocritical Pharisees (12:1). He addressed things like secrets (12:2); speech (12:3); witnessing (12:8); blasphemy (12:10); financial greed (12:16-20) and financial anxiety (12:22-34). He challenged people to be ready and alert at all times like a slave and a soldier (12:35-40).

Now Peter had listened to all of this and he wondered whether or not that teaching was just for them or for everyone (**verse 41**). **Peter says are these teachings applicable to us too?** There is no question that people who are close to God always want to know the truth of God's word.

Well, Jesus answers the question in **verse 48**: this teaching was for "everyone." However, it will only be the faithful and sensible servant who will take it seriously until Christ returns and when He does return, it will be too late.

What Jesus does here is quite simple to see. He describes two types of servants. These are two types of servants He will find when He returns.

Next month, as most of you know, I will be 69-years-old. Let's say hypothetically that God is going to let me live to be 80. What that means is I have 11 years left. What that means is I have 4,015 days left or 96,360 hours left to live. Now I will live those hours either as a faithful servant by God's classification or an unfaithful servant by God's classification. There are no other options:

SERVANT TYPE #1 – The faithful servant who will be rewarded. **12:42-44**

Christ begins in **verse 42** by asking a question, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward?" That word "steward" refers to a manager. It is a term used of one who held an office of administration. It refers to one who was entrusted with great responsibility.

A steward managed everything for his manager and owner, including his property, money and possessions (i.e. Luke 16:1). When Christ uses the term in this context, He is using it to refer to people in God's family who are responsible and accountable for what has been entrusted to them.

This question by Christ was designed to generate three thoughts:

- 1) We are stewards in the affairs of God and are accountable to God.
- 2) We may either be a faithful steward or an unfaithful steward.
- 3) We need to be faithful stewards in this life to have management responsibilities in the next life.

What Christ is answering here is what type of person will be named a manager in eternity? What type of servant will be appointed to a management level when Christ returns? The answer to this question is seemingly very simple and very abstract.

The servant who will be blessed and put in charge of others in eternity will be the one Christ finds “so doing” when He returns (12:43).

The participle “doing” is present tense, meaning that the one who will be named a manager in eternity will be the one Christ finds continually serving Him, continually shining, continually working, and continually watching when He returns.

Notice Christ does not specifically say what the faithful servant is doing because faithfulness varies from person to person, depending on gifts, abilities, skills and opportunities. The faithful servant is faithfully carrying out their assignments and responsibilities, in whatever God has given him/her to do.

The servant who is continually faithful in life in his/her witness, in his/her fear of God, in his/her use of money will be appointed a manager in eternity. Jesus says this kind of person will be put in charge of “all” his master’s possessions (12:44).

Right now, at best, faithful servants manage just a portion of God’s things. However, the one who is faithful will eventually be privileged to manage everything for God.

One of the great names of the Christian Church is John Calvin. During the 1500’s, Calvin became an international figure for God. At age 30, his health began to fail him. He suffered with indigestion, headaches, gall stones, hemorrhoids, gout, fever, asthma and tuberculosis. Because of these problems and because of his schedule, John Calvin would very often only be able to sleep about 4 hours a night. On one occasion, a friend of John Calvin wrote to him and advised him to slow down so he could spare himself. Calvin wrote back these words, “What, would you have my master find me idle?” Calvin always wanted to be doing something for God so when Christ returned, He would find him actively serving. Calvin knew that would bring great reward and I am certain when we get to heaven we will discover he is highly rewarded.

When Jesus Christ returns, those who are faithful in doing what He has given them to do will be rewarded. Perhaps you have a S.S. class. Perhaps you serve on a committee. Perhaps you serve on a board. Perhaps you have a gift of helps or mercy or giving or evangelism. Blessed is the one who is faithfully serving Christ when He returns. There will be major remuneration and promotion.

SERVANT TYPE #2 – The unfaithful servant who will be punished. 12:45-48

In this section, Jesus Christ makes it clear that when He returns, not every servant will be faithfully working or serving Him. There will be those He will find unfaithful and He intends to reward them.

He brings out at least three character qualities of an unfaithful servant in **verse 45**:

Character Quality #1 - An unfaithful servant doubts Christ's soon return in his heart. **12:45a**

The "if clause" that begins **verse 45** is what is called in Greek a 3rd class conditional clause. What it grammatically means is that there is a good probability and possibility that many people who claim to be servants of God will actually think this way in their hearts. There will be many unfaithful people found when Christ returns.

Unfaithful people downplay the idea that Jesus Christ will soon return. They may talk about the return of Christ, but deep in their hearts, they really don't believe it. One who is unfaithful has the exact opposite mindset about this than one who is faithful (**12:40**). **One who is faithful wants to be ready at all times; one who is unfaithful doesn't really think he needs to do anything different because he really doesn't believe in his heart that Christ is coming and will hold him accountable.**

Jesus Christ always promoted the idea that "I will soon return." He promoted the idea of His imminent return. Unfaithful people downplay this and they see Christ's return as something far off in the future.

The Apostle Peter said that in the last days there will be mockers who are living life according to their own lusts who will ask "where is the promise of His coming?" Their idea is people have always been talking about Christ's return but it hasn't happened (II Pet. 3:3-4).

The closer we are to Jesus Christ, the more we will sense and want His imminent return. Unfaithful people do not pray "Lord come quickly." I think there is a purifying effect of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. When you think Jesus Christ could come today, it does affect what you say and do.

Character Quality #2 - An unfaithful servant abuses God's people. **12:45b**

An unfaithful servant does not really believe that Jesus Christ will return so he doesn't have any concern at all for how he treats others. He is only interested in himself. His abuse is not gender biased. He abuses men and women. He says and does what he wants to and about others with no concern for their welfare.

The word "beat" is a word that literally refers to striking, smiting and inflicting evil. Unfaithful people don't care who they hurt or how much they hurt others. They have their own agenda and their agenda is not to glorify God.

Woe to the unfaithful pastor who misuses his position to take advantage of others.

Woe to the unfaithful board member who dominates the sheep.

Woe to the unfaithful member who tries to destroy a leader or member in any way.

Woe to the unfaithful husband who abuses his wife and children.

Woe to the unfaithful wife who refuses to submit to her husband or love her children.

Unfaithful people don't care what they say or do to another person because they don't think Jesus Christ will return and hold them accountable. Jesus says, "Yes, I will."

Character Quality #3 - An unfaithful servant lives a licentious life. **12:45c**

An unfaithful servant behind the scenes is living a flesh-driven, indulgent, worldly and sensual life. He is not a self-disciplined, responsible, godly person. His goal is pleasure and he is involved in things sinful, such as continually getting drunk.

Night after night unfaithful people indulge their own fleshly desires with no thought whatsoever that I will give an account to Jesus Christ.

Now Christ wanted the unfaithful servant to think long and hard about what he was doing so He gives three warnings:

(Warning #1) - Christ will come back on an unexpected day. **12:46a**

Dr. Luke really emphasizes the fact that Christ will come on a day not expected (Luke 12:40). That word "expect" is intriguing because it indicates Christ will come back on a day when the opinion or supposition or thought to the unfaithful person will be He is not coming today. Apparently the day of Christ's return to the unfaithful servant will be a day he never expected.

(Warning #2) - Christ will come back at an unknown hour. **12:46b**

God works in time and He breaks the temporal time clock down into days and hours. Christ will come on a real day in a real hour. There is one hour out there in the future that no one knows and no one expects that will be the actual hour He will return.

From an actual time standpoint, Jesus Christ will come back at an hour not expected. So it will be a surprise as to the day and a surprise as to the hour. It may be that it will be in the exact moment of unfaithfulness.

These religious guys who set dates for the return of Jesus Christ are making a major mistake. No one knows the day or the hour.

(Warning #3) - Christ will come back and punish unfaithfulness. **12:46c-48**

The unfaithful person will not get off the hook. In fact, Jesus warns that He will "cut to pieces" the unfaithful person (**12:46**). That word literally means Christ will severely scourge and thrash the unfaithful servant and cut them wide open. Everyone will see it and know it. This person will be fully exposed.

As near as we may determine, there are three types of unfaithful people who will receive their due reward from Jesus Christ:

Person Type #1 - The unfaithful servant who was never a believer. **12:46c**

Matthew says this was a man who was “evil” in his heart (Matt. 24:51) and he is judged with the hypocrites, not the unfaithful. What this means is that this man was never a true believer. He pretended to be a religious servant of God, but never was actually saved and so when Christ comes back, He judges him and sends him to hell to burn with all other unbelievers. But before He does, He says I will “cut him in pieces.” This is graphic language that describes a horrific judgment against a religious hypocrite that is beyond the norm. When Jesus Christ returns, He will judge the truth of the heart and there will be many religious hypocrites who never had Jesus Christ in their hearts.

Person Type #2 - The unfaithful servant who was a believer and knew much. **12:47**

If a servant had great exposure to the truth of God, the doctrines of God and the instruction of the word of God and did not apply it, he will be disciplined and suffer great loss. He will not be in hell, but he will lose.

There will be believers who knew the truth and ignored it. They would not respond to it even when the Holy Spirit convicted them time and time again. Christ says when I return, there will be a high price to pay. If you knew the truth and refused to respond to it, there will be a judgment.

Person Type #3 - The unfaithful servant who was a believer who knew little. **12:48**

This believer didn't know much and therefore will not be disciplined as much.

Jesus Christ makes it clear here that no unfaithful servant will be entrusted with management in eternity. The real issue of faithfulness or unfaithfulness is found in the heart (**12:45**).

Earlier in this very chapter, Jesus said you need to “fear the One who has the authority to cast into hell” (Luke 12:5).

As God searches our hearts, what does He see? Does He see that we really do have Jesus Christ in our hearts? Are we faithful or unfaithful? Are we responding to His word and conviction? Are we doing what He really wants us to do?

I don't know how many hours any of us have left to live here. But there is an hour and a moment when Christ will return and when He does, we will face Him in judgment. If you will faithfully respond to the word of God and the Spirit of God, you will be blessed.