

## Luke 12:35-48

### “Be Ready For His Return”

The focal point of our present passage? Center your life *not* around material possessions but around the promise of Christ’s coming. That’s the context of which we find ourselves coming *out of* from last week and falling *into* today. Living on *earth* in the light of *heaven*; becoming stewards of God’s kingdom through serving others in this world.

In Vs 35 Jesus shifts the focus from being worried about the present to being watchful about the future; being ready for His return. Perhaps you recall that the primary point of emphasis of our last gathering sprang forth from Vs 15; “*Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.*” Yet because we’re *of* the earth we have a tendency to set our minds on things *on* the earth. The bible says, “Don’t do that.” We’re to set our minds on things above and not on things on the earth; which in essence translates, we’re to set our priority *not* on things that are temporary, but on the things of eternity.

Now it’s not that we shouldn’t be good stewards of our *possessions*. We absolutely should be. But what Jesus brings to the forefront today is that even more so we should be good stewards of our *person* as well. Your possessions are one thing; your person is something altogether different. At best, there is temporary value to your possessions... However there’s *eternal value* to your person. Do you see the rationale? If we’re to be good stewards of our possessions, (which have temporary value), how much more should we be good stewards of our *person* (which has eternal value)? Upon which should we place the highest priority; upon which should we be the most mindful?

The encouragement, the exhortation of the previous passage (in the words of Jesus [Vs 33]) was that we should provide ourselves money bags that don’t grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. Live in the future tense. That is, invest in the eternal; be ready for your Lord’s return. How are you to do that? In short; be watchful, be waiting and be working. Notice...

### Vs 35-36

Lots of key words/pictures and concepts to point out here; we see things like the “waist girded”, the “lamp burning”, “men waiting for their master”, here’s a phrase I like, “he *will* return” and “open to him *immediately*.”

We’re seeing here a need for vigilance (watchfulness), attentiveness, alertness and awareness. Or to understand that another way, *be ready* for your Lord’s return.

Jesus says here; “Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning.”

What does that mean? In brief: be service minded presently, yet watchful and alert not sleeping spiritually but having a view (ultimately) toward the return of Christ.

Now this is certainly something that would in effect be going over their heads in this moment because they’re not even clear on the prophecies concerning the cross and the death of Christ much less the return of Christ for His church and the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ to the earth.

But as you know in that culture at that time the men wore these long robes which made working a cumbersome thing. So what they would do is take their robes (when they were working/serving needing to be busy) and pull them up above their knees and tie the excess in their belt or around their waist. Anytime you would gird up your waist it was an indication of work and/or service.

That seems clear enough; what's the deal with the "lamps burning"? Couple of things could be happening in that comment; I believe both are valid. #1 Stay awake and alert spiritually; keep your lamp burning, your light shining. When it comes to your relationship with Christ you don't want to be "lights out" trust me on this one, you want "lights on" and burning bright. But also as it pertains to your service (and my service) it doesn't really matter how *ready* to work we may be; if we can't see properly our readiness becomes irrelevant. We need light; where do we receive the light to serve the Lord well; to understand what His heart is and how it is that He would have us to be serving? Remember this Vs? "*Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*" Ps 119:105 and Again, "*For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life," Proverbs 6:23 We're to stand prepared to serve and serving God whole heartedly; and we're to have the word of God burning *brightly* in our lives.*

Vs 36

We're to be both waiting and watching for our Lord's return; we are His servants and He is our Master which means we are to wait *on* Him and watch *for* Him.

Here's what I want to point out in this Vs; 3 words found in about the center of it, "He *will* return". There's no uncertainty there, there's no ambiguity there, it's very clear; Jesus has gone away (He has ascended into heaven) but make no mistake, He *will* return. No less than 5 times in the book of Revelation alone Jesus speaks of His soon return; there's a sense of urgency in the scriptures as it pertains to the return of Christ. Even as the book of Revelation comes to a close and the Lord signs off (if you will) with His final words to the church, what are they? "*Surely I am coming quickly.*" Rev 22:20

The point of this passage being that we're to be ready for it, "That when he comes and knocks they may open to him *immediately.*"

I want to move for a moment out of the realm of interpretation and into the realm of application; because there's application to be found in this passage not only prophetically, but presently/personally as well.

Because what we find here is the *master* of the house, knocking of the *door* of the house desiring to come *into* the house. I think you know where I'm going with this: how important it is that when the Lord is knocking on the door, the door of your heart, that you and I be ready *for* Him and open the door *to* Him *immediately*. Oh, certainly there's application here evangelistically; if you don't know Jesus, if you've never been forgiven *by* Jesus of all your sin and God is dealing *with* you; He's seeking to reason *with* you that though your sin is like scarlet He'll make you white like snow. He'll give you beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, let me encourage you, open the door of your heart to Him immediately; be forgiven of sin and made brand new instantaneously, it's a beautiful thing.

When Jesus returns we don't want to be caught off guard, needing to get things in order; now is the time for that; you won't get a forewarning, *this* is your forewarning. Wise is the one who is serving the Lord *presently*, but *ultimately* is watching *for* Him and waiting *on* Him to return.

So there's application for believers as well, yes the unsaved needs to be saved. But those who *are* saved need to receive the warning to not grow apathetic/sluggish in their walk and relationship with the Lord. We're to be "waiting" for our Master when He returns; we're to be ready...and here's the catch, we don't know when He's coming, it could be literally at any moment therefore we should always be alert and attentive, notice.

Vs37-38

So can waiting be tedious? Sure it can. Can watching and working take it's toll? Absolutely it can; but the rewards are out of this world... You see, so far Jesus has been in keeping with His culture. Master goes away, servants wait up *on* him, they're watching *for* him, he might return in a day, a week, whenever. But when he returns they need to be on point, doesn't matter if it's 3 in the mourning; they will be ready to receive him and to serve Him. The master of the house should never have to wait on himself, or be locked out of his own home, the servants are to see him coming and open to him as soon as he knocks. Servants who tried to live on the edge would try to sneak in a bit of sleep in the night watches; but the faithful servants would never sleep; they would be on the watch, going to the door; looking *for* and waiting *upon* his return.

But then Jesus breaks from the cultural mindset. He says, if you're waiting, if you're watching, if you're ready for His return here's what's going to happen; you Master (Jesus Himself) will cause *you* to sit down; He will gird *Himself* and He will *serve* you... Let that blow your mind...

The Lord of all creation will serve you, that's how much He *loves* you.

So, quick summary: Vs 13-34, "Don't seek the things of this world." Vs 35-48, "Be found faithful serving the Lord". Over and over again throughout the scriptures we're exhorted to maintain proper perspective and proper priorities. I suspect it's because we're so prone to fall back into a worldly mindset and prioritize the things we see; we like to walk by sight and not by faith. Yet the scriptures are clear, "...*the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*" 2 Cor 4:18 So if you want to set your life goals on obtaining all that you can in this world that's your prerogative but don't be deceived you'll only be ripping yourself off concerning that which pertains to eternity. That's why Jesus (taking us back to our opening thoughts) said to provide for ourselves money bags that don't grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail. Don't labor for rewards that's temporary, but those that will last throughout eternity...

Vs 39-40

Again the exhortation is given to *watch*! Jesus gives us fair warning and this is it; "There won't *be* any warning." He will come like a thief; unannounced and unexpected. Paul the apostle said, "*For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.*" 1 Thess 5:2 The only way to be on guard and prepared for a thief is to live in constant readiness; the way we prepare for the return of Christ for His church is to live in constant readiness.

This is one of the reasons we're big proponents of the pretrib rapture theory around here. Because it teaches us to watch and be ready for the Lord could return (as He said) at any hour. If we believe that He might return ½ way through the great tribulation period than we're looking for the anti-Christ not Jesus Christ; or if He comes after the tribulation (again) it's not at a time nor in an hour we wouldn't expect; we'd know *exactly* when to expect it, 7 yrs after the A.C. shows up. But Jesus is teaching us anticipate His return not after the A.C. goes into the temple and demands to be worshiped as God; not after the great tribulation; but rather on a day and at an hour that we do not expect... What's the net effect? It promotes personal holiness in our lives; we don't want to be caught off guard, unprepared and not ready for His return...

Vs41-44

Peter pipes up and says, "Lord is this type of responsibility and this type of reward just for us, or is it for anyone?" BTW, it's a great question to be inquiring of the Lord as we're spending time in His word. A word is sent forth and it strikes you in a peculiar way; "Lord are you speaking this to *me*? Is this a word for *me*? Give me ears to hear You Lord; open my heart to receive Your word."

To answer the question Jesus basically says, "I'm speaking this to *anyone* who would be a faithful and wise steward." If you want to be promoted from servant, to steward (if you will) than this is a word for you...

We note in this particular portion that faithfulness and wisdom will bring eternal benefits. Jesus says that the faithful and wise steward will be made a ruler in His kingdom. God desires, and God *requires* faithfulness of His servants, His stewards. 1 Cor 4:2, "Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." God's not looking for *faithlessness*; He's found plenty of that; He's looking for *faithfulness*. The 2<sup>nd</sup> attribute of the person who receives the promotion is *wisdom*; faithfulness (committed and trustworthy, stick-to-it-iveness) and *wise* (insightful, discreet, good judgment).

Jesus is still teaching us what it means to be ready for His coming; what kind of person will be promoted in His kingdom, He says we need to be faithful, we need to be wise. You say, "What does that look like?" It's a great question and here's the answer; it doesn't look like passive idleness, but progressive service.

Vs 43 says, "Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes." Being ready involves action, we're to be doers of the word of God. God has placed a calling on your life; He's called you to Himself, He's given you His word, now He's watching your faithfulness; if you're exercising wisdom through the knowledge of His word. If you're humbling yourself and serving others or if you're waiting around to be served; what Jesus is telling us is that if we're doers of the word, if we're servants *here* we'll be rulers *there*. The question that confronts us is, "Do we really believe it?"

It's counter intuitive to human culture. In our eyes the one who is great is the one who is ruling over the people; "The boss". But Jesus is teaching us that as it pertains to the kingdom of God, (where you're going to be forever) just the opposite is true. If you want to be great *then*, than you need to learn *to* and be *about* serving now; let the question probe your heart. How are you involved right now? In what way are you serving the Lord currently? If you can't answer that definitively in some way, you're only ripping yourself off for eternity. Look at Vs 43-44 again...Now that's either true or it's not, do you believe it? If so, how does your life reflect it?

Vs 45-46

You see this is the danger of thinking that "this" needs to happen, or "that" needs to take place prior to the Lord's return (the rapture). As the mentality of "delay" creeps in people lose their sense of accountability and readiness to meet the Lord. The result being carnality and brutality; *beating* the sheep rather than *feeding* the sheep, perversion and corruption as opposed to purity and holiness.

It's the mentality of, "The boss is away, so we can come out and play", seeking to take personal advantage of what would seem to be unaccountable time. But with God there's no such thing as time that's unaccounted for. We should always have a cognitive awareness of God's presence and have in our heart an expectation/anticipation of the Lord's return.

Whether it happens by His coming to receive us at the rapture or should we meet our Maker through death we're all only a heartbeat away from standing before the Lord. Such a mentality ought to make us *want to be ready* to meet Him, to be faithful and wise stewards, busy about our Master's business. That we might hear the words we all long to hear, "*Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.*" Matt 25:21

If you believed, if I believed that Jesus could come back with in the hour; how much different would we behave toward one another? Would you trash talk that person? Would you yell at your spouse? Would you be criticizing and tearing down or seeking to edify and build up? What would be great would be to realize that we wouldn't behave *any* differently because we're ready for His return...

Now what's this, "Cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" business? Well, one thing everyone agrees on is that it's a picture of judgment. The thing people disagree on is whether or not this is a believer who walked away from the Lord forfeiting salvation, or is this simply an unfaithful servant who forfeits his reward, or was this never a believer at all? It all basically depends upon your theology. with out trying to promote my personal opinion I would say this: #1 Make your calling and election sure, # 2 Work out your own salvation (Phil 2:12) with fear and trembling; allow God to work in you both to will and *to do* for His good pleasure. #3 Finally (this is something else everyone agrees on), you don't want to find yourself having to discover which side the pendulum swings on this, be ready for His return...

Vs47-48

Will there be varying degrees of penalty and punishment for the disobedient; the unbelieving? According to this there will be; the one who knew what to do and didn't do it will be held to a higher level of accountability than the one who did wrong but didn't know the difference. You see we have a responsibility not only to *not do* evil or commit sin, but *to do* what the will of the Lord is. To honor and obey His word.

To hear it and not obey it is only to bring greater accountability into your life; the fruit is found in being a doer of the will, of the word of God.

So many people wonder about that poor guy in the jungle somewhere who never knew, who never heard the gospel and how God will handle that. Can I exhort you today? Don't worry about the guy in the jungle who *doesn't* know (though you're free to go tell him) worry about yourself because *you do* know...and to whom much is given, much will be required; and to whom much has been committed; of him/her the will ask the more.

Here's what the word of God says, "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*" 2 Cor 5:10

Final words? "Be ready for His return." Step 1, *give* your life to Jesus Christ Step 2, *live* your life for Jesus Christ If you're not certain that should you die this day that you'd go to heaven, cinch it up, call upon the name of the Lord that you might be saved. If you're flirting with disaster, you've lost the sense of the soon coming of your King, repent, return to your 1<sup>st</sup> love and repeat your 1<sup>st</sup> works. Be ready for His return...

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for the ready reminder of Your Word. Place an urgency, an expectancy in our hearts, may we lead our lives in a manner that's holy and pleasing unto You and may we be found ready to meet You at Your return. Jesus be there anyone who may be here who's *not* ready to meet You; if you're knocking on the door of their hearts *today*, we ask You to give them both the faith, and the strength to open to You immediately; to surrender to You fully.

It comes down to this; are you ready for the return of Jesus Christ are you ready to stand before Jesus today. God loves you, He gave Jesus Christ to shed His blood and pay the penalty of your sins on behalf *of* you and now if you'll just cry out *to* Him and believe *upon* Him. It's beauty for ashes; the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Sound like a good trade? Your life of sin, for His robe of righteousness; if you want Jesus in your life today; than don't delay; believe upon Him now.