

Luke 12:35-48 – Faithful Watching & Fruitful Service – Sermon Outline

Intro: You hear a lot about waiting for the coming of the Lord. This text shows how we should do that.

Need: Waiting for Christ's return stimulates activity, doesn't reduce us to "rapture ready"/lifeboat Christians.

Theme: Christians are to watch for the Lord's return like a servant preparing for His Master's return:

1. How faithful watching produces fruitful service.
2. Blessings for faithful watching & fruitful service, judgment for its absence.

I. How faithful watching produces fruitful service.

A. 35, Gird your loins, trim your wicks to keep your lamp burning well/evenly.

1. The idea is to always be ready, watchful for your Master to return.
2. Eph. 6:14 and I Pet. 1:13 speak of girding up the loins of your mind with truth. Jesus isn't saying to tighten your robe so you can go on a long journey or do physical battle, but prepare for the long spiritual journey of a Christian, do spiritual battle against the world, flesh, and the devil.

B. Ex. 12:11, the Israelites were to eat with belt fastened, sandals on feet, staff in hand, in haste the Passover meal, echoing the language that Jesus uses in our text.

1. This was the Lord's deliverance. It would come swiftly and require action/obedience straight away for the "coming of the Lord" in judgment upon Pharaoh, salvation upon His people who looked to Him, applied the blood of the Passover Lamb to their house, did as commanded, dressed for deliverance.
2. If they were not ready, they would have been left behind, the agony of the firstborn dying in Egypt led to their demanding the Israelites leave in haste. The Israelites had unleavened bread for Passover.
3. The lamb is Christ. I Cor. 5:7-8, "Therefore, purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

C. Israel experienced the "coming of the Lord" and day of judgment while in bondage in Egypt.

1. But they were faithful in their watching for that coming, keeping the Passover. As Jehovah, the LORD passed through and saw the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of the house, He delivered them.
2. If you do not have the blood on the doorposts, if you are not keeping the feast with your family by living in sincerity and truth rather than malice and wickedness, God's judgment will fall on you.
3. We must gird the loins of our minds and trim our wicks to be ready for the Lord's judgment, which will be a day of deliverance if we have been waiting by serving all our lives, else it is a day of damnation!
4. If you are watching for the Lord and His return and coming judgment following death, you will not be idle, staring at the sky, nervously waiting for God to return, but rather, you will be doing His will!
5. Luke 12 has said to fear God who can cast body and soul into hell. If we say to our soul to eat, drink, and be merry, the Lord may take our souls suddenly, and that day of judgment is as good as here.

D. Thus, a faithful servant watches for His master by setting things in order for His return!

1. The Lord mixes many metaphors together in our text, and for the sake of time we will not go in detail through them all, but look at the big picture Christ is painting, and draw out applications.
2. Recall the preceding verses, the call to seek first God's kingdom, we do it as His servants.

3. We are being told to always be wearing the full armor of God, knowing the battle will not end until the King returns, waiting for His return not by laying down your armor and weapons as a traitor, but fighting faithfully, longing for His return at the appointed time, waging war for His kingdom.
- E. 36, faithful “waiting” for the Master is seen in Luke 2:
1. Simeon in Luke 2 was “waiting for the consolation of Israel” and saw the child Jesus.
 2. Then Anna the elderly, widowed prophetess who stayed in the temple praying and fasting night and day also saw Christ when Simeon was there with Jesus and his parents. She then speaks of Christ to “all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem” Lk. 2:38. Looking is translated “waiting” in Lk. 12.
 3. Simeon and Anna saw Christ, but the rest who were waiting but did not get to physically see Him, were told of Him. All true believers should be living with this expectation of the coming of Christ, the Consolation of Israel, to make all things new, and telling others about Him.
 4. It is not as if you go to hell if you are sinning at the moment Christ returns. Rather, your whole life is in view at Christ’s return, as a day is as a 1,000 years with Him, so our brief life passes before His eternal eyes on judgment day. The point is to live with that perspective by fruitful watching/serving.
 5. Simeon and Anna’s watching did not lead to idleness, they continued in prayers, good works, teaching, serving, etc. Undoubtedly the rest who were looking for redemption were doing the same.
- F. 36b-37 shows that faithful watching and fruitful serving harmonize, require each other in fact.
1. Weddings in Christ’s time took place at night, and servants were expected to attend to their Masters upon returning from a wedding. The bed must be made, the bath, the food, the fire, etc.
 2. Christ our Master/Lord will return, & he has called us to seek and serve in His kingdom, and also to watch and wait for its consummation at His return. The two go together, work together for His glory.
 3. God builds His kingdom through His Church, the body of Christ, serving Him, advancing and manifesting His kingdom by His Spirit, knowing it is Christ the Head of the body/Church working through them, calling out the orders, leading us as a true Lord/King on the battlefield.
 4. Children, be serviceable by diligence in school, adults by diligent in work and raising family, etc.
- II. Blessings for faithful watching, judgment for unfaithful watching.**
- A. Blessings in 37b, 38: The Lord will serve us in glory, honor and bless us, if we served Him on Earth!
1. 38, “second watch, or come in the third watch” The Jews had 4 watches through the night, from 6 PM to 6 AM, and the Romans had 3 watches/guards.
 2. Matthew Poole points out how this is a spiritual watching, and Rom. 13:11 and Eph. 5:14 compares our lusts and sins to being in a spiritual slumber. We must guard our hearts and minds, not be lazy so that we allow lusts and temptations to root themselves into us.
 3. This teaches us that even for the Christian, if we are not watchful, on guard, dressed for action, our default is to slide into sin. Sanctification, holiness, doesn’t happen by inertia.
- B. Inertia, our natural drift and inclination, is always back toward sin this side of glory.
1. The lusts of the flesh are like a weed implanted in the midst of our soul, always growing, so we must always be chopping it down with faith, repentance, study, prayer, encouragement, etc.
 2. Satan’s arrows, his temptations, and the world’s allurements are always being slung at us, so we must take up the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, etc.
 3. To be asleep in your bed, in nothing but your underwear, in the midst of a raging battle for your soul and growth in the Lord – this is what Christ is warning against here.

4. Those who do not know God's Word, do not worship the Lord in Spirit and in Truth, who do not join themselves to Christ's Church nor pursue holiness as the passion of their life rather than a hobby to get God off their back, are like those asleep & unarmed when the enemy comes to slit their throats.
- C. But the one who will kill & cast us into hell is not Satan, nor is it our lusts. It is the good God Almighty!
1. This can also be compared to the stages of life. We may take for granted that we will all live to a ripe old age, but that is foolishness. The drunkard says he will change later, then dies in a car crash.
 2. Who is to say the Master will not return now by taking your soul to be with Him, with nothing to do but await with dread judgment day, because you said you would repent later, but later was too late.
 3. V. 39, Christ/God's judgment is the thief, we are the master who failed to keep watch! I Thess. 5:2, says the Day of the Lord comes as a "thief in the night". Also read Rev. 3:3, 2 Pet. 3:10 on this.
 4. In a real sense, our day of death is as good as the day of judgment, because there is no repentance after we die, the judgment is according to how we lived in this life.
 5. There's no hope of us as disembodied souls repenting and trusting in Jesus and doing good works after we die but before Christ returns to raise up our mortal bodies and face His final judgment.
 6. V. 40, therefore be ready for Christ will come at an hour you do not expect like a thief in the night.
- D. On the flip side, if the Lord calls you home in the second or third watch of your life, in your early years or middle of life, and you were already serving Him diligently, you are greatly blessed!
1. The marriage supper of the Lamb is yours, and that too you can "watch" for: partaking with Christ in heaven. The Lord indeed will provide that heavenly table & serve His people, Christ's bride. Christ has said in His Father's house are many mansions, and He goes to prepare a place for His people.
- E. 41-42, Do Jesus' words apply to all Christians, or just the apostles (and church leaders today)?
1. Peter asks who Jesus' parable applies to, and the answer is to church leaders in particular, but by application, this can apply to any Christian or anyone in leadership with great responsibility.
 2. 42, "steward" is *oikonomos*, meaning house-law/house manager. Pastors/ministers in view.
 3. But parents have this over their children, fathers/husbands over whole household, etc.
 4. If you are wise over your own house/family, the Lord may make you a ruler over his household, as v. 42 says, and in keeping with qualifications for Elders in I Tim. 3 and Titus 1.
 5. 43-44, such pastors/elders are greatly blessed for their important, faithful service, and yet we know from James 3 few should become teachers because they are held to a stricter judgment.
 6. Luke 19:17 has shown us in the parable of the minas who productivity/fruitful service leads to ruling over much in the Kingdom of heaven. There is that eternal return on being rich toward God/investing in heavenly riches and not earthly riches that rust and moth destroy!
- F. 45-48, Christians, especially ministers/leaders in authority, who get tired of "watching" for Christ's return, will face more severe judgment!
1. They might see much injustice in this life, little seeming fruit in God's church/kingdom, and so grow weary in well-doing, lose heart, and begin mistreating God's sheep, His "male and female servants".
 2. Such ministers use tithe money to live easy lives, eat, drink, & be merry.
 3. Those given much from the Lord, who were baptized into Christ, have heard the Gospel, taught sound doctrine, yet fail to faithfully watch and fruitfully serve, will be "beaten with many stripes".
 4. This refers to severe punishment in hell, in comparison to the pagan who never heard the Gospel, never had a church to go to; they will suffer for their sin in hell, but less severely so.

5. The principle is given at the end of v. 48, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

III. How Christ faithfully watched and fruitfully served God the Father, and equips us to do the same:

A. Christ lived His whole life in service and preparation for His great judgment day.

1. We do see that Jesus knew something of when His hour had come to be glorified, Jn. 12:23.
2. He, too, died facing judgment. His death was judgment, as all death is, for the wages of sin is death.
3. In fact Lk. 12:49-50, the very next verse, Christ refers to His readiness for His "baptism" of death and judgment. It is distressing to Him, He must face the cross, the Father's wrath and judgment for His people's sins, borne on His own shoulders at the cross.
4. His judgment was most severe, for He suffered as the innocent, indeed perfectly righteous, Son of God for the sake of sinners. His substitutionary atonement, His baptism and cup that He drank, none other could drink, Matt. 20:22-23. It is the cup of God's wrath for the elect's sin.
5. And yet, Mt. 20:23 Jesus says the disciples will drink of the cup and be baptized with that baptism.
6. But that is only by virtue of union with Christ, so as His disciples, we derivatively suffer persecution.
7. Baptism and the Lord's Supper is a partaking in what Christ has done for us, for He ministers them to us, and so we do have His baptism and drink His cup and remember and proclaim His death, but we participate in that through Christ who was baptized and drank the Father's wrath on the cross.
8. He suffered the Father's wrath as our substitute, and we enter into His protection/atonement by union with Christ, not by facing the wrath directly ourselves, but through Christ who suffered for us, laying down His life for us even as husbands are called to do for their wives.

B. Christ's disciples failed to keep watch as Christ was keeping watch to prepare for His death/judgment.

1. Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, fervently prays in the night, asks His disciples to do the same, especially Peter. But they do not, He tells them to do so in order to not fall into temptation.
2. Peter would soon deny Christ 3 times, but Christ had even prayed for Peter to be restored to faith, for Satan had asked to sift Peter like wheat!
3. Satan would sift all God's children like wheat, but take heart, Christ prays for His elect bride even as He prayed for Peter. He is our intercessor, His blood always prays/pleads for us before the Father!
4. Christ was watchful in prayer through the night watches, quite literally, when the thief in the night, the traitor Judas who sold out Jesus for a few coins, came.
5. Our lives may be taken suddenly, earlier than we'd expect, and then we are standing not before Herod or Pontius Pilate, but the just Lord God Almighty and His throne.

C. May we always be watchful, prayerful, worshiping and serving God, even as Christ did in His life, to the bitter end, which birthed the joyful new beginning of resurrection life unto glory!

1. The hard truth is that we will often be like Christ's disciples, asleep at the wheel, asleep in crunch time, without our loins girded and lights burning, failing to watch for the Lord and serve Him.
2. And yet, the Lord Jesus Christ prays for all His elect, like Peter, and like Peter, we will repent bitterly for our failures, our sins, and will strengthen the brethren in word and deed as fruits of that genuine repentance, just as Christ commanded Peter to do and Peter ultimately did.
3. So let us faithfully watch for the Lord's coming in all that we think, say, and do, so that day of the Lord's return motivates us to continually serve Him with glad hearts. May we remember His promised blessings, and also shudder at His punishments if we shrink back and do not persevere. Let us pray.