

Jesus Teaches His Disciples

Lesson #3 – The Need for Watchful Waiting & Faithful Working

Luke 12:35-48

As Jesus teaches the “innumerable multitude” along with His followers, He shifts the emphasis from worrying about the present to being watchful for the future. The themes of Luke 12 all go together, for one of the best ways to conquer hypocrisy, covetousness, and worry is to look for the Lord’s return! Throughout this teaching session, Jesus is presenting practical doctrine for His followers and He continues to encourage those struggling with decision concerning His person. Jesus will now give an exhortation to watchfulness. He has been very clear concerning His soon-to-be death and resurrection. But now He will begin to speak of leaving and then returning! Since a believer’s treasure is to be in heaven, and since he is not to be living in concern or fear about the daily needs, he should look forward to Christ’s return!

I. The Need for Watchful Waiting

➤ Thesis Statement

“Let your loins (Lit. - clothing be secured at the waist) be girded about, and your lights (Lit. - lamps continually) burning;” Luke 12:35 Everyone listening that day could picture exactly what Jesus was communicating by this statement. It is the breakdown of culture that causes us to wonder.

“loins be girded” – a man’s outer robe had to be tucked into a belt at the waist before working or moving about. It could be free to flow while walking or sitting, but with work, it must be tied up.

“lights burning” – not allowing the lamps to go out; diligent to keep them lit

In our terms, we might say, “Get on your work clothes, and grab your flashlight or headlamp!” Both are statements about being ready for action. **Being alert and ready to move!**

This is the theme of the next two illustrations. Jesus teaches that a believer needs to live with an attitude of readiness and watchfulness for the return of Jesus.

➤ Supportive Parable #1 – Groom’s Return from Wedding

Jewish wedding practices: The betrothal or somewhat like our engagement time, would last about a year. The couple was legally married but not living together. It was a time of preparation for both. At the end of that year, a great feast was planned, and family and friends would gather to celebrate. Late that night, the groom would bring his bride back to their new home, where they would be greeted by servants who were ready open the door and welcome them.

- “ye yourselves like unto”

“And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.” Luke 12:36

Again, everyone listening that day knew all about weddings, just as we are very familiar with the goings-on of our 21st-century weddings. See the phrase, “**the wedding?**” That made me smile. I have six adult children, and have been involved in two “the wedding.” You know what I mean? It seems that for months, every conversation is about “the wedding.” You buy countless items for “the wedding.” Your brain is constantly thinking about “the wedding!” You begin to wonder if there is life after “the wedding!” We can be certain that weddings had that

same importance in Jesus' day. So, when Jesus talks about the group of men waiting for their master as he returns from "the wedding," we can be sure this was understood as very important. This was not only a wedding, but it was "the wedding" of their master! A very big deal! A huge deal! They needed to stand ready!

- "Blessed are those servants"

"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. ³⁸And if he shall come in the second watch (Lit. - 9 pm – 12 am), or come in the third watch (Lit. - 12 - 3 am), and find them so, blessed are those servants." Luke 12:37-38

The servants who are watching for the return of the groom are blessed! You see, they don't know what time the happy couple will be arriving! They had to keep **watch and be ready** in hopeful expectation! The servants certainly didn't want to be taken by surprise. This makes complete sense. There was no tight wedding schedule in the 1st century like many have today! Some modern brides have that special day scheduled down to the minute! I've seen it!! But in Jesus' day, they didn't live by the clock! So here we see, "if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch." The servants just didn't know when they would come! This is not referring to the Jewish night watch system found in the Old Testament, but the Roman nighttime watch system; 1st watch – 6-9 pm (way too early to wrap up the wedding banquet); 2nd watch – 9 pm-12 am (this time might be more likely for the couple to arrive home); or if the party was going strong, it could be the 3rd watch - 12 -3 am, but Jesus doesn't even give the 4th watch- 3-6 am (no honeymoon is starting that late for most couples!!) But for the servants **waiting and watching** that would get long and maybe even difficult to stay awake and watch! Ever stay up all night? Some of you might know that, because water seeped into our finished basement a couple of weeks ago, John and I stayed up all night tending to the mess. That was tough! My husband is a champ; I don't know where he gets his endless energy. I was ready to throw in the sappy, dripping towels by 10.30! It was a long, exhausting night! But these servants only had one job that night, to be **watching and waiting** for the groom and his bride so they could "open unto him immediately."

But don't miss this: **the watchful waiting servants would be greatly rewarded for their faithfulness.** Jesus goes on and tells the disciples that the roles would be reversed between the master groom and the waiting servants. Verse 37 says, "verily I say unto you, that he (*the master*) shall gird himself, and make them (*the servants*) to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." This is unprecedented! No 1st century master served his servants: not hired workers, and certainly not slaves!! A master would never set up a banquet, have the slaves or workers sit to enjoy a relaxing full-course meal, and then serve it to them himself! Yet this is **Jesus' plan for His servants and followers!** He will love them, die for them, lead them, comfort them, serve them!

- **Supportive Parable #2 – Late Night Thief** Here's another parable again teaching the unexpectedness of Jesus' return!

- "he would have watched"

"And this know, that if the goodman (Lit. - owner) of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through." Luke 12:39

Of course, a homeowner would never know when a thief planned to break in. That's not how thievery works! But Jesus' point is to always be on guard, always be ready, as if a robbery could happen at any time, so could the coming of Jesus. Paul used the same figurative language in **1 Thess. 5:2-6.**

➤ Jesus' Application of Parables

“Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.” Luke 12:40
Both of these parables highlight the **unexpected nature of Jesus' second coming**. Just like a 1st century bride and groom coming home from their wedding and a sneaky thief, they both arrive suddenly and unexpectedly. **Jesus' followers must always be on guard, waiting and watching; ready at whatever hour Jesus comes!**

II. The Need for Faithful Working

- **Peter's Interruption** Recent Interruptions to Jesus in our study: enthusiastic woman – Luke 11:27; snobby Scribe – Luke 11:45; covetous man – Luke 12:13; and now Peter

“Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?” Luke 12:41
Peter is the self-appointed spokesman of the disciples, and he asks Jesus, “Lord, are you telling these things to just us or all this crowd?” Usually, Jesus will answer these interruptions, sometimes with a direct answer, sometimes with a rebuke, and many times He will use the question as part of His teaching, but **here He simply ignores it**. Why? Because the subject matter was obvious. Who would be serving, waiting, watching, and later served by Jesus? His faithful followers! Again, Peter forgot to think before speaking!

Jesus will continue with two connected parables about a wise and wicked **household servant**. Notice how **watching and waiting wasn't all Jesus required of His followers, but also faithful, wise service too!**

- **Parable of Contrasts – Wise Steward**

“And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward (Lit. - manager), whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? ⁴³Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. ⁴⁴Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.” Luke 12:42-44

What we see emphasized here is a promotion for faithful service, a reward. Jesus is describing a “faithful and wise” servant who had been given responsibility by the homeowner to distribute food to the other servants. This servant manager was both faithful to their duties and wise in their dealings. And the master later made him “**ruler over all**” that he had! Do you get this? This servant went from heading up the household cafeteria to the administrative offices!! Makes me think of the Old Testament events surrounding Joseph in Egypt. Everywhere Joseph went, he was promoted because of his wisdom and efficient service. God blessed him with promotion. Joseph first ruled over Potiphar's house and later all of Egypt! And Jesus is saying the same thing, “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Your faithful, wise service to me will cause me to promote you to more responsibility!” Later in Matthew 25:21, 23, Jesus will restate this principle in another parable.

- **Parable of Contrasts – Wicked Steward**

“But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; ⁴⁶The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. ⁴⁸But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.”

Luke 12:45-48a

But here's the big contrast, the wicked servant. He, too, had the responsibility to oversee the other servants, but he saw the absence of his master not as an opportunity to work diligently, but to **lord over the others and party!** We are told he physically mistreated both the men and ladies in the household, gluttoned on the master's food, and got drunk on the master's wine. What a loser!

Jesus' parable went on and said that on a day when this wicked servant "looketh **not** for him, and at an hour when he is not aware," a severe punishment came! Jesus goes on in verses 47-48, teaching that knowledge comes with responsibility. In His parable, a servant who knew exactly what was expected of him and didn't do it because of laziness or defiance would be punished more than the servant who didn't fully understand or know what was expected. Both would be punished, but in varying degrees.

➤ Jesus' Application of Parable

"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Luke 12:48b

*With great privilege from God comes great responsibility from God,
and with that privilege and responsibility comes also great accountability to God,
and with that accountability comes reward or punishment!*

Here we find the connections to the disciples and to us, His 21st-century believers. All of Jesus' followers are given much in salvation, but each has different gifts and opportunities that, in turn, give them different responsibilities.

For instance, at this time, His disciples were given the privilege of walking with Jesus, hearing from Jesus, observing Jesus, and, in the months and years ahead, they would have the great responsibility of spreading the good news of the Gospel and beginning the new institution of the church. That's a lot of responsibility!

We, the 21st-century believers, have the completed Word of God, the Holy Spirit living within us, the testimony and writings of former saints, countless study helps, the platforms of international travel and communication, all for the giving of the Gospel and the formation and strengthening of more churches! That's a lot of responsibility.

And please realize, **with great privilege from God comes great responsibility from God, and with that privilege and responsibility comes also great accountability to God, and with that accountability comes reward and punishment! Wow!** Paul speaks of this in **2 Cor. 5:9-11.**

Before going on, we need to reestablish who Jesus is talking to. Back in verse 22, it clearly tells us **He was addressing His disciples**, His faithful followers, though before the great crowd; later, in verse 54, He will shift again to the people. So, we can be confident that these statements concerning privileges, responsibilities, and accountability are for believers. With that said, look at verses 45-46 again. **(read)** Slave owners did have the right to punish their slaves at the time of Jesus, even to death, but more probably, this phrase "will cut him in sunder, and will appoint his portion with the unbelievers" **did not mean execution** but instead a different kind of **cutting and appointing punishment**. As we look at the word translated "unbelievers," the Greek word can also be translated "unfaithful," and about 50% of English translations use the word "unfaithful" in this passage: "will cut him in sunder, and will appoint his portion with *the unfaithful*." So, what was the probable punishment for this wicked, unfaithful servant? The owner would cut him out of his roles of responsibility and put him with other slaves who were low-level, unfaithful, and untrustworthy. Even one English

translation/commentary said, the householder would send that wicked servant back down to the kitchen to peel potatoes or out to the barn to clean stalls instead of ruling in the house! Because of his unfaithfulness and misuse of his responsibilities, his privilege was cut away, and his punishment was removal from useful service. Wow!

Just a swing back to Peter's question, "Who are you talking to, Lord?" The answer would be all those followers with Jesus that day, but especially the special chosen twelve. They would be special managers of the will of God, as Jesus gave the Great Commission and ascended into heaven. But all listening, then and now, are managers of the responsibilities God has entrusted to us. How are you managing? Are you serving as Paul also encouraged? "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." 1 Cor. 4:2

Let's take a quick review! Jesus is moving through this wonderful teaching session, speaking to this massive crowd and His faithful followers. He is calling the crowd to confess Him as their Messiah, and the disciples to faithfulness in life and service. Jesus told them that He was going to leave, but then one day, when they knew not, He would return. So, they must be ready and...

Ready People are:

- 1) **Not hypocritical, but sincere v. 1-3** All their lives, the disciples had viewed normal religion as hypocritical Pharisees. Jesus called them to "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy," because God knew all things. They were to live sincerely in their walk with God.
- 2) **Not fearful, but ready to witness v. 11-12** The disciples were obviously fearful of the active hatred demonstrated by the Religious Leaders toward their Master. But Jesus called them not to fear but to understand that the Holy Spirit would give them the very words to witness before them!
- 3) **Not greedy, but generous v. 13-21** Jesus told the disciples that one's life consisted not in the abundance of the things he possessed but what is stored up in heaven! Then one is rich toward God! So be ready to live generously for the kingdom!
- 4) **Not anxious, but trusting v. 22-34** Those disciples and followers with Jesus had given up much: homes, jobs, families, their future. But Jesus told them not to be anxious, just as big noisy birds, and lilies receive from God their very existence, so will they. "How much more are ye better than" these?
- 5) **Not lazy, but diligent v. 35-40** Lazy, power-hungry, dominating, abusive, workers for God would be punished with a lack of rewards and usefulness. God's workers were always called to ready watchfulness and faithful diligence. And these verses make it very plain that, **with great privilege from God comes great responsibility** from God, and with **that privilege and responsibility comes also great accountability** to God, and with that **accountability comes reward or punishment!**

Ready to greet Jesus joyfully!

Lastly, have you ever wondered why Jesus has lingered these 2000 years? It is for the souls of men to be saved. Listen to 2 Peter 3:9-10. God is "not willing that any should perish!" Have you made the commitment to follow Jesus? Have you taken for yourself the gift of salvation paid by Jesus through His death on the cross? Is he still waiting for you? Make that commitment to Christ today!! **Titus 2:11-15**