

LESSONS FROM HEAVEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH - The Parables - Pt 15
Sunday, November 7th, 2021, 6:30 p.m. - Teaching # 2142
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DEGREES OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT WHEN JESUS COMES AGAIN

Luke 12:35-48 - "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! [39] 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." [41] Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" [42] And the Lord said, "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. [45] 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."

A careful reading of these verses reveals they do not technically form **one** parable. The passage is really a string of brief stories collected around a single theme: ***First, there is the story of household servants, awaiting their master's return from a wedding feast (12:35-38)***. Then, ***second, there is the warning of being caught unprepared in the story of the thief who breaks into the house while the head of the house is sleeping (12:39-40)***.

After this second illustration, Peter asks Jesus the really interesting theological question about whether that warning is directed to them (the disciples) or to the crowd in general - ***"Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?"(12:41)***. In other words, Peter wants to know if this state of ***unpreparedness*** is a possibility for himself, or just those who really aren't disciples of Jesus at all.

Finally, and at least partially in response to Peter's question, ***there comes the story of four different servants at different stages of readiness or unreadiness at the return of their master (12:42-48)***.

That's the basic flow of the passage. Now let's look at how the text before us fits in with the teaching of the rest of this chapter:

This series of parables follows immediately on the heels of the teaching of the man God called a fool. In that parable (12:15-21) Jesus told the story of a wealthy farmer who lived totally for the hoarding of material goods. Jesus gave a clear example of a person who had ***so fixed his attention on the things of this world, he was totally unprepared for the fact that he was about to meet God that very night.***

Then, especially in **verse 31**, Jesus urges all His disciples to give their utmost diligence to ***seeking His kingdom first every day of their lives - “Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.”*** The pursuit of material things, power, and pleasure will ***distract attention from the inevitable Coming of Jesus.***

So, in today’s text, because this subject is the single most important one in the mind of Jesus, He continues on this theme of ***alertness and readiness for His coming.*** He approaches the subject from two different directions. ***First, he gives encouragement for those who will be faithful and prepared (12:35-38).*** Then, ***second, he gives warning to those who are negligent in preparing for His Coming (12:39-48).***

1) **THE THREE BASIC AREAS OF READINESS FOR THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS**

Luke 12:35-38 - “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!”

These are really wonderful verses to study. They contain ***three areas of readiness*** followed by the ***promised blessing of Jesus***.

First, the ***three areas of readiness*** for the Second Coming of Jesus:

- a) ***“Stay dressed for action....” (12:35a)***. Actually, the phrasing in the old English of the King James is helpful - ***“Let your loins be girded.”*** While we don’t use those expressions anymore, they ***do*** help give a picture of the intended meaning.

People wore **long robes** that literally dragged around in the dust. They were heavy and bulky and cumbersome. But there was also a heavy leather belt worn around the waste. And the encouragement here was to make sure the bulk and weight of the robe was **tucked and secured in that wastebelt so as not to get in the way of quick and sudden movement.**

This is the same thought in Paul's mind when he thinks of the spiritual warfare we are all involved in. In one of the more involved images he says, "**....and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace**"(Ephesians 6:15).

I take that to mean responding to the gospel isn't just a **one time** decision. It changes the way you **travel** through life. Real readiness includes not only staying **clean**, it involves staying **quick and active and constantly on the move in the next thing Jesus has for your life.** The thrust here is **service** and **activity** for Jesus, not just abstaining from acts of **sin**. It's about being **light on your feet** for Him - **responsive** - in this darkened, stodgy world.

Think of being ready as being ready for the **next** thing God has for you to do. Think of being ready as **not living too tightly tied to your own future plans**. Think of being ready as **being constantly ready to move into something brand new when Jesus calls**.

Don't think of yourself as automatically locked into any career from now until Jesus comes. What **else** might Jesus have for you? Who's the next person, or people group Jesus might want to use you to reach? Your house is payed for? Good. Now, what's the **next thing** Jesus might want you sponsoring in His Kingdom?

Remember, Jesus just warned, earlier in this very chapter, about the rich man who, when considering his future, could think of nothing else but building bigger barns to store more stuff for himself. Now, hear Jesus calling you to be dressed in readiness to move, to change, to expand your vision and horizons.

If I'm locked into only **one way** of thinking about my future - if I'm not even open to the possibility of moving into whatever Jesus may have for me **next** - then I'm unprepared for His Second Coming. We'll see that in the second part of this message. Now for the second area of readiness:

b) **“Keep your lamps burning” (12:35b)**. I don’t think it stretches the passage at all to consider the two most common themes in the New Testament around this image of a brightly burning lamp. Simply put, here are the two parts to this image. A lit lamp means both **seeing** and **being seen**. It has to do with knowing **where you’re going** in the dark. And it has to do with **being seen** in a dark place. Let’s look at each of these in turn:

i) Being ready for Jesus’ coming requires **knowing where you’re going in the dark**. Later on in this very parable there’s a servant who’s going to receive a beating because **he didn’t know the master’s will (12:48)**. The fact that he was **punished** for not knowing it, shows he was **responsible** to know it.

Dear one, open your eyes and look around. This world is growing more and more confused by the week. And you and I are not called to **adjust** to the darkness. We’re called to **penetrate** the darkness with the light of solid, certain, fixed revealed truth.

Psalm 119:105 - “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

2 Peter 1:19 - “And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts....”

Learn while you're young to live by the Book. Truth is ***absolute***, not ***relative***. Right and wrong are in the hands of a holy God, not in the polls of the masses. Standards of holiness don't change with hair styles.

Shine the light of God's Word brightly into this dark world and you won't always be popular. But far more important than that, ***you will always know where you're going***. And you will be ready for Jesus when He comes again.

- ii) ***The light of truth not only has to do with seeing clearly, it has to do with being seen.***

Matthew 5:16 - “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Our very presence in this world is to be like salt. Our very actions are to ***keep the world from becoming darker than it already is***. Our actions and our words are to be such that ***people will be less comfortable with their sin just because we are near them***.

We get it all backwards. There is so much pressure to ***conform***. We feel uncomfortable as Christians in this dark world - **Romans 12:2** - ***“Do not be conformed to this world....”***- J.B.Phillips says, ***“Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold!”***

We can easily feel ***intimidated***. But the Bible says it should almost be the other way around. It’s the wicked who should feel intimidated by our presence. Our actions should expose and show the stupidity of sin for what it is.

Now on to the ***third aspect of readiness for the Second Coming of Jesus:***

- c) ***Being ready for the Second Coming of Jesus means fighting fatigue and weariness - “If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!”(12:38).***

The end of the third watch is close to three in the morning. Everything is tougher to do at three in the morning. Time drags. Passion and vision grow slack. The tasks you approached with freshness at two in the afternoon can turn into a grind.

Jesus says being prepared for His return means ***confronting those times with understanding and patience, and persistence***. Paul says that in all service there are times that feel ***in season*** and there are times that feel ***out of season***.

Other Scriptures teach the same truth in different words. Some times are great seasons of ***ingathering and harvest*** in your walk with the Lord. Other times, all you do is dig and plant seeds. Those are just seasons of ***sowing***. Sowing means ***you're not getting anything back from all your efforts***. At least not yet. You still do the work. You still expend energy. You still get up early and stay up late. The work load isn't lightened one bit. But you don't have any ***returns*** for all your effort.

Eternity is the harvest time, not this present life. Every blessing that comes from my walk with Jesus in this present age - and there are **many** - is a bonus. My Bible says I'm a stranger and a pilgrim here. I'm totally dedicated to the reward of another kingdom. That's where my whole life is aimed. As a Christian, the biggest mental confrontation I have with the spirit of this age is that everyone around me clamors for the fulfillment of their own rights **here and now**. I forfeit my rights for my Master and the reward of **another age**.

If you don't do everything you do for the Lord with this understanding, **if everything you invest in obedience must have immediate payback for you to stay diligent**, you will not be ready for the Second Coming of Jesus. You will grow weary and quit.

Hear the encouragement of the Scriptures:

Galatians 6:8 - "For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

Hebrews 12:1-3 - “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. [3] Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”

Let's wrap up. There are three elements of readiness for the Second Coming of Jesus:

First, be constantly dressed in readiness to move quickly into whatever is next on the master's agenda. Don't anchor the rest of your life in the cement of your own agenda. Don't ***assume*** the rest of your life. Be constantly prepared and alert for His fresh will for your life like fresh bread baked every morning.

Second, have your mind filled with the light of God's revealed truth to counteract the influence of this dark world. Refuse to be shaped by the pressure of the spirit of the age. Cut through the spiritual fog of your peers with the solid revealed truth of God's Word. Keep that lamp lit at all times.

Third, *fight weariness and fatigue, recognizing the difference between times of sowing and times of reaping.*

Don't quit every time the devil tells you to quit. Learn what David meant when he said to ***wait in hope for the Lord.***

More on this passage in the next message.