

**LESSONS FROM HEAVEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH - The Parables - Pt 16****Sunday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 6:30 p.m. - Teaching # 2144****Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON****DEGREES OF PUNISHMENT AND DEGREES OF REWARD WHEN  
JESUS COMES AGAIN (part two)**

**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."

In the last message we looked at the basic areas of New Testament readiness for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In the middle of this passage Jesus promised wonderful reward for servants who were serving Him faithfully when He came:

**Luke 12:37-38 - “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!”**

If those words didn't come from the lips of Jesus, we wouldn't dare to believe them. Imagine Jesus, the Lord from heaven, rewarding His servants by **serving** them. That will be an incredibly humbling experience for all of us. Imagine the incredible humility and gratitude of Jesus. In a fashion reminiscent of His washing of the disciples' feet, the text actually says Jesus will “**serve**” us (37).

But this passage has another side to it. Jesus has something else important to say on the subject of His Second Coming and our readiness for it. Just as surely as we're stunned at the thought of Jesus **serving** faithful servants, we are also not quite ready for His tone of **wrath** regarding the **unfaithful**. As we continue our study of this string of parables, we find our Lord dealing in raw, clear terms about those servants who **aren't** ready when He comes back.

Most of us have been trained to think of people as being ready or unready - saved or lost - when Jesus comes again. And that is true as far as it goes. No one will be ready to meet Jesus who isn't a recipient of redemption through Christ's sinless life, death, and resurrection. That's basic. But this parable has Jesus giving teaching not often dealt with in the New Testament. Jesus speaks of ***three kinds of unreadiness*** for His coming. We need to consider this parable carefully:

**Luke 12:43-48** - “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.”

In contrast to the faithful servant praised in **verses 42-44**, Jesus specifically mentions three servants who fail the test of being ready for the master's return. While all fail the test of readiness, not all are punished alike. We need to study their situations carefully:

1) **ONE SLAVE DID THINGS SPECIFICALLY AGAINST THE WILL OF THE MASTER**

**Luke 12:45-46** - “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.”

These are very sobering words. They go to the very heart of Peter's question in **verse 41** - “Peter said, ‘Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?’” “Does everyone need to hear the warning about the thief breaking into their house when they aren't expecting him? Is that something we disciples need to take heed to as well as the masses?” That's what is on Peter's mind.

Without directly answering the question, Jesus' next parable addresses the issue very clearly. **Everyone** needs to be careful about faithfulness while waiting for Jesus' return because not everyone who **professes** readiness is truly **prepared** to meet Jesus.

This servant was under the employment of his master. He probably **told** the master he would faithfully execute his master's will while the master was away. But for all that profession, he ends up assigned a place with the "**unfaithful**" (12:46).

And here's another tricky point to note. Not **all** the unfaithful servants ended up there. They didn't all receive this same stern rejection. Only this one is singled out for such drastic treatment. **Why?** Because he was **committed** to wickedness while he was **supposed** to be serving his master. I said "**committed to wickedness**." That's the important point in considering this first wicked servant.

Here's the simple lesson. Nothing angers Father God and reserves the soul for judgement more than **abiding** in activities forbidden by our Master. This is sin against knowledge and light. This is **persistent** sin. **Stubborn** sin. This must be allowed full registry in our minds. I can simultaneously sit in church and commit to activities I **know** are violations of God's Word. I can justify improper relations with the opposite sex. I can feed attractions to the **same** sex. I can justify dishonesty and corruption. I can justify hatred and temper and ill-will. I can abide on any church membership list while having a heart filled with greed and covetousness. But, if I **continue** in my rebellion, I will end up with the unfaithful on judgment day.

Having ears doesn't guarantee **hearing**. "He who has ears, **let** him hear."

2) **THE SECOND SLAVE WAS PUNISHED FOR NOT DOING THE REVEALED WILL OF HIS MASTER**

**Luke 12:47** "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."

This is a little different from the sin of the first unfaithful slave. This slave isn't sited as **doing** the wicked things the first slave did. His sin is of a different nature. His were sins of **omission**. He is punished for what he **failed** to do. He didn't **do** the master's will while the master was away. There were things he knew he **should do**. He simply chose **not** to do them.

But if a servant isn't doing the work, what kind of servant is he? If you pay someone to do your yard work this Saturday, do you feel pleased paying him for work he didn't do just because he didn't steal your silverware? Jesus is putting force behind His reminder of the whole point of servanthood here. A servant isn't worth his salt just because he or she doesn't do something **bad** to the master. The master has things the slave is to **do** for him.

You can tell the apostle Paul thought a great deal about this idea of **productivity in the Lord's work:**

**1 Corinthians 3:12-15** - “Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— [13] each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. [14] If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. [15] If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”

People have many questions about these words from Paul. And they **are** difficult verses. But at least this much is very clear. Only **some** work will receive a **reward** - “If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward”(14). Other servants will find their work **worthless**. Paul says everything they did will be **burned up** and they will **suffer loss** (15). It's not that they will be cast out with the unbelievers. Paul says they will still be **saved** (15).

So, just as we're not all going to be **rewarded** equally for our faithfulness, we will not all be **punished** in exactly the same way for our unfaithfulness. The Lord is absolutely just. He will do exactly the right thing. But those words of teaching from Jesus and Paul are meant to be taken seriously by every disciple of Jesus.

As I understand it, the fruit of my labor for Jesus is all that I have *laid up through my investment in His kingdom* while I am here on earth. There will come this time of assessment of all I have done. There will be a *reward* for faithfulness. There will come the *smile and approval* from our Lord. There will come the words, “**Well done, my good and faithful servant.**”

But Paul says none of that is automatically mine just as a *right of conversion*. Not everyone who goes to heaven through faith in Jesus Christ will hear those words, “**Well done, my good and faithful servant.**”

This second servant, who knew the master’s will but didn’t get it done, while not assigned a place with the unbelievers, received a “**severe beating**” (47). Those are very difficult words to deal with. While I don’t even pretend to know *how and when* that process of judgement (Paul calls it “*suffering loss*”) will take place, *I can read*. And I know that this is not something pleasant. I know that there will be servants who find the reward of their labors *far diminished* from anything they expected.

So, there will be servants of Jesus, who, while not assigned a place with the unbelievers, will still sting and smart and, in the words of Paul, *suffer loss* before the judgement of Jesus when He comes again.

The message from these words of warning is clear. ***Do what Jesus is calling you to do.*** Don't think just because you're already a Christian the rest of your life doesn't effect eternity. The rest of your life ***matters.*** It will matter for all eternity.

- 3) THE THIRD SERVANT FAILED TO DO WHAT HE SHOULD HAVE DONE, BUT RECEIVED LESS PUNISHMENT BECAUSE HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE MASTER'S WILL WAS

Luke 12:48 - “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.”

The obvious point is ***increased blessing and increased light bring increased responsibility.*** As servants of the Lord, we are expected to make full use of all we have received from His hand. To whom much has been ***given*** much is also ***required.***

So if you and I want those wonderful words of benediction from our Lord, “***Well done, good and faithful servant,***” we will have to be both ***good*** and ***faithful.*** Those two words aren't synonyms. To be ***good*** is to stay ***clean.*** To be ***faithful*** is to stay ***productive.***

I'll tell you why I think many of us have trouble getting a handle on these words of Jesus. Most North American Christians have become so **rights oriented** in all of life, they live as though **entitled** the best of everything. We are now living in a day when, even in the church, people have come to think of God as owing joy and blessing and bliss to everyone but serial killers. This New Testament news flash that diligence in service is important to our eternal standing comes as quite a shock.

So eventually Peter gets his question answered. "**Lord, are these strong words for the masses, or are they for us too?**"

O, they're for you, all right, Peter. They're for the whole church. There's more to being ready than most Christians think. True, we're not saved **by** works of service. We're saved by grace alone, apart from works. But we are saved **for** works of service. And the only proof we value our Master and Lord above all else is that we **are still faithfully doing His will, so His coming won't catch us spiritually asleep like a thief in the middle of the night.**

By the way, I take that reference to the "**middle of the night**" to mean our Lord tests servanthood by the extent to which we remain faithful when our service is the most **inconvenient** for us. No one naturally gravitates to a task in the middle of the night. That's why faithfulness there is specifically mentioned and noted.