

ARE YOU READY? LUKE 12:35-48

Today's passage is not one I would choose to preach on. The 3 key themes raise 3 really difficult questions. Paul said there is a time coming when people will just listen to the teaching they want to hear. 2 Tim 4:3. **Read. Luke 12:35-48**

The first theme is around the Lord's return. Do we believe in Jesus Christ return?

It is core theology and yet it is not talked about much today. If you grew up in church circles in the 70s and 80s you will know it was very prominent. Why not now?

It is so divisive and confusing. It is hard to keep waiting for something that does not happen. There have been so many false predictions. It is also hard to believe. It is very concrete: God returning to this world in such a way that it is not debatable.

I have heard a few people say the pandemic is a sign of the end times. Jesus clearly says there will be wars, earthquakes and pandemics and they are not signs. Read Luke 21:11. Matthew 24:4-8. He said it would be like the times of Noah where people were living normally. Luke 17:26ff He said it would be like a thief in the night. Unexpected.

Therefore, we have to decide. Do I trust what God says? He is returning. Think carefully for a minute. If Christ were to return today, what would your reaction be? Annoyed, fearful, said, or joy?

Second major theme of this passage is around being ready. Story set in the culture of the time with masters and servants/slaves.

Note servant slave idea. Many in Roman Empire were in slavery. Not like 17th century slavery where slavery was based on race. Some similarities. Could be traded. And you were treated like a commodity. But you also had some rights. Many slaves were highly skilled. And it was not for a lifetime. They would normally expect to be free by 30. A master was responsible for an extended household.

Weddings went on for up to a week. Therefore, if the boss went away to a wedding, the employees would have no idea when he would be back. Could come back in 2 or 3 days or might be a week. The picture is that someone would be on the lookout for his return. They would want everything ready for this return. They would go to meet him, escort him to the property and make sure a meal was ready, and the place was ship shape. Then in an amazing picture of role reversal, the Master serves the servants.

Be dressed for service and well prepared. The picture here is of the dress of time. Not pants but tunic. However, if you wanted to work, move freely, tucked it up into one's belt. The second uncomfortable question is this. **Are you ready for the Lord's return?**

Jesus is coming to earth to bring about his kingdom. That what he is returning to do. The picture in 1 Thess 4:17 is used to support the rapture but is not right. (I realize that some of you will not agree) Paul is using a metaphor of an emperor who would go off to war. When he returned from war, the people would go out of the city to meet their emperor. They did not go out there and have a picnic but escorted their emperor into the city, Jesus did not ask us to pray they kingdom come of earth as it is in heaven and then have us all leave earth to live in some spiritual space somewhere. Jesus return is the fulfilment of that prayer.

What this parable is asking is: are we ready for Christ's return. Are our thoughts and actions about working and doing what we are able to bring God's kingdom here on earth? It will be a huge shock for us if Christ comes back and we do not have a kingdom mentality.

If we have said. Well, I do not know when he is coming back. Maybe he is not coming back. We can just go about building our own little empires. Actually, it does not really matter what we do because heaven is some spiritual state up in the clouds. Therefore, I can just do what I want down here.

If we are not passionate about God's kingdom now, then why would we be excited about Christ returning to rule and reign over his kingdom. Very uncomfortable.

If you do not have a servant mentality now, then Christ's return is going to be very tricky. No ambiguity. Christ glory will be manifestly obvious. His power, his glory, his majesty. If we are not used to serving now, how will we cope in this kingdom

Are we serving one another and building up the body of Christ. Are we working on unity, good relationships and loving one another. Do we love the stranger in our midst and those in need we come across? These are the instructions of Jesus. When he returns, will he find us doing these things?

Alternatively, do we think? I am too busy now. However, one day, I will get involved in church. Maybe when I retire I will have time. Alternatively, do we think? Well, it does not matter. Christ has not come back in 2000 years, so he is not likely to do it any time soon. Maybe he never will.

The third theme is around Accountability Peter says well who are you referring here. Everyone or us. Jesus Tells this second story: the implication is extra responsibility for those who are given responsibility. Some would say this includes everyone. But seems to have weight on those who are in some kind of leadership role. I.e. "To whom the master has given responsibility for managing his household and feeding his family.

This head servant is oppressing other servants, partying, and getting drunk. It speaks of leadership that is demanding,



abusive, leading an excessive lifestyle. I.e. Leadership that lacks integrity. One sees this unfortunately in church leadership with waves of leaders caught in abuse. Living lifestyles of luxury and putting huge demands on people to give. They will be held to account.

It sounds gruesome when it says that servant will be torn apart and banished. Not literal. But implication is that they will face judgement. Many would argue that the punishment is the same as someone who is not a believer and that they were never part of God's kingdom to start with. Their life and actions show they did not have a relationship with God.

Jesus ends with the statement that is more general and applies to everyone. Much is required from those to whom much is given and much more is required from those to whom much more is given.

We have more resources than any generation that has ever lived before. We have more access to the Bible and God's word than any generation that has ever lived. We live in one of the most free countries in the world. We have all been given much. The accountability that is applied to leaders applies to us all. We will be held accountable for all that God has given us.

He has given us children, money, gifts and abilities and influence and we will be held to account for who we have raised them. The Bible makes very clear there will be a day of reckoning. All that we have done will be brought out into the open. All we have done examined. What is not of God will be burnt up as it were. What we have done for God, kingdom will survive.

Here is the uncomfortable question. If Christ were to return today, how do I feel about being held accountable for my actions. We understand accountability in our work place. We go to work. Our time is not our own. Resources are not our own. They are to be used for the benefit of the company. We understand this concept. We have been bought as it were by the blood of Christ. We are part of God's family and the family business of the Father. All we have comes from God. So why would we not expect to be held accountable for it.

In your workplace, you would lose your job if you used the company's resources for yourself. See court cases about this all the time. A person with responsibility in the company, often in the accounts department, sets up false invoices for false companies and then pays those invoices into accounts in their name. At some point, the boss gets suspicious and they do a deep audit. When they are caught, they often say. "I felt they owed me. I deserved to be paid more. It was my right." Often the companies are good companies that look after their employees, but somehow the person feels hard done by.

I wonder how often we have the same attitude as that offender. God is generous and says. I will give you all you

need. The passage before talks of this. I will give you all you need day by day if you make the kingdom your primary concern. But we think. No, I deserve more. This passage says one day there is an audit coming. Deep audit.

Are we living in such a way that we would be comfortable with an audit?

First question challenges our beliefs do we believe the Word of God that Christ will return second question challenges our priorities and lifestyles Third question challenges our independence. An employer has the right to ask for accountability.

Now none of these questions is very comfortable. If I wanted to make you comfortable, I would not preach on this passage. I would tell you you are loved by God. God has great plans to bless you. He is going to make all things right. Revival is coming. That is what people like to hear.

However, I would not be being faithful to the truth. Jesus said many things that made his listeners uncomfortable. No less comfortable to us today. Thing is. Each of us now has heard the Word of God. We have heard God's truth spoken clearly. So each of us is now accountable for what we do with this word. We can leave here and think. Hmm, that was uncomfortable. I might check out somewhere else next week. Hmm, well that was interesting. I wonder what we will study on Wed home group. Hmm, I will have to think about that. However, have no intention of thinking about it.

Problem is that now we have heard the word of God, we are answerable to the Word of God. Do you believe in Christ's return? Are you ready for his return? Are you ready to be held to account?

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REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

- *Do you find it hard to imagine Christ's return? What do you think it will be like?*
- *If you are really honest, what would be your reaction if he were to come today?*
- *What do you think God's kingdom is and what does it look like?*
- *What does "being ready" look like in practical terms?*
- *Make a list of everything God has given you. Resources, abilities, opportunities etc, and share it. How do you feel about giving account for these things before God?*
- *What is God asking of you in response to his Word?*



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