

Return of the King - Luke 12:35-48

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[0:00] So we're going to read from Luke chapter 12 from verse 35.

Luke chapter 12 verse 35. It's page 1045 in the Church Bible. Be dressed, ready for service, and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks, they can immediately open the door for him.

It'll be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table, and will come and wait on them.

It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. But understand this, if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.

You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. Peter asked, Lord, are you telling this parable to us or to everyone?

[1:30] The Lord answered, who then is the faithful and wise manager whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?

It'll be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

But suppose the servant says to himself, my master is taking a long time in coming, and he then begins to beat the men servants and maid servants and to eat and drink and get drunk.

Well, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him, and an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But to one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows.

[2:40] From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded. And from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. Thank you, Ralph.

Well, this morning we're starting, if you look in your summer term program, a short series on four simple parables from Luke's Gospel.

And all of them have a particular theme on the subject of the return of Jesus. So, Jesus coming again. So, how should that shape and change us in our lives today?

And the first one that we're looking at this morning is the return of the King. So, let's ask God's help as we pray together.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word.

[3:54] We thank you for these parables in Luke's Gospel. Stories that Jesus told to explain to us something of his return.

We pray that as we read and as we listen this morning, that these stories would shape and change us. And show us how we are to live in the light of your return.

We pray, Father, that we would be filled with hope. And that our lives will be put in order.

So that we are living as faithful servants waiting for you. Father, please help us, then we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, I'm not going to start just yet, actually. I've got some sheets here.

[5:01] I've got some sheets here. Thank you. Thank you. So, you'll see in the summer term program, anyway, we'll be looking at four parables in Luke, in June and then come July and August we will have different

speakers from some of our partnering churches so you can be praying for them as well as they prepare and get ready for that.

Then on Wednesdays we'll be following up on our talks for the month of June so the parable we look at this morning we'll be looking at that next Wednesday evening in our home groups.

Thanks very much Maria for your help there.

So let's look at Luke chapter 12, 35 to 48. The first heading we have there is what time, any time? Well whenever my parents had to go out for an evening or if they were going away for a few days my only question was this what time will you be back?

Because as a teenager I quickly learned the benefits of knowing the exact time the parents would get home it's valuable information. But my parents were also quick learners they soon learned that the best answer to give their scheming teenage son was this expect us any time.

[6:53] In other words you know we will be back so make sure when we do get back the house is in order.

In a sense that's exactly what Jesus is saying to us here in verse 40. Look at verse 40 with me. You also must be ready because the son of man, that's Jesus will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

The promise of Jesus' return is not to try and catch us out but to make sure we are ready. It's a gracious advance notice for us to get things in order.

He is saying to us you know I will return so make sure when I do return you are ready.

Look how Jesus describes his return in verse 40 again. Let's read verse 40. You must be ready because the son of man will come.

[8:09] The son of man is a title. It was Jesus' favourite way of referring to himself. And the son of man it doesn't just describe a person but it actually describes a great event that is going to take place which the son of man is at the very centre of.

So to get a bit of background to this we need to go back to Daniel chapter 7 verse 13 and 14. So keep your finger in Luke and have a flick back to Daniel chapter 7 verse 13 and 14.

The song that we didn't know earlier is actually based on these verses that's why we sang it. So Daniel chapter 7 verse 13 and 14. Here Daniel has a vision of what will take place at the very end and the person at the very centre of that vision is the son of man and it tells us what it will be like. So Daniel chapter 7 verse 13. He says, In my vision at night I looked and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven.

He approached the ancient of days that is God and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power.

[9:39] All peoples, nations and men and women of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

You see in those few verses it describes the coming of God's king with absolute power and supreme authority. So back in Luke when Jesus says I am the son of man Jesus is saying I am that king.

I will return and when I return I will restore order, establish peace and execute justice. justice. I am this glorious king who is to come.

I'm sure we've been all aware of the investigations into FIFA over these last couple of weeks. No one it seems is off limits. All the facts are being made known.

Every bribe, every corrupt payment is being exposed. Well when the son of man comes in all his glory no one and nothing will be off limits.

[10:52] He will expose every wrong. He will correct every injustice and he will establish his eternal kingdom.

Now Jesus is saying we must be ready for the return of the king because when this king comes it will come as a surprise.

Look how Jesus describes it in verse 35 of Luke 12. he says it will be a surprise. He says be dressed ready for service.

Keep your lamps burning. Like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.

Jesus can come at any time. like the master who went to the wedding he could return surprisingly early or he could return surprisingly late.

[11:59] We might not know when would it be tomorrow next week will it be in five years we do not know when but we do know he will.

and the good news is if we are ready for the king's return there is a wonderful banquet that awaits us verse 37 it will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth he will dress himself to serve and will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.

What a wonderful picture that is. Those who are ready for the return of king Jesus will be welcomed into his eternal kingdom.

They will be seated at the master's table and served by the master himself dining with the king of kings at his eternal banquet verse 38 it will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.

[13:21] Great blessing awaits those who are ready for the return of the king. So here is the big question are we ready?

Are we ready for the return? verse 39 but understand this if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming he would not have let his house be broken into.

When we lived in Dublin don't worry Kim I hope it doesn't happen to you when we lived in Dublin our home was broken into twice and each time it was a complete surprise.

Nobody told us when the thieves were going to come. We didn't get a letter in the door saying we're going to be around Sunday night 7 o'clock. But that's the point isn't it?

Thieves don't have a habit of telling you when they are going to come. You just have to be ready and make sure your house is secure. In the same way Jesus has not told us when he will return but that he will return.

[14:32] And the promise of his return is not to try and catch us out but to make sure we are ready. It is a gracious advance notice for us to get things in order before it is too late.

So the return of Jesus is going to come. Now to help us think through what it means to be ready for Jesus he introduces us to two people.

In the second part of this parable we have the faithful servant and an unfaithful servant. So look at verse 41.

Peter asked Lord are you telling this parable to us or to everyone? Who is it that needs to be ready? Who is this message for? Well while it may apply to everyone and I think there is an application to everyone, it is especially directed at those who claim to be disciples of the Lord Jesus.

[15:51] So let's look at these two characters in turn. First we have the faithful servant and the question we need to be asking ourselves is am I like this faithful servant?

Verse 42. The Lord answered who then is the faithful and wise manager whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?

Now the question is quite simple. when the master returns will he find the servant manager behaving in a way that is fitting to his position?

You see the head servant has the special task of making sure that all the rest of the servants are ready for the return of the master. The servant manager is responsible for the other servants. it's his job to keep them awake at the various watches of the night. It's his job to make sure they're well fed and that they're strong and they're keeping an eye out. If the servant manager is not ready then how are the others going to be ready?

[17:12] So the application is this. The faithful servant that we have in verse 42 is the person who is taking discipleship seriously.

They understand what their responsibility is as a disciple, in particular to other disciples, to the rest of the church family.

They know their position and their calling is to take care of other believers. elders. They know that they have a responsibility to fellow disciples to make sure that they are built up and encouraged in the faith.

Now God in his goodness has provided his church with elders and teachers and leaders and God puts them in place to take care of the house.

But it isn't just the responsibility of elders and leaders. it is the responsibility of everyone. As disciples, our calling is to get alongside one another and make sure that we are ready for the return of Jesus.

[18:31] So let's try and think that through in practice what it might look like. We just had tea and coffee together. The person that you were talking to. Do you know how they are in their relationship with God?

Do you know how they're getting on in their faith? Are you aware that there are some people within the family of the church who are struggling and perhaps drifting?

people? Do you see, God has placed us as people into a church family to watch out for one another.

It's our responsibility to take care of the house, to keep an eye out for one another, to make sure that we're living faithfully as disciples.

disciples. This is what a faithful servant is all about. Verse 43, it will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns.

[19:41] So when Jesus returns and he finds us as disciples taking care of each other and looking after each other, that's going to be good for us. Verse 43, or verse 44, he says, I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

The disciple who takes his responsibility seriously will be richly blessed when the master returns. He will enjoy life in the king's kingdom forever.

He will have a seat at the table of the king's banquet and he will live forever with him. Are we faithful servants?

But then there's the other one, the unfaithful servant, verse 45. But suppose the servant says to himself, oh, my master is taking a long time in coming.

And he then begins to beat the men servants and the maid servants and to eat and drink and get drunk. Now, the contrast couldn't be more stark, could it?

[20:59] We had the faithful servant who's making sure that all the servants are well looked after, that they're prepared and they're ready. The unfaithful servant is, well, he's just carrying on and doing whatever he likes.

The unfaithful servant is the one who does not take discipleship seriously. They're neglecting their responsibility. responsibility. They ignore their position and calling.

Rather than invest time in other people, they're actually investing time in themselves. In practice, an unfaithful servant is a consumer.

In other words, they see the church community as a place where you go to get, rather than a family to join in to serve.

Oh, they're very happy to come along and use the services that are provided. But the care of others and the teaching of others, well, that's not my responsibility.

[22:08] Well, if that's you, yes, it is your responsibility. God has placed us as a family together to build each other up, to care for one another.

That was the role of the servant in the house. He was to manage the house and to look after people. So how are we practically going to do that?

Well, let me make two suggestions. first, let me speak here to those who are parents of younger children and even if you have older children or teens.

Make it your priority to disciple your little children. God has given you the gift of children and placed them into your care so that you may manage them, so that you might get them ready for the return of the Lord Jesus.

That is your primary responsibility. So parents, make it your objective to be a faithful servant and raise your children as disciples who are ready.

[23:32] So that's the first thing. Let me say this to us all as a church family. Let us make meeting together as a church family a priority.

We say it so often and here's the reason why. Because we need one another to be responsible to each other, to build each other up.

Plan your week, plan your timetable, plan your terms. We meet on a Sunday morning, we meet together on Wednesday evenings. If we don't plan for these things, then we'll be doing something else.

Plan to be there, not to be seen, not to earn brownie points, not to get God's attention, but so that you can meet with others and pray with them and listen to them and encourage them as we talk through God's word together.

together. Take time with one another to build each other up in the faith. You don't need to be a trained teacher.

[24:40] You don't need permission. We just do it. If we are disciples, the people in the church family are your and my responsibility.

It's not just the role of elders and leaders. It is the calling of every disciple and to ignore our responsibility is very serious.

Very serious. Look at verse 46. The master of that servant, so the master of this unfaithful servant, will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.

He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. It's harsh language, isn't it? But it's intentional and it's intentional to wake us up, to show us that this is serious. To ignore our responsibility, to reject our calling as a disciple means we will be treated as an unbeliever.

[25:54] Instead of blessing, there will be judgment. Verse 47. That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows.

Rather than dining with the king in his eternal kingdom, kingdom, they will be shut out and separated from the king forever.

Because a true disciple, the faithful servant, will be watching out for those who need built up in the faith.

Now maybe this comes as a shock to you. That's the way in which Jesus' parables work. They come with a shock.

Maybe you didn't realise how serious a disciple was. I didn't know that I had to do this. I didn't know that people within the church family was my responsibility. Well maybe that's you.

[27:03] And what does Jesus say to us? Well look at verse 48. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows.

You see for those who have not understood their responsibility, rather than being judged, they will be disciplined. And Jesus is using this parable and he's teaching us through it.

He's saying, will you wake up to your responsibility? I can discipline you now or you can ignore that and face judgment later.

God in his grace warns us of the return of Jesus so that we can put things in order today. The promise of his return is not to try and catch us out, but to make sure we are ready.

So what is our response to this? Well, there are two things.

[28:17] First, there is an awesome privilege. Look at verse 48, the last part of verse 48. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded.

and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. You see, if we're disciples this morning, I want us to see that we have been given so much.

God has given to us his own son, Jesus Christ, the faithful servant, the one who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom.

The one who came and died for us, the one who came and took the punishment that I deserve, and through our faith in Jesus, we can now be forgiven. All of our sin and shame and guilt has been dealt with once and for all.

We are now welcomed into God's family, treated and treasured as his own child. And because of what God has given to me through Jesus, I am no longer an outsider and left outside.

[29:33] I am a servant of the King with the promise of a place at his banquet in his eternal kingdom forever and forever. If we are disciples, we have received so much grace and mercy in abundance day after day after day.

We are truly privileged people if we are disciples of Jesus. But with this awesome privilege comes great responsibility.

Do you see what it says at the end of verse 48? Everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded.

from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. You see, when we experience his forgiveness and welcome, when we see that we've been brought into the King's palace, welcomed into his family, being able to serve the eternal King, when we see the grace and the mercy that has flowed to us, it motivates us to serve one another.

It fills us with a desire to reach out and to build people up with the amazing grace of God.

Discipleship is serious.

[31:16] It is an awesome privilege, but with it comes great responsibility. Look at verse 40 again.

You, me, disciples, even if we are not yet a disciple, you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Let's pray. our Father God, we come to you as one who is gracious and merciful, and we ask that you would now forgive us for the times we have neglected our responsibility, and we have acted more like an unfaithful servant rather than a faithful servant.

Help us to see afresh the amazing grace and mercy that we have received. Give us a vision of that eternal banquet, seated at the King's table, served by the King of Kings himself for all eternity.

May you motivate us afresh, fill us with a desire to care for the church family, to build each other up in the faith, so that we are ready for the coming name of Jesus.

[33:38] Father, we thank you for our church family. We thank you for the support of one another. Thank you that you have given to us each other wonderful gifts from you to serve one another and to help each other.

and we pray that we would do so more and more and that the return of the King would motivate us afresh.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing together a song which talks about Jesus who is the faithful servant, the one who came to serve us, and in response that we would bring our lives and serve one another.

So let's stand together as we sing this. Amen.