Getting Jesus clear... on following him

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 September 2020

Preacher: Simon Dowdy

[0:00] Thanks, Andy. We're going to have our Bible reading now. So please do turn to Luke chapter 12. If you have your Bible with you, you can be able to explain the screen behind you.

That's Luke chapter 12, beginning to read at verse 41. That's Luke chapter 12, beginning to read at verse 41.
Peter says, Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all? And the Lord says, Who then is the faithful and wise manager who his master will set over his house and give them their portion of food at the proper time?
Blessed is that servant whom his master will quite so do it, quite so do it. Truly, I say to you, he will set them over all of his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, My master is delayed in coming and begins to feast the male and female and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come all day that does not expect it.
And at an hour, he does not know that will cut him into pieces and put it with the unpaid. And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act to put it in his will will receive a sincere eating.
[1:29] But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light eating. Everyone to do much was given. Of him, much will be required.

And from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. I came to cast fire on the earth than would that it were already kinged.
I have a baptism to be baptised with and how great is my distress until he is accomplished. Do you think that I've come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather divisible.
But from now on, in one house, there will be five divided. Three against two and two against three. They will be divided. Father against son and son against father.
Mother against daughter and daughter against mother. Mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother. Great. It's lovely to see some of us here in person.
[2:31] Please please speak this gospel open and let me pray for us. Jesus says, you also must be ready for the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Heavenly Father, we praise you for this glorious truth that the Lord Jesus is returning and we pray please would you help us to so listen and pay attention to your word this morning for we might indeed be ready.
And we ask it in his manner. Amen. Now I wonder if you read about the Argentinian man Juan Manuel Barrecero.
At the start of lockdown he was on the Portuguese island of Porto Santo when all international passenger flights between there and Argentina were cancelled.
He longed to be back home with his elderly parents his father having just become 90. So, what did he do? Well, a few days later having made careful preparations he boarded his 29 foot sailing boat and began an 85 day voyage across the Atlantic Ocean back home.
[3:51] having got back he told reporters the most important thing for me was to be with my family. I wonder how you would finish that sentence.

The most important thing for me is dot dot dot dot dot dot Well, however you might finish it if you were with us last week as we looked at the previous section Luke 12 35 of course we saw that whatever other things might be on our horizons at the moment the most important thing is to be ready for the return of Jesus do catch up online if you missed that.
The return of Jesus at the end of history as Lord and King is mainline Christian teaching it's not the kind of preservation of just a few cranks but Jesus himself spoke about it that the New Testament apostles teach it and the creeds affirm it he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-11 01:17:50

and his kingdom will have no end.
And yet as we also saw last week Jesus anticipates the fact that there's going to be delay and the problem of course with delay is that we begin to question whether it's going to happen.
there are times when the delay of Jesus unsettles me as I imagine it does a number of us. After all 2000 years is a long time to be waiting and it's hard to remain focused on a day which in a sense never seems to come.
[5:38] so then how do we keep going during the delay? Well as Andy said just now it's not like a dog or a cat from a city by the front door waiting for the master to come home.

No, it's very different than that. And in today's passage we see two vital aspects of discipleship of what following Jesus looks like and once we've grasped these two they'll help us to stay awake ready for when Jesus returns.
So I've got two points this morning that are on the outline that's on the screen that's been on the screen firstly faithful service of Jesus verses 41 to 48 have a look at verses 42 and 43 and the Lord said who then is the faithful and wise manager who his master will set over his household to give them their portion of food at the proper time blessed is that service whom his master will find so doing when he comes.
Now the point here is a simple one the mark of being ready for Jesus is that we are faithful in serving him. The Lord Jesus is picking up here on the imagery of last week.
Do you remember we were on the set of Downton Abbey and Lord and Lady Rampham had gone away. Carson a rival head buckler rather than putting his feet up in their absence is instead as busy managing the household when they are away as he is when they are in residence.
[7:22] Just as in the first century the job of a household manager was to look after the household and care for welfare of the workers. It's a picture of faithful service, a sense of accountability to a master.

And notice then the glorious promise for those who are faithfully serving Jesus when he returns.
Verse 44 Truly I say to you you will set him over all his possessions.
The promise of sharing in Jesus' rule in the new creation when he returns. Just as remember how last week there was also a promise for those who are trusting in Jesus when he returns.
Verse 37 Blessed are those servants in the master finds awake when he comes. Truly I say to you he'll dress himself for service and have them recline a table and he will come and serve them.
So what about verse 41? Peter said Lord are you telling this parable for us or for all? Who is Jesus addressing?
[8:33] Well perhaps we might think well surely just the apostles like Peter those Jesus will entrust with establishing and building the church. But notice that although Jesus doesn't answer the question directly after verse 41, it's clear when he does answer in verse 48 that he's talking about everyone who regards themselves as one of his disciples as he establishes for all of us the principle.

Can you see it there in verse 48? Everyone to whom much was given but him much will be required. And from him to whom they won't trust in which they will demand the more.
The genuine disciple is someone who is actively engaged in serving Jesus until he returns. God will be to God to see it as a service.
Look like? Well, I take it at the very least, it's some of the things we've seen since chapter 12 verse 22 where Jesus began specifically addressing his disciples.
In other words, unlike the rich fool who simply seeks after his own kingdom, it's seeking Jesus' kingdom, verse 31. Instead, seek his kingdom and these things will be added to you.
[10:03] And then verse 34, it's investing our treasure, our resources in his kingdom. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

If you're seeking your own kingdom, then you're clearly not expecting Jesus to return at any time soon. over the summer holidays, I was reading the biography of Louis Zamparini.
He was an American, born in New York in 1917, a rebellious child. He was quickly in trouble with both the school and the police. Until then as a teenager, he was talent spotted.
He was a great runner and he ended up running for the USA in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. After Pearl Harbor, he enrolled in the U.S.
Air Force. In 1943, when his plane crashed from the Pacific Ocean, he spent 47 days at thrift on a life riot.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-11 01:17:50

[11:07] He was eventually picked up by the Japanese Navy and he found himself interred in various Japanese concentration camps for two and a half years.

Now, Hollywood has made a film about this, which sadly doesn't then continue the story. Because after the war, he fritted away his earnings, he became an alcoholic, his marriage was on the point of disintegrating.
Until in 1949, his wife, Cynthia, went along to hear the evangelist, Woody Graham, and she put her trust in the Lord Jesus.
A few days later, under great protest, Louis went along with her. And as Billy Graham spoke about Jesus, these were the words that struck him.
Jesus saved us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of his mercy. And a few days later, he too put his trust in the saviour.
[12:13] At which point he said to his wife, Cynthia, I am through with my past life. I am through with my past life.

And he was. He completely broke with his old lifestyle. In 1950, he travelled to Japan, wanting to meet some of his former captors, forgive them, and explain how they too could receive the forgiveness of sins.
He died just a few years ago in 2014, having given the rest of his life to serving his saviour. Even in old age, he set up a ministry amongst the elderly who retired in his local church.
A man so conscious of God's great mercy and kindness to him, that he spent his life actively engaged in faithful service of the Lord Jesus.
Not to earn God's faith, but in response to it. That is the mark of someone who is awake, waiting for Jesus to return.
[13:26] So for those of us who would call ourselves followers of Jesus, I'd just like us to pause and to ask, ask, does that describe your life at the moment?

Do we see ourselves as accountable to him, as actively engaged in serving him? If it does, then be encouraged.
In part, encouraged by the wonderful promise of verse 44, and actively sharing in his rule in the new creation, but also because it's this act of service of Jesus that of course reveals our hearts and demonstrates that we are indeed living expectantly, ready and waiting for him to return.
But of course it may be that actually, if we're honest with ourselves, this doesn't respond to us.
Perhaps we put our trust in Jesus a number of years ago, and it might then have described us.
But actually since then, over the course of the years, we've become sleepy. Serving Jesus no longer the priority he once was, no longer the sense of accountability to him for the way in which we spend our life.
[14:50] In which case, we need to heed the warning. Because did we notice as Jesus went on with his power, there's a dangerous alternative verses 45 to 48, and you read them again, verse 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, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect, and there's an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful.
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. But the one who did not know and did what deserved the beating will receive a light beating.
Now, they're shocking verses, in a sense, I guess we hear those verses and we think to ourselves, hang on, Jesus, can you really say this? So a couple of things just to help us get our bearings.
Firstly, the language is clearly metaphorical. It's a parable that's taken from first century life and the kind of treatments that servants might expect if they failed their masters.
[16:10] Jesus is using it to describe the reality of judgment. The punishment is deserved, it's fair, and it's final. Now, you might want to ask more about that later, but can we see the principle that Jesus wants us to take away, is the principle we saw earlier in verse 48.

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 second thing to say, just to avoid confusion, is that all three of these servants in verses 46 and 48 are clearly revealed as unbelievers, as Jesus says in verse 46, this servant is put with the unfaithful.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-11 01:17:50

In other words, we shouldn't think this is about degrees of punishment for disciples of Jesus. How could that be? Rather, these are warnings for those who are not, or we may think they are, but actually are revealed not to be.
So then, who do these warnings apply to? Well, I guess in the first instance, to the religious and political establishment of Jesus' death.
Do you remember how back in chapter 11, seven times Jesus said, woe to you, as he exposed that fake religion, just as he exposes fake religious leaders today, those who have no sense of accountability to Jesus for what they teach or the lives they near, those guilty of their clerical abuse and scandals in the church, clergy who reject the plain teaching of the Bible, whether it's on human sexuality or the uniqueness of Jesus Christ or whatever it is.
[18:09] And yet, surely the principle of verse 48 is also a warning to all of us. it must be. Jesus is exposing the kind of discipleship, which I guess says something like this, I'm glad to be a Christian, I'm glad to know that one day I'll get to Adam, and in the meantime, I'll simply get on and live the kind of life that I want to live.

Can we see how that is to ignore the principle of verse 48? end. After all, most of us have been given much. A Bible in our own language, a good church with faithful teaching.
For many of us, good churches over many years with faithful teaching. The freedom to meet together, a wealth of resources unknown throughout much of the world.
For many of us, vast financial resources relative to most people in the world. Good education. Some of us very gifted, very able.
Some of us the privilege of a Christian home. Everyone to whom much was given, much would be required. So then what's the mark of someone who is ready for the return of Jesus?
[19:34] Well, it's not head knowledge. It's grasping that we are accountable to him, that we're getting on and serving him until Jesus returns.

Jesus is saying to us, check yourself, that you're ready. Now, speaking for myself, I think the temptation to give up on active, energetic service of Jesus has probably been with me at most stages of the Christian life.
And I think it probably gets harder as we get older. And I very much doubt I'm the only one who has found those things to be true.
Second principle, inevitable division because of Jesus, verses 49 to 53. Have a look at verse 51. Do you think that I've come to be a peace on earth? That verse comes from a bit of a shock, doesn't it? I imagine if we went off into Rockwell Park later on this afternoon or Dunwich Park and asked people, do you think that Jesus came to bring peace on earth?
[20:48] I imagine 99% of people would say, yes, of course he did. Those with no Bible knowledge perhaps might think of Christmas cards and they would say on the front piece on earth.

Those with some Bible knowledge might think of the words of the angels to the shepherds as they rejoice in the birth of the Saviour. Glory to God in the highest, honour of peace among those with whom he is well pleased.
So have a look at verses 49 and 15. As Jesus says, I came to pass fire on the earth and would that it were kindled already.
I have a baptism to be baptized with and how great is my disgrace until it is accomplished. Jesus' point is a simple one.
It is that division is inevitable once we have grasped why he came. Firstly, notice, verse 49, he came to bring judgment.
[21:55] fire is often a picture of judgment in the Old Testament. At the start of the Luke's gospel, John the Baptist likewise warns of the impending judgment to come in terms of fire.

But then, verse 50, he has also come to bring salvation. We are moving from fire to water, and yet water too often in the Old Testament is a picture of God's judgments.
So can we see in verse 50 how Jesus is using the most dramatic language to explain what his death on the cross will achieve. He has come to be uniquely deluged, if you like, with the water of judgments himself, so that those who trust in him won't be.
So yes, Jesus has come to bring the forgiveness of sins and peace with God. But he's also come to bring division on earth, because people divide in their response to the salvation that he offers.
Now once we grasp that, that Jesus is both judge and saviour, division is inevitable. because those who follow him and those who don't face two very different destinations.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-11 01:17:50

[23:26] Imagine you're going on a walk in the countryside somewhere, you get chatting to a fellow walker, in the course of the conversation you work out and actually you're heading to two very different places at the end of the day.

Now to begin with, of course, that will hardly make any difference as you walk along the same path. together. But at some stage, there's clearly going to be a division.
There's going to be a party of the ways because you're both going to different destinations. What will you say, what will that division look like for the Christian?
Well, it will be experienced at the most painful and personal level. verse 52. From now on, in one house, there will be five divided, three against two, and two against three.
They will be divided, father against son, son against father, mother against daughter, daughter against mother, mother in law against daughter in law, daughter in law against mother in law.
[24:31] father. Now, I'm only too conscious that many of us have experienced this. I think of a friend of mine who was disemperative when he became a Christian.

I think of someone else who, she became a Christian, she then married a Christian, her mother wouldn't attend her wedding. Well, it may simply be a kind of gradual drifting apart from family members as you have less and less in common as you follow Jesus and serve him faithfully or perhaps the pain of a child who rejects the gospel and walks away or pressure from family members who see you doing more and more of the kind of faithful service of Jesus that we've seen in verses 41 to 48 and pressure you not to do so.
Look further afield, of course, and it's hard not to think of the horrific honour killings which are so common in many parts of the world. Some of us, I guess, will have had the privilege of being brought up in a close mix, though not Christian family.
Others will have the privilege of having close friends who are Christians. You see what Jesus is saying. The danger is that we put loyalty to our biological family or loyalty to those friends above loyalty to Jesus.
And that ends up distracting us from being faithful in serving him, such that we're not ready for when he returns.
[26:19] I guess we might even try to settle through a kind of form of Christian discipleship which seeks to avoid division. We don't speak about the eternal realities that Jesus speaks about, of heaven, of hell, of the fact that there's only one way to God, of the need for repentance and faith in him.

Not of course that we're to seek division or to be kind of intentionally divisive. but actually if we're to be faithful to Jesus, if we're to speak about the salvation and judgments that he came to bring, then it comes with the territory.
Jesus is warning us that a fear of the relational cost of being publicly Christian could mean that we're not ready for his return, because it will stop us serving him faithfully.
In other words, he doesn't want us to be caught out when, in our experience, the gospel brings division, and especially division amongst those we love and care for the most.
Now, I guess for some, these worst verses are a warning. Perhaps we've hidden the fact that we're followers of Jesus. Perhaps we soft pebble or change the teaching of Jesus.
[27:51] Because when our loyalty to family and close friends who are followers of Jesus comes above our loyalty to him, we are spiritually speaking in a dangerous place.

But I guess for others, these verses will actually be a great encouragement, people who are going to be a good person. Because what Jesus is describing is precisely what we experience, yet not all the time, but actually letting these talking about take part and keep serving him until he returns.
in fact, verse 53 here is actually a quote from the Old Testament. It's a quote from Micah, the prophet. The point being that everyone who trusts God's promises, whether you are Micah hundreds of years before the coming of Jesus, whether it's in the first century and you're one of Jesus' followers, whether it's now in 2020, if you're taking God seriously, if you're trusting his promises, you will experience this kind of painful division.
And yet Micah goes on. He says this, As for me, I will look to the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me.
His horizon focused on the Lord's coming. He cries out to the Lord to come. And his confidence is that he will come.
[29:26] let me lead us in the moment. As for me, I will look to the Lord.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-11 01:17:50

I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. Heavenly Father, we praise you very much. The Lord Jesus will return at the end of history.
We pray that he might come soon. Please help us to heed this passage we've looked at this morning, to take it to heart.
We might be ready for his return, actively engaged in his service, not thrown off course by the division the gospel causes.
And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-11 01:17:50