

Be Ready!

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Date: 18 February 2024

Preacher: Ricky Njoto

[0 : 00] Good morning. Please keep your Bibles open to Luke 12. We are continuing our series through the book of the Gospel of Luke. Now, who here has heard the name John Wesley? Yeah, yeah.

You know, brother of Charles Wesley. Charles Wesley was a hymn writer. I think we've sung a few of his hymns. Now, John Wesley is an 18th century theologian who lived very modestly. He budgeted that he only needed 30 pounds a year to live, and that's the equivalent to about 30 to 40 thousand Australian dollars today per year. Everything that he received after that amount, he would give away everything, every year, so that the next year he would start again with zero.

Now, he didn't have, I don't think he had any kids, so it made it easier. Once, I think in one year, he received about 1,500 pounds, and again, he only kept 30 pounds in his diary. He said, I need to be faithful with whatever Jesus has entrusted to me.

If Jesus returns now, will he say to me, well done, my good and faithful servant, God provides, you know, as God provides to the birds. So, we should use our wealth for his service.

[2 : 03] We don't need to hoard and keep accumulating wealth here. Rather, we need to treasure things above. We heard that last week. Where our heart is, that's where our treasure is also.

Now, in our passage this week, Jesus continues the same message, actually. There's no separation. There's no formal separation in the text between what he said last week and what he says this week.

In the context, it's one long speech. And so, Jesus continues the same message by giving us another perspective, by giving us another reason why we should not hoard treasures here on this earth.

And that is because we should be ready any time for Jesus to come and pick us up. We don't have time to hoard treasures.

In verse 35 to 36, Jesus tells us to be ready like servants waiting for his master to return.

[3 : 13] At any time the master can return and they must be, we must be ready to run to the door and open the door for him. And so, if we ask ourselves, hey, Jesus is coming soon, what do we do to get ready?

Well, Jesus says here that being ready for Jesus to return means being ready for service. We are not placed here on this earth to serve ourselves.

There's a reminder here of the theology from Genesis 1 and 2 where humans were created not to be gods themselves, but to be stewards.

So, they could serve God through managing creation. We must not think that any of our possessions here on this earth is ours and must be used for ours only.

We must be ready for the boss to return and claim what is his. And so, Jesus gives two reasons why being ready is important.

[4 : 30] First, in verse 37 to 38, he gives a surprising reason in verse 37. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes.

Truly, I tell you, he, that is the master, will dress himself to serve and will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.

Wow. Wow. We should be watchful and ready for Jesus to return because then Jesus, the master himself, will dress like a servant, hold a banquet for us and wait on us.

Serve us in the banquet. This is revolutionary. Jesus' original audience would have been very surprised indeed.

Because back then, kings and emperors and lords were very much separated from the ordinary people. There is no way that they would even sit and eat with the commoners, let alone serve them

and wait on them.

[5 : 44] Not alone serve the servants, the slaves, and wait on them. And a lot of people today would be surprised as well by the message of this kind of Lord.

Several years ago, I was leading a Bible study with people who would not call themselves Christians in the group. We were talking about Jesus, the servant king, you know, the king who reigns through serving.

And one of the non-Christians was so surprised. And he said, oh man, I wish my boss were like that. Well, Christians do have a boss like that.

So if we do have a master like that, who is willing to hold a banquet for us and serve us, then our proper response should be to always be ready to serve him when he comes, right?

The master's graciousness is indeed a good reason for the servants to always be ready to serve him. Another reason for us to always be ready is in verse 39 to 40.

[7 : 05] We don't know when Jesus comes back. Here, the parable changes. Jesus, the son of man, is like a thief who may come anytime, at any time during the night.

So we must be ready anytime. There's a sense of urgency here. If Jesus returns this afternoon, or tonight, or tomorrow, or in the next five minutes, I won't be able to finish this sermon, but Jesus returns.

We must be ready. This should make us self-reflect and ask ourselves, are we ready? Are we dressed ready for service, metaphorically?

Are we keeping our lamps burning? Are we ready to run to the door and open it and serve Jesus when he arrives? Or do we say, no, not yet, Lord.

I'm not ready yet. Now, after hearing all this in verse 41, Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, asks Jesus a question.

[8 : 19] Lord, are you telling this parable to us, the disciples, or to everyone? In other words, Peter is asking, Jesus, who is the servant in this parable?

Is it just us, your disciples, or everyone? Who's supposed to serve whom here? And more importantly, Jesus, when you come back, when the son of man comes, who's going to be served? And then Jesus answers in 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?

Like always, Jesus' response is not straightforward. Instead of answering who the servant is in the parable, He redefines servanthood to cover not only serving the master when he comes, but also serving the other servants while waiting.

And in doing so, Jesus establishes categories based on the responsibility entrusted to us. Those entrusted with much should serve much.

[9 : 46] And they are responsible to serve other people as well as the master. Other servants as well as the master. And if they do that well in verse 44, at the end of that passage, they will be entrusted with even more possessions of the master.

But on the other hand, in verse 45, suppose the servant says to himself, My master is taking a long time in coming, and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk.

This is what unfaithfulness in waiting looks like. Not serving the other people. Instead, these servants use the things entrusted to them lavishly for themselves.

They eat and drink and get drunk. Using whose food and drink? Well, the master's. And they bully the people entrusted to them.

And so, bad stewardship is a bad way to wait for Jesus to return. When the servants think that they are the masters, just because they are entrusted with the master's possessions, they become bad stewards.

[11 : 16] If we, who call ourselves servants of Jesus, use our own wealth or intellect or talents or power for ourselves, rather than for serving God through serving other people, then we are not being good stewards.

Yes, we have things that we need. We can spend money on those things. We have to. But if we only use those resources only for ourselves, then we are not being good stewards.

And the warning there, the punishment is severe in verse 46. When the master arrives, he will cut them into pieces and throw them into the place with the unbelievers.

We might say, in hell. Not sharing the joy of the banquet of the master. And so, is Jesus here addressing the disciples or everyone?

Yes, to both. Again, everyone is created to manage the world as God's servants, as God's managers of the field.

[12:42] But Jesus points out that there are some who have been entrusted with much. Like God's people. Like his own disciples. Like his own disciples.

And they are to use these responsibilities to lead others through serving them. In other words, as Jesus puts it at the end of verse 48, from everyone who has been entrusted with much.

Have we been entrusted with much? Much more will be asked. Have we been entrusted with much? Much knowledge about God's will?

Much wealth? Much health? Have we been entrusted with leadership? With power? Father, then we must use them. Then we must use them. Not to build our own kingdom and honor and glory as if we are the master.

But we must use them to serve others. Because those things belong to Jesus. And he's entrusted them to us for that purpose.

[13:53] Let me tell you about another 18th century man called William Wilberforce.

William Wilberforce was born in a wealthy family in England. He was very intelligent. When he was only 20 years old, he was elected to parliament.

And he became best friends with the prime minister. When he was 26, he started to believe the gospel. And his life changed from then on.

He was mentored by John Newton, the author of the song Amazing Grace. And John Newton guided William to use whatever he had for the gospel.

His career in parliament. He was thinking of getting ordained as a pastor. But John Newton said, no, you have a career in parliament. Use that for the sake of the gospel. So his career in parliament, his money, his intellect.

[15:03] So William began to live out his faith. He saw the people around them in a different light. Instead of wanting to serve others.

He wanted to serve others. And so when he was just 28 years old, he proposed a reform to the parliament to abolish slavery.

It took him 20 years to do that. Proposal after proposal, year after year for 20 years before slavery was abolished in England.

And then he went further. He proposed that slavery should be abolished in all British colonies. Which took another 26 years before he succeeded.

Slavery was made illegal when William was on his deathbed. He used his time, his career, his resources to serve others.

[16:08] Because he came to know the Lord who served him. He also gave away practically all of his fortunes to the needy. He was born a rich man and he died penniless.

But he died as a faithful servant of Jesus. Jesus will return.

And those who are waiting here faithfully, managing the resources that he has entrusted to them, faithfully, will be rewarded with a great banquet. Where the Master himself will serve.

But it's clear that not everyone will be rewarded when Jesus returns. Some, as the text says, will be judged.

Will be chopped into pieces. And that message of judgment is controversial, isn't it? Not only now, but also back then. As Jesus' message of judgment here would have been a warning for the Pharisees and the scribes.

[17:18] Who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the people. And yet did not serve the people. And that's why Jesus continues in verse 49.

That he has come to bring fire. That is judgment onto earth. And in verse 51. He hasn't come to bring peace, but division.

That is, because of his message, people will be divided according to their response to him. Some will submit to his rule as the Master.

And dress ready for service. While others might not want to give up their lavish, selfish lifestyles that allow them to squander the resources of the Master.

So people will be divided according to their responses to the message of Jesus. And in verse 52 to 53.

[18 : 24] Even families will be divided. But tucked in verse 50. There's a glimpse of good news. Yes, Jesus has come to bring fire. But the fire wasn't kindled when he came here the first time. Because the first time he came here, he came to take up the cross. In verse 50, the fire wasn't kindled yet. Because he had a baptism to undergo. And from other texts, like Mark 10, for example.

That baptism refers to his approaching death. Where he gave his life as a ransom for many. This is great news, isn't it?

Jesus has come to bring the fire of judgment. Yes. And he will come to judge the living and the dead. As we say during the Apostles' Creed. Yes. He will judge the servants who are not faithful.

[19 : 26] Yes. But he first came here to face that judgment upon himself. He has faced the judgment of the cross. Where he took the sins of the world upon himself.

And this is where he dressed like a servant and served us. And received the many blows that we, his unfaithful servants, should face.

So that, before he comes to bring the fire of judgment, he could first provide hope. So that, instead of being cut into pieces, we, his servants who repent, would get served instead by the master who has been the faithful servant in our place.

Let me say that again. We all have been unfaithful servants. With our time, with our money, with our health, power, and intellect.

We all deserve to be beaten with many blows. But Jesus, the master, dressed like a servant and became the most faithful servant to God for our sake.

[20 : 41] And received all our punishment for our sake. So that we can be rewarded with a banquet as if we've been faithful. If we repent and turn to him and ask for forgiveness.

And that should bring hope even to other servants who have not repented. Because they too can repent.

So, we are called to wait for Jesus' return. And be ready. But what do we do while we wait for the coming of Jesus? Well, we don't just sit around and do nothing.

As the passage says, we must dress for service. And here are two things that we need to do in light of this passage.

First, while waiting for Jesus, we need to use the resources entrusted to us for service. This is especially the case if we've been given greater responsibility.

[21 : 55] If we have more money, more knowledge, more power, leadership status. Let's ask ourselves, what is my role in this household?

What has Jesus entrusted to me that I can use for serving others? Perhaps you've been entrusted with more knowledge of the Bible.

Then use that for service. Meet up with others and read the Bible with them and try to explain it to them. Lead a Bible study, perhaps.

Perhaps you've been entrusted with a friendly and hospitable disposition. Then use that for service. Invite your friends, Christians and non-Christians, to your place for dinner and show them how God has loved you and you want to love others.

Join the welcoming team. Say hello to newcomers at church. Perhaps you've been entrusted with wealth.

[23 : 07] Then use it for service. Give to the needy. Give to gospel works. Give to organizations that help victims of abuse or sex trafficking or the like.

From the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be demanded. Second, while waiting for Jesus, we need to tell people about Jesus, regardless of the division that it might cause. We need to invite other people to repent before they get thrown into the place with the unbelievers. They might reject the gospel.

They might even be angry at us for telling them about Jesus. But I think that's a risk worth taking. Last week, one of my friends lost her father.

I remember how her entire family became Christians, except for her father. And for many years, she always tried to talk to him about Jesus, but his reaction was always negative.

[24 : 31] Every conversation about Jesus always made him angry. So, sometimes she tried to be subtle, like leaving a gospel tract on the table so that he might see and perhaps read it.

And she always prayed for him. I remember she said to me once, one of my greatest fears is to see my dad die before he knows Jesus.

So, before it's too late, I need to do everything that I can to get him to know Jesus. And so, last week, when I heard that her father just passed away, I was also very glad to hear that a few weeks ago, he decided to believe in Jesus and be baptized.

Because of the daughter's constant evangelism and prayers. Not regarding the anger and the conflicts that it might have caused.

Friends, it's not too late. Jesus will return, but we don't know when. While waiting for Jesus to return, let's spread the good news of the master who's willing to become a servant and has done so for our sake.

[25 : 58] Our church is focusing on mission and evangelism this year, so let's take every opportunity to be trained so that you, in turn, can use the resources entrusted to you to serve others with the gospel.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for giving us Jesus, the faithful servant who has faced the judgment for our unfaithfulness.

So now, through the power of your Holy Spirit, help us to be faithful and use the resources, whatever it is that you're giving us, to serve you and others.

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.