

Servants Waiting For Their Lord

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[0 : 00] I invite you to turn with me today to Luke chapter 12, starting in verse 35.! You can open up a Bible, you can Google it on your phone. It should be up here soon, I think.

We're continuing our series in Christ's parables, the stories he told, to give us insight into the way his kingdom works. And today's parable is going to have two big messages in it.

They both happen in the very first verse. Luke chapter 12, starting in verse 35. Stay dressed for action, and keep your lamps burning.

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. 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. If he comes in the second watch or in the third and finds them awake, blessed are those servants.

[1 : 13] But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Peter said, Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all? 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?

Blessed is that servant whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, My master is delayed in coming, and begins to beat the male and female servants into eat and drink and get drunk, 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 he will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. 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 a beating will receive a light beating.

Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required.

[2 : 27] And from him to whom they entrusted much, they will require or demand the more. The Coast Guard's motto is Semper Paratus, always ready.

In my time in the Coast Guard, I had several roles that required a second helping of Semper Paratus, working in a command center.

When the radio crackles and delivers you a mayday call, you don't have time to get ready. A boat is sinking or it's on fire. There are people in the water without life jackets.

You don't get the call and then get ready. You have to be ready already. Working pollution response. You can't get a call about an oil spill and then get ready to deal with hazmat situations.

You have to be ready already. I saw a lot of need to be always ready. But the Coast Guard has some interesting units.

[3 : 32] Call them the strike teams. And they take Semper Paratus to a different level entirely. Now, with a name like that, you might think that they're some sort of counterterrorism unit. But actually, they're pollution responders.

The best in the world. When I was deployed to Texas for the Hurricane Ike response back in 2008, I was removing acetone drums from people's front lawns.

I was dealing with diesel spills and gasoline cleanups. What was the strike team doing? They were working a chlorine gas release. Now, chlorine gas, it was in an industrial application.

But when that gets in the air, that's a weapon of war. I wasn't ready to handle anything like that. But they immediately went in, secured the release, cleared the air, and made it safe.

Right away. How could they do it immediately? It's simple, really. They're always training. And they're always packed and ready to go.

[4 : 36] They train every single day for all sorts of pollution response incidents. And they have 18 wheelers packed full of supplies that are ready to go on a moment's notice.

And Jesus here today is giving us a similar *semper paratus* message in this passage. He gives us two instructions in verse 35 that follow with two parables.

The strike teams are always training. Well, Jesus says, keep your lamps burning. And explains it with a parable of servants awaiting their master's return.

The strike teams are always ready for action, packed and ready to go. Jesus says, dress for action. And shows us what that looks like with the parable of the faithful and the unfaithful servants.

Let's look at them in turn. First, keep your lamp burning. Now, Jesus gives us a couple word pictures, what this looks like. But this watching and waiting, this keeping your lamp burning.

[5 : 38] In verse 35, he says, keep your lamp burning. Verse 36, he says, be like men who are waiting for their master's return. Verse 37, he says, let the master find you awake. Again, in verse 38, he says, the master wants to find you awake.

In verse 40, he says, you must be ready for the master's return. What's that supposed to mean? What does that actually look like? Awake, ready, waiting.

He's telling us to be alert, to direct our attention somewhere in particular. Where? Where are the servants looking? What are they looking for?

Verse 36, their master's return. And so are we. And that's actually huge, like really huge. It's easy to get caught up in the details of the parable, what servant is which, what they're dressed in, and miss the biggest point.

He is coming back. 2,000 years ago, Jesus died on a cross and was buried for sinners like you and me. What happened next?

[6 : 50] When we walked through Ephesians last fall, the apostle Paul wanted us to remember the Lord's great might that he worked in Christ Jesus when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Jesus died and was buried for you and me.

But today he is alive and reigning in heaven for you and me. That is an awesome message. But it doesn't end there.

He doesn't stand still in heaven. He is coming back. He's with us to the end of the age, but this age will end. And when it does, he will come in glory to judge the living and the dead, to throw down the devil and give his people an everlasting home.

When Jesus told this parable, on that day he was here to call sinners to turn to God. But on that day, he will make his home with his servants and judge the rest of the world for rejecting him.

[8 : 23] In the days when he told this parable, he was spat on. But on that day, every knee will bow to him. In the days when he told this parable, he was, for the most part, ignored.

And to this day, most ignore him still. But on that day, no one will be able to ignore him. In the days when he told this parable, he came to bear your sin and death on the cross.

But on that day, he will put an end to evil and make an end of death. In the days when he told this parable, Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a colt.

But on that day, he will come riding on the clouds of heaven. In the days when he told this parable, he was here to wear a crown of thorns.

But on that day, he will come wearing a crown of glory. There is coming a day when the king will return.

[9 : 23] He's coming to bring final justice. He's coming for his family. He's coming to be with them, to wipe every tear from their eyes.

He's coming to end all turmoil. He is the coming king. So today's message, first and foremost, is a message of glory.

Of expectation, of hope. Of the awesome love the Lord has for his people. He is coming for you, if you are his. Look at verse 37.

If you are awake, attentive, anticipating the Lord with a glad heart. If you are his alert servant, what does he promise you? He says, he is coming for you.

And what will he do? The master will put you, his servant, at his table. And he will serve you his feast. You will partake in his joy.

[10:27] That's what we're attentive to. That's what he wants us paying attention to. That's what we look for. That's what we anticipate with glad hearts. So that's the first instruction.

Keep your lamp burning. Stay awake. Direct your attention at the Lord and his plans. They are glorious. And they are for your everlasting good.

Oh, what good news that is. But if you don't know Jesus. If you don't have an expectation of his return.

If you don't have the hope of heaven. If you aren't his servant. This good news is not yours yet. Today, I invite you to do just that.

To keep your lamp burning. To dress for action. To seek him out. This passage says that the servants are waiting for their master. Who is your master.

[11:29] Are you seeking his will? Or your own? On the last day, will you have a seat at his table? Or will he not know your name? Jesus says in verse 37.

Truly, to those who are my servants. I will dress myself for service. And have them recline at my table. I will serve them. If you don't know this Jesus.

Who is coming as a reigning king. Who will share his table with those. That he is reconciling to himself. Come. Come to Christ.

The Bible says if you confess with your mouth. That Jesus is Lord. And believe in your heart. That God raised him from the dead. You will be saved. He will enter into this relationship.

And you will sit at his table on the last day. Practically. What does watching for the Lord look like?

[12:35] Well. Directing your attention at the things of God. By necessity. Means. Not being obsessed with the things of this world.

They have their place. But it's a minor place. The hymn. Be thou my vision. Sums it up really nicely. Riches. I heed not. Nor man's empty praise.

Thou mine inheritance. Now and always. Thou and thou only. First in my heart. High king of heaven. My treasure. Thou art. This is going to show.

In your life. Because if your eyes are on the Lord. They're not on idols. Pleasure. And money. Popularity. And when your heart is filled with his word.

It's not filled. With love for sin. It can't be. So Christians. How are you doing. With that?

[13:36] Here are a few questions you could ask yourself about. Where you're directing. Your attention. Where does my mind wander. When I'm alone. What do I pray for?

The things of God. Or the things of. Me. Me. How often do I pray? What are my goals? What do I want?

Both short term and long term. When I'm bored. What do I wish I was doing? Where am I looking? For advice.

What is the loudest voice? In your heart. Answering these questions honestly.

Will quickly show. Where you're directing your attention. And. How do we make progress here?

How do we get to the point where we are directing.

[14:36] Our attention. More and more. At Christ. And his coming. How do we increasingly. Stay awake. Stay attentive. Stay ready. Keep our lamps.

Burning. Well. It's all about directing our attention. You have to take an active role in that. It doesn't happen by accident.

It can look like a lot of things. Many families choose to pray at mealtimes. And that's a way of regularly centering on God. But don't let it be a formality. Let it truly be a centering on Christ.

And the things that he has. In the fall. We worked through the book of Ephesians. In Ephesians chapter 5 verse 19. Paul tells us to address one another.

In psalms. And hymns. And spiritual songs. Singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. Giving thanks always. And for everything. To God the Father. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[15:35] What could that look like? It could look like a lot of things. It could look like leaving notes for your family. Or sending text messages with encouraging scripture verses to your small group.

It could look like listening to hymns and spiritual songs in the car. Instead of top 40 in sports talk. It could look like filling your earbuds with sermons.

Or Christian audio books. Or an audio bible at the gym. It could look like watching bible cartoons with your kids. Instead of Sesame Street. It could look like a chalkboard in your home with bible

verses on it each week.

It could look like a lot of things. The idea here is to do whatever you can. To saturate your life with the things of God. To set your gaze on Jesus.

It doesn't happen by accident. It only happens when you take action. To summarize. Keep your lamps burning. Direct your attention to the things of God.

[16:37] Especially the truth that he is coming. He came once as a humble servant. But on that day. He will come as a reigning king.

But. Can you do that too much? Have you ever heard the phrase.

So and so. Is so heavenly minded. They're no earthly good. When we take Jesus seriously here. To direct our attention to his glory and his plans.

Will we become ineffective? Will we say. I'll fly away oh glory. I'll fly away. And then just sit on our hands. And wait for that to happen.

Not if we. Direct our attention correctly. See. Jesus says. Keep your lamps burning. In the very same breath. That he says.

[17:34] Dress for action. Looking to heaven. If we're doing it right. Leads to fruitful lives. So let's look at the other instruction.

In verse 35. Stay dressed. For action. If you've ever taken a foreign language. You know there are some things. That don't quite make it across.

In translation. English phrases like. Bite the bullet. Or turn over a new leaf. Make no sense. When you translate them directly.

Into another language. Right? And something similar is happening here. Quite literally. What Jesus said was. Make or keep your waist girded.

Now. That doesn't mean very much to you and me. But in the ancient world. Everyone wore long robes. So if you were relaxing at home. With your family.

[18:33] You let the robes flow free. But if you were working in a field. Or serving in a house. Like the people in these parables. You'd tuck the lower portion. Of your robes.

Up into your belt. So you could move around freely. Your waist was girded. So Jesus is saying. I want you dressed for work.

So to the original audience. He said. Roll up your robe. Today. He might say something like. Roll up your sleeves. He's saying.

Look for my return. And get down to business. And that's exactly what the second parable shows us. The work that the Lord wants us to do.

While we watch and wait for him. But before Jesus tells the parable. Peter asks him a question.

Verse 41. We read. Peter said. Lord. Are you telling this parable for us?

[19:29] Or for all? So he's asking. You know. Who's responsible for this? Is it just the leaders? Is it everybody? Is it the whole world? What is this directed at? That's a great question.

How does Jesus answer? With a question. Verse 42. Who is responsible for this? Well. Jesus answers.

Who then. Is faithful. And wise manager. Whom his master. Has said over his household. And so. Jesus doesn't give us. A cut and dried answer. Rather. He invites us.

Everyone who hears this. To identify. With the faithful servant. Will you. Be the faithful servant. He asks. Or will you be one of the three. Unfaithful. Servants.

So the question isn't. Whether you and I. Have responsibility. To God. The whole world. Is responsible to him. The question is. How will you respond? The main point.

[20:32] Of the parable. Of the faithful. And unfaithful servants. Is this. Jesus is returning. As the all. Powerful king. And in the meantime. He expects his servants.

To serve. There are four ways. To respond. To that call. So he tells a parable. With four servants. One faithful. And three unfaithful. In verses 42 to 44.

We see the faithful servant. 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. Blessed is that servant. Whom his master will find. So doing when he comes. Truly I say to you. He will set him over all his possessions. What does the faithful servant do?

Like what is his task? We could try to spiritualize. The task that Jesus specifically talks about here. But this is a parable. He's trying to get across a main point.

[21 : 31] Not specific details. I think what he's trying to do. Is paint for us a picture of. Be faithful in the task that I have appointed you. So he calls us to service.

And the many roles and abilities that he has set us in. And given us. It's more of a call to obedience. In the whole of life.

If you know God's will. Which means you know his word. And you do it. Which means you work with his strength. To obey.

What does he say will happen? Verse 44. He will set you over all his possessions. What does that mean? One ancient writer put it this way.

He will place you over all he has. That is. Over all the joys. Of the kingdom of heaven. In contrast though.

[22 : 35] To the faithful servant. There are three unfaithful servants. The first. Is the most severe case. And there's a descending order. The first one we see in 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. Whew.

See. What is he doing? That servant. Knows God's will. And does the exact opposite. It's active rebellion. It is the greatest treachery there is.

The Lord commands him to do good. So he does evil. What happens to him? Verse 46. The master of that servant will come on a day. When he does not expect him.

At an hour when he does not know. And he will cut him to pieces. And put him with the unfaithful. He beat other servants. What he has done to others.

[23 : 33] The Lord will justly do to him. Look carefully at verse 45. What is the unfaithful servant thinking?

He didn't direct his attention at the Lord's coming. In fact, he directed his attention at the Lord's absence. And he saw it as an opportunity to indulge in evil.

And so we see how these two commands. Keep your lamp burning. And dress for action. Are so related. Because if you're not looking at his return. You're going to end up thinking and acting.

Like this servant. The first unfaithful servant knows the Lord's will. And actively disobeys. The second. Knows the Lord's will.

And simply fails to do anything. Verse 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.

[24 : 36] If you hear God's word today. Like you are hearing God's word today. But you don't put it into practice. The first unfaithful servant knows the Lord's will.

And actively disobeys. The second knows the Lord's will. And simply fails to do anything. The third unfaithful servant. Doesn't even know the master's will. Verse 48.

But the one who did not know. And did what deserved a beating. Will receive a light beating. So there are four kinds of servants. One who knows the Lord's will. And serves faithfully.

He is blessed incredibly. The second knows the Lord's will. And does the very opposite. He is utterly destroyed. The third knows the Lord's will.

And does nothing. And he is disciplined sternly. The fourth. Can't even be bothered to learn the Lord's will. And he too receives discipline. Which servant are you?

[25 : 42] And after hearing this message. Which will you be? Even if you've never opened a Bible in your life.

You have probably heard the last sentence of this passage. The second half of verse 48 reads. 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. Now people have been using this idea for ages. When I was a cadet at the academy. The superintendent there was a Christian.

And he said that this verse was his favorite leadership quote. Spider-Man movies use this mantra, right? With great power comes great responsibility.

It's a riff on the same thing. The idea has been used everywhere. In all sorts of contexts. The question is how should we apply it? I think there are a lot of ways that Christians narrow down the focus of this.

[26 : 45] A lot of times. I think we frequently tie this verse to our finances. Many in this room today. Are among the wealthiest people to ever walk the earth.

You're not in the fabled 1%. But if you're in the middle class in America. Your quality of life. Is significantly higher than kings and queens.

Even up into the last couple hundred years. You're one of the richest people ever. So sometimes we focus on that and say.

Is much required of you there. In your money. We often connect this verse to ability. Some very talented people sit here today.

Now unless the admission standards are declining. Some of America's best and brightest young leaders are sitting with us today. And we have many other very gifted people.

[27 : 44] Teachers and engineers and medical professionals. Is much required of you. Because of your great ability. Money. Ability. Time. We could go on and on.

What are we supposed to do with that? Well. What is this passage about? To begin with. What is Jesus talking about?

When he sort of identifies everyone to whom much has been given. Again. It's not just a random line tagged on at the end of the passage. It's the summary of the passage.

So what is the parable about? It's knowing what God requires of you. Looking to his return. And serving. So that's what's been given to you.

The message of the gospel. And the message of resurrection obedience. And that's what's required of you. That same service. So if you're sitting here today.

[28 : 41] You have access. To all of God's instruction. Much. Has been given you. In his word.

And much. Has been entrusted to you. In his instructions. And much is required. See.

Money. Ability. Time. The main point of this passage. Isn't any one of those things. In a way. It's about all of them. All at once.

What is Jesus talking about? Servants. Who know the tasks. All of them. That their master has set for them. So this is a call. To complete service to God.

And that means worship. That means ministry. It means giving. It means serving your family. It means building up your brothers and sisters in Christ. It means all of those things. Everything. Much.

[29 : 43] Has been entrusted to you. So get busy studying it. If not. You risk being grouped. With the last servant.

Who didn't know. What was required of him. Because he didn't take the time. Now. That's. A lot. Isn't it? How can you get started? What if there was a place. Where you could get together with other.

Servants of the Lord. What if you could. Share life together. Read his word together. Remind each other. That he is coming. Talk about how to be.

Faithful servants. Pray for each other. Wouldn't that be awesome? Wouldn't that help you keep your lamp burning?

[30 : 44] Wouldn't that help you stay dressed for action? Well. Maybe. You should check out. Our community groups. I know for some of you.

That's not a possibility. Especially cadets. It's really hard. But the. Moral there. Is. Seek out fellowship. With other Christians. Long term. Steady.

Relationships. That point you. Towards Christ. When we started today. We thought about the Coast Guard motto. Semper Paratus. Always ready. The Coast Guard trains its people to be ready for crisis through constant training.

Keeping their lamp burning. And staging their equipment for ready service. Staying dressed for action. Jesus calls you to do the same.

To be always ready. Will you direct your joyful attention at his glorious return? Jesus calls you to roll up your sleeves.

[31 : 50] Will you serve him faithfully? If the answer is no. This passage has stern warnings for you.

But if the answer is yes. This passage hints at glory we do not have words for. Verse 37 says.

Blessed are those servants whom the Master finds awake when he comes. Truly I say to you. He will dress himself for service. Have them recline at his table.

And he will come and serve them. He who has ears to hear. Let him hear.

Pray with me. Father in heaven. Help us keep our lamps burning.

[32 : 49] Fix our eyes on your coming. To your glory. To your love. Help us live every day in the light of that truth.

Lord give us a sense of urgency. To reach a world that does not know you. Doesn't even know. To seek out. Your coming.

Help us to actively direct our attention. Away from the things of man. And towards you. Father we ask that you help us to keep our sleeves rolled up.

Thank you Lord for the great gift. That is your word. Reveals your heart. And instructs our hearts. And our hands. Lord by giving us the Bible you have entrusted us with so much.

I ask that we would prove faithful servants. With all that you have given to us. Lord we pray these things in the mighty name of Jesus.

[33 : 56] Amen. Amen. Stand with me again soon.