

# Luke 12:35-59 "Are You Ready?"

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[ 0 : 00 ] First, let me just say thank you for praying for us as we go to India.

I've been particularly aware this week of my inadequacy for this and of the spiritual warfare that we are engaged in. So thank you for praying.

It really is exciting to think about going across the globe to share the good news of Jesus, the hope of the kingdom with people who are in many ways very different from me, to encourage them with the love of their Father and the treasure of His kingdom.

What a great privilege that is. At the same time as I've been thinking of that, I've also been reminded of what a great privilege it is that I have day in and day out to get to share those exact same things with you.

One person at a time. One life situation at a time. Right here in this place with these people. What a great privilege it is to be your pastor.

[ 1 : 13 ] It's an honor for me. It's a delight to me to share the good news of Jesus with you, to see how God is at work in my life and in your life, to share that together as He walks with us.

My wife tells me that I tell her I love you too often. That may be true. I don't tell you often enough, Southwood, I love you.

So enough of that mushy-gushy stuff. Let's do turn our attention to what we are about together, to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the gospel according to Luke, this morning we're in the middle of Jesus teaching His followers. He's been warning them about eternal matters in chapter 12 thus far.

The dangers of hypocrisy, of fearing man more than God, of greed and covetousness and storing up for yourself treasures on earth rather than in heaven.

[ 2 : 16 ] And He continues in that same train of thought with more weighty words this morning. It's a long passage that we will read as we go. But first let's pray and ask for God's help.

Will you pray with me? Father, we look forward to that day we've been singing about and listening about and to an eternity in relationship with You.

And what a joy that that's not awaiting us only, but that we know that relationship with You now. You are our Father. You've sent Your Son.

You've given us Your Spirit. And so, Father, would You teach us by Him this morning. These are Your words, not mine. Might we hear You clearly.

Speak, Lord. Your servants are listening. Change our hearts. Cause us to worship and to serve You more. We ask it in Jesus' name.

[ 3 : 16 ] Amen. Sometimes Christy will go away for a long weekend. Maybe a women's retreat or a girls' weekend at the beach with some friends or something like that.

And the girls and I will get a special, fun weekend together. Those times stretch my ability, both as a parent and also particularly in terms of managing the household, which my wife typically does more of and better of than I do.

There are meals to eat, rooms to clean, work to be done for each of us who is left at home while she's gone. And so, I want the house to look the way it's supposed to when she gets back, right? Have you had that feeling before? That means, usually, that the couple hours before she returns is a mad scramble. Everything needs to be cleaned.

The frozen pizza boxes need to be taken out to the big trash can outside where she won't see them when she comes back. There are several of them, usually. We tell the girls to go fix each other's hair nicely because dad hasn't touched it all weekend.

[ 4 : 30 ] All of these things that we're doing so we can be ready for mom's return. In this passage, Jesus is asking us, are you ready?

Are you ready? And it's his return that we must be ready for. Look at Luke 12 at verse 35. Verse 40. What is Jesus telling us to be ready for?

It's the return of the king, right? It's his second coming. Sometimes in these verses, the king's referred to as the master of the household.

But it's this idea that when he returns, he comes to bring joyful deliverance on the one hand, and at the same time, devastating judgment at the same moment.

[ 5 : 41 ] This is the biblical picture of what will happen at the Messiah's coming. Salvation and punishment. It happens all the way back in Exodus, which the words here are recalling the Exodus of God's people from Egypt.

Stay dressed for action or gird up your loins is what they were told at the Passover. Passover, that first Passover celebration of God's people. They were to be ready to leave Egypt in the dark.

They needed lamps. In the middle of the night, when God came to rescue them and to bring judgment on his enemies. Now, when Jesus is talking to his disciples in our passage this morning, I need to tell you up front, there are references to his death to come, to his resurrection to come, and even to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

But even those, even those other things that are mentioned, look forward to another day. And there are a lot of details in this passage that are only fitting for one other day, and that is his second coming.

When he fully and finally delivers and judges. Yes, there are elements of salvation and judgment in these early instances, but ultimately Jesus is pointing us this morning as we think about his words.

[ 7 : 09 ] He's saying, be ready for my second coming. For eternity. For my coming again to deliver and to judge.

So there may be some major events in our lives. Crises of faith. Significant challenges. Where what Jesus tells us will also apply. But primarily, it's the return of the king on the clouds.

What we've been singing about. The second coming of the Messiah. What we've heard sung to us. Did you know in the New Testament it is referenced over 300 times?

The second coming of Jesus. His return. It's said, it's talked about so often because it's what we're all to be longing for. And even now, shaping our lives and pointing our hearts towards today is that day.

Remember in verse 40, Jesus says, we don't know when he's coming back. Right? In an hour we do not expect. One Sunday when Christy had been gone for one of those long weekends.

[ 8 : 17 ] She was coming back and I had expected her to come mid to late afternoon on that Sunday. And so after the worship service, I was in my office with all three girls.

Hungry. Needing lunch. And with the house in bad shape back there. And I get a text on my phone. I'm in Decatur! Exclamation mark.

Smiley face. But I didn't feel exclamation mark. Smiley face. I thought, no! Two hours early! The mad scramble is not going to be effective this time.

I can't get them fed and have the house ready. So Jesus tells us some things in this passage that should be taking place in our lives now.

So that we're ready for his return that comes when we don't expect. He says we're to focus not on figuring out when he will return. But living in such a way as to be expectant and ready every day.

[ 9 : 20 ] His return is the most important day of our lives. And we don't know what day it is. So we must always be ready. So what does he tell us?

He tells us several things in this passage. How do I stay ready for the return of the king? We're going to walk through this passage and he's going to teach us about that. And the first thing is to serve the king.

Look at these parables that Jesus starts with again at verse 35. Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning. And 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, in the middle of the night. And finds them awake. Blessed are those servants.

[ 10 : 24 ] But know this, that if the master of the house had known at 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.

The priority of service in God's kingdom. It's evident throughout this whole passage. You'll see it time and again this morning. We are to be prepared to serve the master.

To open the door and get him what he needs. To be awake and on the lookout to handle his return. Even in the middle of the night, so to speak. Notice the priority of service in Jesus' kingdom is not just highlighted by the servants.

It's so important to serve in his kingdom that the king himself serves, doesn't he? When the master returns, he serves the servants. One way to be ready for the return of Jesus is to be serving him and his kingdom priorities all the time.

Think about it this way. If Jesus showed up this afternoon and he returned, would you say, oh, hang on a minute. Give me a couple years to fix my priorities.

[ 11 : 41 ] I need to spend my time differently. I want to start spending my money a little bit differently. Or would he find you prepared to serve and seek first his kingdom?

Would he find you actively doing that? Of course, that looks different for each of us, doesn't it? What it looks like for us to serve in his kingdom. But all of us have a tendency to be looking out for ourselves, don't we?

Pursuing our own kingdoms. We've got big plans. And therefore sleeping, as it were, on the king's priorities. On what our master would have us to be doing while he's gone.

We tend to be consumers, don't we? In all of life. But even then of kingdom things. You know, what's my church doing for me? We're consumers.

We focus on ourselves rather than on serving. Are we serving our own agendas or our master's agenda? We so naturally live for today and for ourselves, don't we?

[ 12 : 48 ] You don't even have to think about it to do that. You'll wake up doing that tomorrow, won't you? What do I need today? What am I going to do today? How is today going to go? Will it be what I want it to be?

It's natural. And we so naturally give little thought to the future. Certainly little thought to our eternal future. And so this can leave us radically unprepared for that great day when Jesus returns.

If I've spent the weekend with my girls while mom is away, just having fun, eating out, making messes, while avoiding serving the good of the household and the needs of our home, I won't be ready when Christi returns unannounced.

Let me ask you a few questions in this regard just to get your mind thinking in this direction. What could that look like for you? Are you putting yourself in places to be equipped for bringing the gospel of the kingdom into every area of your life?

Are you regularly in worship? In relationships? In Sunday school classes? Small groups? Other places where you can learn and process how God's word impacts your life?

[ 14 : 08 ] In every way. Your work? Your neighbors? Your community? Serving the kingdom doesn't just mean I'm going to stay in this room and make sure that when Jesus comes I'm in the sanctuary at church.

Because that's where Jesus would want to find me. No, no, it's too easy. It doesn't mean you have to go on a mountaintop and start looking out for him to be ready. No.

He's called you into his kingdom and it's everywhere. But are you seeking how his word prepares you and equips you for that? Are you intentionally thinking about work, life, neighbors, community, everything with his priorities?

I know you go to training for your job. I know you read blogs about parenting, business leadership, college football. Are you preparing to serve God at home, in the office, and in your free time?

Are you investing in your heart the way you're investing in your body? Working out, watching what you eat, buying the right clothes?

[ 15 : 16 ] Those have some value, God says. But are you praying, studying to feed your heart? Are you actively engaging in this spiritual warfare the king tells us we're fighting in his kingdom for him, for his kingdom?

Being alert and aware as a servant means knowing we're in a war for the hearts of our kids, for the dignity of the downtrodden in our city, for the souls of our neighbors in Huntsville, and our neighbors in India, for the glory of the gospel to be reflected in our marriages?

There's a war and you're in it, like it or not. Are you fighting? It's a war that requires us to sacrifice our agendas daily and to serve others in the service of our king.

Wars require sacrifice like that. This is a general call to serve the king, to prepare ourselves to serve him so that we're ready when he comes.

And after that general call, Jesus gets a little more specific and he calls us to embody the king's gracious character. Verse 41.

[16:36] Peter responds to Jesus. 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 will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. You see what Jesus is saying?

We're stewards, aren't we? Perhaps especially those in leadership in the church. Pay attention. Leaders. But just as surely any and all of us who would be faithful followers of Christ are stewards who rule on behalf of the king.

For you Tolkien fans, this is the steward of Gondor who's in charge until the true king returns, right? You can keep that picture. Everybody else can move on. This is the way God created us in his image as vice regents to rule over his creation.

All the way back in the beginning, it's what he's made all of us for as image bearers of his. And he created us not just to go rule in any way we wanted to. Go be in charge.

[17:53] No. How are we supposed to rule? We're supposed to rule the way the true king would, reflecting his gracious character. So we have to ask, what is our master like?

How would he care for his household? We know he would lovingly provide for all their needs. He would generously give without demanding repayment.

He would be fair to all and especially merciful to those in need. And so Jesus says, being ready for my return means living like that every day.

Embodying my gracious character in every situation and to every person, especially your brothers and sisters in my family. To use the example of Christi returning home again.

If we clean up along the way. If we eat appropriately. If we function in every way as she would while she is gone. There won't be a mad scramble to straighten up when she's coming home.

[19:00] We'll be ready. The problem for us is if God is always faithful. Consistently gracious. Overwhelmingly generous.

Intentionally merciful to those beneath him. Sacrificially loving to others. And he is. We're different. We have a strong propensity towards loving ourselves.

Right? Towards doing things our way rather than his. We've had it all the way since he created us to do this back in the garden. We as people started thinking, you know, I'd rather rule my way. I've got a different way that this would work better. And Jesus describes this tendency in the unfaithful steward. Verse 45. A contrast with the faithful steward.

If the servant says to himself, my master is delayed in coming and begins to beat the male and female servants and eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him.

[20:04] And at an hour he does not know and 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. And from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

Jesus, in some sobering words, pictures a steward who lives for himself, who mistreats those under his charge, and pays the price in dreadful ways when the master returns.

This is a clear warning to elders and deacons in the church that we are to tend and feed the flock as the good shepherd would. Not any way we want.

But it's for everyone following Jesus to clarify Peter's earlier question. Is this for us or everybody? Verse 48, Y'all, that's all of us.

[21:24] We often hear these words used to speak of those who've been given much in terms of material possessions or physical talents. That's not untrue.

But in context, those who have been given much are all those in relationship with Jesus to whom the Father has given what? The kingdom.

Verse 32 from last week. That's what the Father has given to us. Every spiritual blessing in Christ. The word of God that all of us have so that we can know him more and know his heart and understand our master's will.

And God says, Steward those things as I would. Love your children in the way I love you. Do your work justly and fairly and faithfully the way I do with all of creation.

Engage with your neighbor and the least of these and the lost passionately, sacrificially, relentlessly the way I do.

[ 22 : 36 ] The heart I have towards them, God says. Have you been given much forgiveness? Forgive much. Have you been given much hope?

Share hope with others. Have you been provided for generously and freely? Then dump it out on others as freely as it has been given to you.

Give the same way. Serve the king. Serve the king. Serve the king. Embody his gracious character in every way.

And then one last way to stay ready for the return of Jesus. Cling to the king. All these things we've been talking about, things we can do, ways we can live day in and day out to be ready for the return of Jesus, they all come out of a heart that treasures the king.

They're all a reflection of our heart for him, aren't they? Verse 34 told us, Where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. See, if I treasure Christi, when she comes back in the middle of the night unexpectedly, she will find me faithful to her.

[ 23 : 58 ] She will find us longing for her to come back. Anxious for her to be home again. She'll find us living in such a way that if she came back, she would be happy to be living with us, right?

If we treasure her. Walking back into a messy kitchen says, We were hoping you weren't coming back tonight. Walking back into a home that's prepared for her says, We love you and couldn't wait for you to be back here with us.

It's why, by the way, side note, we're called to pray and long for God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven because we long for the king to come and live with us.

We want this earth to be a fit place for our king to dwell, not just so it'll be great, but because we treasure him. And we want him with us.

That's why we need the kingdom to come, right? The point of this last section, several brief comments that Jesus makes, is that we must cling to the king.

[ 25 : 08 ] That we must be committed to him no matter what because both deliverance and judgment are coming. And he is the dividing line.

Listen to these hard words. Verse 49. I came to cast fire on the earth and would that it were already kindled. I have a baptism to be baptized with and how great is my distress until it is accomplished. That's Jesus headed to the cross. That's what that verse means. Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.

For 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 her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. We think of Jesus as the prince of peace and that's true. He does come to bring peace between men and God to reconcile us to God by his cross in particular.

[ 26 : 14 ] And that unites people. But Jesus is highlighting here a stark distinction that his coming and his death will bring. And that's because while some embrace him and follow him, others reject him.

And so there's division between those. Jesus is the dividing line. And he continues on this point. He also said to the crowds, when you see a cloud rising in the west, you say it once a shower is coming right there off the water.

And so it happens. When you see the south wind blowing, it's coming up from the desert. You say there will be a scorching heat and it happens. You hypocrites.

You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? You're good at seeing the weather coming, but you don't see what's happening right here in your midst.

The Messiah is here to rescue. He's been promised for years and for generations. He's coming now. He's here to rescue. Everything now changes.

[ 27 : 27 ] Look around you. The blind receive sight. The lame walk. The good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the one who doesn't fall away on account of the one that's brought this. The Messiah. Find him.

Cling to him. At the same time, he says, verse 57, Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer puts you in prison.

I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny. Sometimes we hear that quoted as just good practical advice, which it is.

But now in this context, think about it, we understand that the judge is God himself. Because not only is salvation coming with the Messiah, the rescue you've been waiting for, but so is judgment for those who reject him.

So read the signs of the times, Jesus says. Get right with God now. The kingdom of God is in your midst, so align yourself with the king.

[ 28 : 43 ] Cling to him, Jesus is saying. Do you long for Jesus? Do you ever daydream about his return?

What's it going to be like to be with him forever? Is your heart faithful to your first love? Clinging to trust in him until he comes back?

Listen, if you don't know Jesus, nothing could be more urgent than for you to meet him today, to know him.

He was promised to come once, and he came. He's promised to come back again, and when he does, he will deliver and judge fully and finally.

Don't say to yourself, well, I've got time. Plenty of time. Do you think Jesus is coming back tonight? No?

[ 29 : 50 ] Well, this passage says he's coming when we don't expect. So in that regard, if you don't think it's tonight, tonight's as good a time as any in that respect. Jesus is coming.

Don't delay dealing with Jesus. If you want to talk about it more this morning, I'd love to talk with you. Any of us would love to talk with you more about him, but don't delay.

If you're unsure about Jesus, or if you look at your life and realize that you're not serving the king and kingdom priorities, or that you're not embodying the gracious character of the king, and you realize what that says about your heart, is that you don't treasure the king, if you realize that this morning, let me give you a glimpse at why we long for his return.

What it is about him that wins our hearts, that makes us want to shape our lives after him right now. Why would somebody do such a thing?

When Christy comes home from a trip, everyone in our house is eagerly awaiting her return. Now, part of that is because Christy usually brings presents back for us.

[ 31 : 10 ] Because while she's been away from us, her heart has remained so fixed on us, she loves us so much that while she was away, she was thinking of bringing something back for us.

And then secondly, we're so excited she's coming home because she doesn't come home just to prop her feet up, she comes home and jumps right back in to serving, fixing us dinner, taking care of our house, getting us ready for school, sitting and reading with us.

Her love for us is so evident and so persistent, even when we leave a mess, even when we didn't live the way she would have wished while she was gone, even when she really deserves a break, she keeps loving us.

That's just a glimmer of our Savior's heart for us. His heart remains fixed on us always. Always.

Do you remember verse 50? What does he say about how we're on his heart all the time? I have a baptism to be baptized with and how great is my distress until it is accomplished.

[ 32 : 23 ] Remember, Jesus has set his face to go to the cross, to be baptized. There's judgment there as well as he's going to purchase for us our salvation.

We're on his heart. He's coming to give us gifts, salvation and the kingdom and every spiritual blessing, even eternal life, a gift from him.

And when he returns, he doesn't just bring gifts because he loves us. The king who is due all glory, the master who deserves all service from all the servants, who deserves to take a rest after all the

work he's done on our behalf.

Nonetheless, what does he do? He serves us. He says, I want you to recline at the table at the wedding feast of the Lamb that is rightfully mine.

Remember verse 37? 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.

[ 33 : 46 ] Y'all, that's a king worth waiting up for. Now do you know why he has our hearts? Why it's worth anything for us to serve him?

He has come once in great humility to rescue us at the cost of his own life. And he is coming again in great glory to be with us forever and serve us always.

Stay ready for him. Trust him now. Serve him now. He will never let you down. Pray with me.

Jesus, we look forward to that day when you come. Thank you you have not left us alone now.

But oh, we long to be with you always and forever eternally. So Jesus, make us those today who truly do long for that day more than any other day.

[ 35 : 01 ] Who long to be with you and who live as people whose great joy is to serve the king and to be ready for his return.

Oh Father, just in the years that we have on this earth, help us as we serve to make it a fit place for the unnumerable incomprehensible years we will spend with you forever.

Change our hearts by your spirit. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. For more information visit us online at [southwood.org](https://southwood.org) The people who whom the country the few