

# Ready or Not

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] to be thinking about. If you were at university and you were studying that, they would call it the doctrine of God. And there you are teaching your children who God is. What a great thing that is. Keep doing that. Keep telling your children who God is. We're going to be looking at a passage in the Gospel of Luke, so you may want to open that up in your Bible just now. And it's always a good idea just to turn to the start of a book. So chapter 1, have a look at chapter 1. We're not going to read chapter 1. I just want you to go there just now and I want you to find verse 3.

So look, chapter 1. Luke's writing his Gospel and he says, it seemed good to me. I'm reading in the ESV. It'll be maybe slightly different from your translation, but it's the same word. It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus. Why? That you may have certainty concerning the things you've been taught.

So there's the context of the whole Gospel being written by Luke, so that Theophilus, the reader, us, can have certainty about what is being taught. Taught about who? Taught about Jesus. So this is written so that we can have certainty. Father God, as we approach your Word, as we want to sit under it and hear what you have to say, for the reason that you said it, in the way that you said it, Lord, we ask that we would have open hearts, open ears, and that we would worship you by how well we are concentrating. Help us, Lord God, to hear from you. To hear from you and not just walk away, but to listen and to change. Blessed is he who hears and does.

So, Lord, help us to hear from you and to follow you and trust you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

So you've looked at Luke 1. Now you're going to flick forward to Luke 12, and you're looking for verses 35 to 48. So Luke 12, 35 to 48. And don't be worried, you're not going to be skipping all around the Bible.

[ 2 : 3 5 ] But once you've got to that, that's where you're staying, and you'll be pleased about that. So you can have the Bible open in front of you the whole time and just check that I'm talking truth. Now, just before Luke chapter 12, Jesus tells a story of a rich man who had so much stuff, he decides to build bigger barns. You know that one? And that night, God said to him, fool, this night, your soul is required of you. And the things you've prepared, whose will they be?

He says, tonight your life is over. Life can end suddenly, can't it? I experienced that recently. A 37-year-old friend of mine on my course collapsed and he died. On the Wednesday, we were a hill climbing. We played football together. We had a meal. The Thursday morning, he was lying on the floor and he was dead. Alex Salmond, one minute he's talking at a conference. The next minute he's dead at the lunch. The One Direction singer, Liam Payne, just 31. Life apparently still all ahead of him, but now it's all behind him. And so Luke writes his account of Jesus' ministry because he wants his audience to be certain about life and about Jesus. And in chapter 12, he wants them to be certain that what they've heard, that he will return. Says it on the way out of your church. I don't want you to go out just now. But when you do, that's exactly what it says. Tell he comes. Be certain he will return. He's judge. And in chapter 12, we realize he's to be feared. But also, he provides for all our needs. And so we're going to read our passage now and we're thinking under the heading, ready or not. And I've got three questions for you to think about as you read the passage.

What have we to be ready for? What does being ready look like? And why do we need to be ready? What have we to be ready for? What does being ready look like? Why do we need to be ready?

Look chapter 12 at verse 35. Stay dressed for action. 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 and finds them awake, blessed are those servants. 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 must also be ready for the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect. And Peter, one of the apostles, 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. But if that servant says to himself, my master is delayed in coming, and he 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 him, at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pities 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 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. Amen.

You ever watched Rafael Nadal play tennis? He's left-handed, but I'm going to do this right-handed. He takes an age to serve. Gets his racket. Gets his ball and he bounces his ball. And the guy down the other end, he's grown a beard by the time he's served. He knows at some point, Rafael will serve and he's got to stay ready. He's got to be in the ready position. Well, bad pun alert. This passage has a lot to say about serving and waiting expectantly. I wonder how your calendar is for the week ahead or the weeks ahead. Is it busy?

[ 8 : 31 ] Is it not too bad? Maybe it's not as busy as it used to be and you wish it was. Have you got on your calendar for each day ready for Jesus' return?

No doubt some of us. I'm going to say this, more likely the ladies. No doubt some of us have already started preparations for Christ's birth and the celebration of Christ's birth. Yes.

Jesus says, be ready for my return. So how ready are you for that? Not the 25th of December. Maybe you think, meh, that's not going to happen, that return. And you've put the racket down and you've walked off thinking, Rafa's never going to serve. Because 2,000 years after hearing the Lord saying he's coming soon, maybe you think, meh, and you've fallen asleep on the job. Maybe subconsciously or even secretly, and you're not telling anyone this at church, you don't think he's coming. It's been so long.

And you don't really believe it. You've become a servant who's let the light die out. You've got your jammies on. You've got your wee hot water bottle. You're under the blanket and ready for a kip.

Hopefully not during the sermon. And after 2,000 years, you think, the Master is not coming. Well, the Apostle Paul, who asks Jesus a question in this passage, he wrote a letter later on, and he said in that letter, a day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. Time's not the same for the Lord as it is for us. So maybe you don't think he's coming. It's been so long. Or just maybe you think it's only been 2,000 years.

[ 10 : 46 ] And if one day is a thousand years, he's only been away for a weekend. Surely he'll be away for at least a long weekend with a bank holiday. He's no coming in my lifetime. And if that's you, this passage is ice cold water on your face. It's a blaring alarm clock. It's a smoke alarm going off in the middle of the night. Time to wake up. Be ready for the return. That's our first subheading.

Be ready for the return. Jesus gives us picture after picture here, doesn't he? Saying, be ready for the Master's return. Verse 35, stay dressed for action, or literally gird your loins. Which means tucking your robes in in case you have to work, run, climb. You might have noticed men in that part of the world aren't wearing trousers, aren't they? It's robes. It's gowns. And so when you're working, you have to pull them up and tuck them in to your loins so you don't trip over them. It's not easy to run or climb a ladder in a long dress. At least that's what I've been told. The point is, be ready for work. 35B, keep the light on. The Master might come home, and if you've let the oil light go out, he's going to come back, and you'll not be able to see. You'll be chapping, and you'll be at complete darkness, not knowing which way is up. Wrapped in your blankets with your wee hot water bottle, with no smartphone to help you. Pre-electricity. It is proper dark. And Jesus says, don't let the lights go out. It'll be so dark. You might not even be able to see to chap the door, the Master.

You'll be tripping up if he does, because you can't just flick the switch. You need to take care. You actively have to keep the oil lamp on. You need to work at it. Make sure there's fuel.

Be ready. Keep the oil light going so the Master will come. Be so ready when the Master comes home from the wedding feast, which by the way could last a fortnight. Do you see the picture? The Master will come. Be so ready. Be so ready. You're at the door to open it. One knock. That was two. And open.

You're not like a sprinter in a tracksuit waiting in the call room. You're not a sprinter even being called to take her marks. You've to be in the set position, waiting only for the sound of the gun to which you'll react. Bang! Go!

[ 13 : 59 ] Verse 38. Whatever time in the day, in the second watch of the night, or the third watch of the night, the second millennium, the third millennium, the fourth millennium, the 54th millennium, the door is knocked. Bang! You're on it. Master! You're back.

Do you see how ready for his return we need to be? You're not a musician in an orchestra who, whilst the music is playing, has laid down her instrument, confidently believing she knows where she is in the piece. No. You've got your flute at your lips.

You're ready for the moment the conductor points at you. Because you don't have the sheet music. And you don't know the timing. Be ready.

Verse 39. Jesus' great pictures continue. If you knew that a thief would arrive at your house at 4.23am, you'd have been ready, wouldn't you?

Depending on who you are, you might have phoned the police. Or you might have had your baseball bat ready. Or if you're wee Kevin McAllister, home alone, if you don't know that, you've laid all your booby traps, haven't you?

[ 15 : 21 ] But unlike Kevin, who was ready at 9pm, you don't know what other thieves are coming. You must be ready now as you don't know when.

Verse 40 makes that clear, doesn't it? You must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. I spoke about not really believing Jesus will come as he hasn't yet.

Or expecting that it will be way off in the future. People who are not ready. But there's a third, an equally wrong reaction. Which is a kind of fever pitch guessing level of ready.

And by that I mean people with a fixation on working out when. You met any of these? The Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

This scripture says to that sort of thing, stop it. You will not predict it. You will not expect it. Listen, I think in a few years time, it will be 2,000 years since the Lord's crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

[ 16 : 35 ] And thus, I imagine in the next few years, we're going to start hearing all sorts of speculation about the Lord's return. Probably from people who claim insider information.

They will say they're prophets. More likely they're bampots. Fakes. Or they're misled. There will be false prophets.

And if they name dates or time periods, you know they're false because they're contradicting what Jesus says. The Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

And so the point is, you do not know when, so be ready. Ever ready. Don't keep guessing. But be ready. Don't let the light go out.

Don't be under the cover sleeping. Be in the set position. Ready for the Lord's return. For the conductor's instruction. For the master returning from the feast.

[ 17 : 38 ] So we know what we're to be ready for. I've answered that question with you, haven't we? Secondly, be ready, not just for the return, but be ready, be serving.

How are we to be ready? What does ready look like? Be ready, be serving. Well, I don't know about you, but the prospect of being ready might sound a bit something that we don't really like, because it kind of suggests passivity to us, being passive.

We might think it suggests waiting, and we don't like waiting in the car.

Hurry up, lights. Change. At the supermarket, why don't they just open the other towels? At the departure lounge, oh, the flight's delayed.

And we view waiting time as wasting time, don't we? Waiting for Jesus' return is to make good use of time.

[ 18 : 47 ] The best use of time. Gird your loins mean be ready for work. In this sense, waiting time is working time.

Waiting time is working time. Being ready by serving. This is what it looks like. Verse 41. 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.

And answering this question, Jesus has given us another picture, hasn't he? Being ready looks like serving the servants.

Servants also belong to the master. It looks like feeding them. Jesus speaks about being a faithful and a wise manager. And you might be going, Well, what does that mean?

[ 19 : 52 ] And so on one level, that means being a leader, doesn't it? Looking out for others. Whether it's leadership over a church, over a family, or some people in other way.

And did you notice? Leadership looks like giving and serving food. Giving them, we're told, their portion. Yes, Peter, that will be you, the apostles.

You will feed the other servants belonging to the master. Food sustains life, doesn't it? The word, as we were hearing, sustains and creates life.

You will be telling that word, you apostles. But this message, Peter, is not just for you. For it's for us too, isn't it? We are servants, verse 43, servants, and we have to be doing, while the teacher is away, while the master is away, we have to be looking after the other servants.

Teaching, feeding, loving, being ready, looks like loving service of the church. And so, being ready, ready, so ready for Jesus' return, should affect how you view your own stuff, your possessions, your money, your time.

[ 21 : 16 ] Do you view these as yours, or as for serving the returning king? Does your bank balance and your financial giving to the church suggest you are seeking first the kingdom?

that you're waiting expectantly for the returning king? If you are certain Jesus is returning, there's going to be relationships you need to sort out.

People that you need to forgive. People that you have angered, that you need to sort it out with, and saying sorry to.

Being certain of Christ's return, it'll have an impact on your own personal dreams and ambitions. It'll increase, as Karen was telling us, your prayer life, and your commitment, and serving to the church.

Because being ready looks like loving service, of the master, and his people, the church. And so, Wester Hills Baptist, you can't be waiting about for a pastor before you're doing that.

[ 22 : 43 ] For it's every servant's job to be lovingly serving each other. Each other's needs to prefer. And so, you can be asking yourself, how am I serving, and what is my heart when I'm serving?

In what way am I seeking God's kingdom? And as a church, you can be asking yourself, how are we as a church seeking God's kingdom?

What's Wester Hills Baptist doing to serve the whole church, the body of Christ? That's good questions to go away and think about.

Good questions for a leadership meeting, for a church meeting, to ask yourself. Because being ready is serving. In contrast, being ready is not lauding it over others.

Not lauding it over others. If that's you, says Jesus, be ready to be, third point, beaten. Be ready to be beaten.

[ 23 : 53 ] Tell you what, we'll get to that. Before we look at that warning, or that negative promise, let's focus on the other promise. We've thought about how we've to be ready, and now let's think about why we've to be ready, with two points.

Be ready, be blessed. Be ready, be blessed. Normally when I turn up to a church, I use the translation they use, but the reason I didn't was because the NIV doesn't say blessed, and it does in the ESV.

So be ready, be blessed. There's a phrase that rings through this passage. Blessed are those servants. Verse 37, it says, blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.

Verse 38, I think it says happy in the NIV. Verse 38, if he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants.

Those who are ready are blessed. Verse 43, blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Why are we to be ready, why are we to be serving?

[ 25 : 05 ] Because it's a blessed, or blessed activity. It is blessing to the people we're serving, isn't it? And it's blessing to us, as Jesus taught his disciples, that it was more blessed to give than to receive.

In the act of serving, we are blessed. In some ways, the act of giving is the blessing.

We often look at blessing in a kind of Tesco club card, or nectar points type way. You know, I'm collecting blessing points for future cash-in.

Yeah? But the activity of service, and the love it creates, the relationship it builds, that is blessing.

Listen, there are people that you love, that you are forever grateful for, and you would do loads for, because of the way they loved, and served you. Is that not correct? They have been blessed with your grateful affection.

[ 26 : 18 ] Serving is a blessed activity. But, that's not all this passage means, because there is a link being made here between our readiness, us serving of other servants, and rewards after the Lord returns.

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.

Now, remember, this is a parable to illustrate, but Jesus is certainly linking eternal rewards of heaven with earthly service here. The master will see, the servant's readiness for his return, and set the servant over all his possessions.

And he owns quite a bit of stuff, does Jesus. What an amazing thing for Jesus to even say, that all that he owns will be shared with his faithful servants.

At this moment of time, it's beyond our understanding to know how that plays out, isn't it, exactly, in the new heaven, in the new earth.

[ 27 : 34 ] But we can trust Jesus, we can have certainty at his word, those who are faithful will possess all that Christ possesses. And if that was not mind-blowing enough, not mind-blowing enough reason to be ready, what about verse 37?

Look at it carefully. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. And here's the shortcoming.

Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at the table. He will come and serve them.

Have to think about that, we'll have a sip of water. There's no way if you go to Buckingham Palace or Balmoral, King Charles is serving you your dinner.

Christ will serve at table. You're sitting down. What a motive to stay ready. Seeing you, the ready servant who's lived expectantly of his return, feeding the people, caring for them.

[ 28 : 53 ] The master, the Lord themselves, dressing himself for service. He says to you, take your seat. He serves you the dinner. No royal person would do that, would they?

No other god of any other religion would either. He truly is Lord of Lords. and no one compares to him at all, do they?

Well again, at this moment in time, it's beyond our understanding to know how that's going to play out exactly in a new heaven, a new earth. But we can trust Jesus.

We can have certainty at his word. Those who are faithful will be served by the King of Kings. Be ready, be blessed, and blessed eternally.

Well that's enough reason, isn't it? To be ready. But Jesus gives us more reason to be ready and it's much more somber.

[ 29 : 55 ] Be ready or be beaten. Have you ever had a beating? Have you ever witnessed one?

It's not just the body that takes a battering. It's the mind. It's the emotions, even maybe the spirit. My nose used to be straighter than this.

Three on one. And that was a beating I did not deserve. Not a beating I did. I said earlier, being ready is serving.

not lauding over others. Not using church to advance yourselves or to make yourself feel important.

Forty-five, if that servant says to himself, my master's delayed in coming, and he begins to beat the male and female servants to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and that an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful.

[ 31 : 18 ] Look where his complacency about the Lord's return has left him. Hell. A leader who is abusive, a leader who is a glutton, self-serving, a drunk.

Instead of serving the people, he's serving himself. Instead of protecting the vulnerable, he abuses them. I don't know you, so I can be really blunt.

If that's any of you, repent. Repent now or the Lord will cut you down. If you are serving but is really for yourself, you have had all the blessing you are going to get and you'll get what you deserve from Jesus.

Hell. Do you hear that warning? Do not harm the little ones. Better have a massive stone round your neck and be thrown into the sea, says Jesus, than harm those who belong to me.

Be warned. We read to those who know and are living as if the Lord will never return, that they are abusing his, he says, cut in pieces.

[ 32 : 46 ] It's put with the unfaithful. It's hell, isn't it? A wolf wearing sheep's clothing, clearly not saved. I'm more guilty because much light was given, says Jesus.

Much responsibility. Be awake to this. And be aware, especially as you have no shepherd, pastor, just now.

Be very for each other. Any authority you have is to be used to serve. Verse 47, servant, and that servant who knew his master's will, but did not get ready or act a severe beating.

A servant who knew to whom light, knowledge of the gospel was given, but lived as a really punished. You'd heard the gospel offer of peace with God through Jesus, but you didn't accept the terms he offered before he comes with the heavenly host.

So you'll be beaten. Be warned. Verse 48, but the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating.

[ 34 : 00 ] It turns out ignorance is not bliss. Ignorance is no excuse, even though we always think it is. I didn't know I couldn't park here.

I didn't know you owned this bit of land. I couldn't dump stuff here. I didn't know that I couldn't do as I liked. Those who did not know but are in the wrong, they will receive punishment, Jesus says, less severe, but punishment.

And now round coffee, we might want to have a theological discussion about eternal rewards and punishments, but I think we've been missing the point. Either of these three ways, you're getting a doing.

the punishment you deserve, the outcome you don't want, which is hell. And so Westerhales Baptist, which one of you would deny you've been given much?

Have you been given much? You have. You've been given the gospel. What more could you be given? You've been given much. everyone to whom much was given, much will be required.

[ 35 : 18 ] From him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. The time I hear that, it frightens me, it wakes me up.

Do you hear the seriousness of that warning, of that statement by Jesus? He will return, the heavenly host will come with him, led by the captain.

You don't know when they're coming, but they are coming. They might just be ten minutes over the hill, or they might be centuries away, but Jesus says he's coming, and he's given you much.

Be certain too, the amount of heartbeats you have left are fewer than when you sat down at the start of this sermon. We will meet Jesus, and he will bless or beat.

I think we best be ready. We best be serving. You know, I can't comment on the readiness of Alex Salmond or Liam Payne, but my brother Ernest, he was ready to meet Jesus.

[ 36 : 26 ] He was ready to meet Jesus and his death because he was ready for him returning. Cutting pieces, severe beating, light beating, or, number four, sat at table and served by the master.

That's why we need to be ready. Surely, there's only one of those four outcomes we're hoping for. There's one Jesus we want to meet.

Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it. He's given us all the incentives in the world to be ready. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.

Truly, Jesus says to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table. And he, the master, will come and serve them.

Lord Jesus, what great things you speak to us, what great promises you give to your children. Oh, we certainly cannot accuse you of not warning us, Lord Jesus, that we must be ready, that you will return, that you want to find us serving and loving each other and looking after those who are dear to you in service.

[ 38 : 04 ] We cannot accuse you of not telling us what will happen if we are abusive of our power or our responsibility. And so, Lord Jesus, help us.

Help us each day, for we are creatures of habit who are forgetful, who get sleepy. Lord God, thank you for waking us up again.

Lord, may we be found ready and serving when you return. May each day be the day that we expect you, and yet let us live our lives knowing that you could return way, way in the future.

Help us to be ready. Lord God, we thank you for this word. Help us as we go about the rest of this Sabbath day to know you and love you and worship you for all that you have given us and for who you are.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. And I've put this on top of the order of service and now I can see it.

[ 39 : 20 ] Right, we're going to finish heaven Yin chat with one Penn N R God, amen, two boys they have been each to their house and they we're going to