

BE READY, THE SON OF MAN WILL COME

Luke 12:35-59

Key Verse: 12:40

“You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

Last week we learned that God is pleased to give us his kingdom. For this reason, he sent his one and only Son Jesus to die for our sins and raised him from the dead on the third day. It is amazing. God wants to give us his kingdom, which is the perfect, everlasting paradise. When we have the kingdom of God, we have treasure in heaven that is never exhausted. It is like having a bank account that never diminishes even though we spend money freely. Those who have the kingdom of God as their treasure are rich indeed. They can overcome greed and worry and live sacrificially for the glory of God and the blessing of others. They say that once Dr. Joseph Chung was a poor medical student with empty pockets. But when he accepted the kingdom of God, he became truly rich in his inner man. He wanted to help suffering people in Bangladesh, but he had no money. So he sold his blood to raise money and sent it to them. God blessed his giving spirit and made him a blessing to people of all nations. May God help us to realize he is pleased to give us the kingdom. May God help us to seek his kingdom and live sacrificially to change America into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Today Jesus teaches his disciples that he will come again to this world. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the focal point of human history. It is the great event toward which all history is moving. However, not everyone will be ready for it. Jesus urges his disciples to be ready so that they may be blessed. Those who are not ready will be most miserable and suffer dire consequences. May God help each of us through this study to be ready for the coming of the Son of Man.

First, be dressed ready for service (35-36).

Look at verses 35-36. “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.” In these verses, Jesus teaches us what kind of attitude we must have toward his Second Coming. Jesus compares his disciples to men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet. In those days, a wedding banquet lasted indefinitely, maybe until the wine ran out. So the servants did not know exactly when their master would return. Sometimes it was early, sometimes it was much later. When the master returned, the servants had to be ready. As soon as the master knocked, they must open the door for him, welcome him, and be ready to serve. Jesus wants his people to be dressed ready for service.

To be dressed ready for service means to have the attitude of Jesus to serve God and others as our lifestyle. During his messianic ministry, Jesus served all kinds of sinners by teaching the word of God, healing diseases and driving out evil spirits. Jesus served his disciples by sharing common life with them and showing them the secrets of the kingdom of God. Jesus was ready to serve anybody, including a man with leprosy. Jesus urges his disciples to be dressed ready for service. We can see a good example in Mary, the mother of Jesus. When the angel Gabriel visited her with the good news that she had been chosen to be the mother of Jesus, it seemed to ruin her beautiful dream of marriage with Joseph. It turned Mary’s world upside down and totally interrupted her life. But Mary did not hesitate for a moment. She accepted God’s calling with an immediate decision of faith. She said, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said” (Lk 1:38). Through her immediate obedience, Mary became the most blessed woman. We see another example of this in Father Abraham. One day, he was sitting in front of his tent in the hot sun when he noticed three people coming. He hurried to meet them and bowed low to the ground, ready to serve them. He hurried to Sarah and told her to prepare dinner for them. He ran to the herd and found a choice, tender calf for the main course and prepared it. He also brought yogurt and fresh milk and served a most delicious meal. As they ate, he stood by, ready to meet their every need. Abraham was an old man, but he ran around like a young man to serve his guests. Abraham may not have known at first that he was serving the Lord. Nevertheless, when he was dressed ready to serve, he could meet God personally and was abundantly blessed.

Second, keep your lamps burning (35-40).

The words “keep your lamps burning” are also very important. As we have thought about in Luke’s gospel, Jesus is the Light of the world. He is always shining upon all mankind to give heavenly sunlight to our souls. We can have

this sunlight when we receive him into our hearts with repentance and faith. Here, the admonition is to “keep your lamps burning.” It means that the lamp once ignited by the light of Jesus should continue to shine without going out. It means we must hold the hope of God in our hearts, especially the promise of Jesus’ coming again. This is one of the most important promises in the Scriptures and a key element of our Christian faith.

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus taught his disciples that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day rise again (9:22). Jesus also taught them that he would ascend into heaven and come again in power and glory as the King and Judge. Jesus said in Luke 9:26, “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” The Second Coming of Jesus is promised frequently in the New Testament. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 says, “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.” Revelation 1:7 says, “Look, he is coming in the clouds, and every eye will see him....”

What happens when Jesus comes again? Look at verses 37-38. “It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.” In these verses the words “it will be good” mean that these servants will be blessed. Those who are watching for the Master’s return and are ready for his coming will be blessed. The blessing they receive is really amazing. The Master dresses himself to serve them and lets them recline at the table and waits on them. It seems too good to be true. So Jesus repeated it in Luke 22:29-30. It says, “And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” There will be a glorious feast in the kingdom of God (Lk 13:29; Rev 19:9). Those who suffer much in the hope of Jesus’ Second Coming will share this glorious feast with Jesus as co-heirs of his kingdom (Ro 8:17). When this hope lives in our hearts, we can keep our lamps burning.

Look at verse 39. “But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.” Jesus’ coming will be unexpected. It is beyond human calculation. This is God’s wisdom. If sinful men knew when Jesus was coming, they would try to enjoy the world to the last moment and then repent. But Jesus’ coming will be as sudden and unexpected as that of a thief in the night. No one knows when he will come. If anyone says they know, they are lying (Mk 13:32,33). Since we do not know, we must always be ready. Let’s read verse 40. “You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” May God help us to be dressed ready for service and to keep our lamps burning until Jesus comes again.

Third, be a faithful and wise manager (41-48).

Peter was perplexed by Jesus’ teaching. It seemed unnecessary for Jesus to come again when he was already there. In addition, Peter wondered how much more ready he could be. Should he stay awake for the rest of his life? He wanted to share that burden with others. So he asked, “Lord are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?”

How did Jesus answer? Jesus explained specifically how Peter should be ready to meet Jesus when he comes again. In verses 42-46 Jesus contrasts two servants who were entrusted with the task of feeding God’s servants. The first one is a faithful and wise manager. A faithful man is a trustworthy man. If he is given a task, he will carry it out to completion, no matter what the cost. This man was not only faithful, but also wise. He understood people well. He knew how to motivate coworkers and how to solve difficult problems. He was creative and inspirational. The task he was given was to feed the servants at the proper time. Here, “feeding” refers to giving the word of God for the nurture of their souls. The best way to prepare for Jesus’ Second Coming is to teach the word of God to his children. This is God’s wisdom. But sometimes it is difficult. In this troubled world, we seem to need all our wits and strength just to survive and to help our children survive. Some people think that the way to prepare Jesus’ Second Coming is to run away to the mountains and live like a hermit. But a truly wise man studies the Bible and teaches the Bible to others for their everlasting salvation. That is why Daniel 12:3 says, “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

We remember that Dr. Samuel Lee was a faithful and wise manager in God's work. He was talented in so many ways. But he gave his heart to study the word of God and he spent his energy on teaching the word of God. Last Christmas Dr. Lee was very ill. But he believed it was his duty before God to prepare and deliver the Christmas message. He poured out all his strength to do so until he was totally exhausted. He delivered the message and soon afterward went to heaven. This was his basic attitude as a faithful and wise manager throughout his lifetime. Through him many disciples of Jesus were raised who received salvation for their souls and became workers for the kingdom of God. Now those men and women are raising disciples of Jesus and spreading the gospel of salvation in 87 nations of the world. Jesus says that the faithful and wise manager will be rewarded greatly until he is put in charge of all his master's possessions.

On the other hand, there was a servant who said, "My master is taking a long time in coming." He thought he was smart. He figured out that it would be a while before the master returned. So he abused his privilege of leadership by beating the other servants, and indulged in physical pleasure. He thought he could enjoy a corrupted life for a while and still prepare for his master's return. But when he indulged in corruption, he became senseless and faithless. He forgot he was a privileged servant and acted like a feudal king. Jesus said, "The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers" (46). When we hear about this man, we shudder. But we must realize that anyone who abuses Jesus' trust in order to gratify his sinful nature will become just like him.

Look at verses 47-48. "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." Jesus is very clear. We who know the gospel must be faithful and wise managers for the work and history of God.

Fourth, Jesus' fire and baptism (49-53).

Look at verse 49. "I have come to bring fire on the earth and how I wish it were already kindled!" Here "fire" refers to the judgment of God that comes with the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a refining fire and a purging fire (Lk 3:16,17). Jesus wanted to establish the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven, purging all evil and unrighteousness. But he first had to suffer, die and rise from the dead. Jesus' death and resurrection would ignite the gospel fire that would rapidly spread all over Israel and the world. It would set believers free from the power of sin and death. But not everyone would believe. Thus, the earth would be divided on the basis of how each person sees Jesus. In this world, the family tie is the strongest. But if three people in one family have faith in Jesus and two people in that family do not, they cannot be united on the basis of family bonds; they will be divided on the most fundamental issue of how they see Jesus and the destiny of their eternal souls.

Fifth, judge for yourselves what is right (54-59).

Jesus turned again to the crowds. They knew how to forecast the weather so excellently based on cloud activity and wind conditions. They were smart and perceptive. But they did not know how to interpret the present time. Because of this Jesus calls them hypocrites. Look at verse 56. "Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?" They knew what was right because they saw the plain manifestation of God's power, love and wisdom through Jesus. But they habitually followed the Pharisees, floating in their bad influence like dead fish going downstream. They suppressed their consciences and avoided decisions that required sacrifice and commitment. Jesus knew these very people would soon be shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" When Jesus thought about the consequences of their heinous cowardice for themselves, their children and the generations to come, he was broken-hearted. He appealed to them in verse 57, "Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?" Jesus really wanted them to make a judgment and decision based on the facts and what their own consciences taught them about the present time. Jesus really wanted them to accept him as the Messiah and make a decision to live by faith in him.

In order to help them further, Jesus urged them to work things out before it was too late by telling them a parable. Look at verses 58-59. "As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."

In this passage Jesus teaches us that he is coming again at an hour when we do not expect him. We must be ready. We must serve God and others with the attitude of Jesus as our lifestyle. We must hold the hope of Jesus' coming again in our hearts. We must teach the word of God to others as faithful and wise managers of God's work. Then we can be blessed to dwell with our Lord Jesus Christ in everlasting glory in the kingdom of God.