

12/02/2018

Message: Living Faithfully in the Face of Christ's Absence and Return

Text: Luke 12:35-48

Introduction

- A. Today, four Sundays before Christmas, begins a season observed by many churches known as "Advent," derived from the Latin meaning "coming." During Advent churches look back 2000 years to recreate the anticipation and celebration of the coming of God's Messiah, Jesus, while at the same time looking forward in anticipation to Jesus Messiah's glorious Second Advent to resurrect the dead, to judge the world in righteousness, to create a new heavens and earth in which we believers, with transformed, incorruptible bodies, will dwell forever with Christ in the glory of His Father with great joy and peace.
- B. While Jesus, who died for His people's sins and rose for our justification, has returned to His Father's throne in heaven, He has left us these words in our text this morning to both encourage and caution us to live preparedly in anticipation of His glorious return. This is what sincere disciples of His will do.
- C. Beginning with Luke 9:51 where we read, "When the days were approaching for His ascension, He set His face to go to Jerusalem; we readers are invited by Jesus to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Him to the cross. During this journey Jesus teaches us what it means, and what it costs, to be His disciples.
- D. Following Him on this journey during the previous two weeks in Luke 12, we saw that Jesus warns us to avoid two obstacles to following Him - greed and anxiety over earthly cares and possessions.
- E. Having told us what disciples must not focus their lives upon, He now tells disciples what we must focus our lives upon - on laying up treasure in heaven, on being prepared in anticipation for His Second "Advent." Jesus uses three analogies or parables to help us focus our present living on His future return.

I. 12:35-38 An encouragement to be ready at all times for Christ's return.

- A. This encouragement is given through a beatitude (verse 37), an invitation to share in Christ's blessing at His coming. Christ's offer of eternal blessing will be enjoyed by those whose lifestyle Jesus commands commends. Those who live serving Christ's interests and agenda as a way of life in anticipation of Christ's return.

Luke 12:35 "**Be dressed (perizonnumi) in readiness, and *keep your lamps lit* (burning).**"³⁶ "**Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns** from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open *the door* to him when he comes and knocks."³⁷ "**Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes;**

1. In 12:35 the Greek sentence we translate, “Be dressed in readiness,” is literally the command, “Let your loins having been girded.” In human anatomy, the loins refer to that part of our bodies between our last rib and our hips. It is the area where we wear a belt. In the Biblical world where men wore long robes, they would pull up the bottom of their robes and tuck it in their belts for work/service or warfare. The children of Israel were to eat the first Passover with loins girded, ready to leave Egypt (Exodus 12:11 in the Greek translation uses “perizonnumi”). So having your loins girded is a metaphor for being prepared to serve Christ and fight against sin, self-centeredness, temptation.

Exodus 12:11 "Now you shall eat it in this manner: **with your loins girded (LXX: perizonnumi)**, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste-- it is the LORD'S Passover.

2. If a servant or warrior did not tuck his long robe up into his belt, his movement would be obstructed, restricting his activity. What is restricting our wholeheartedly serving Christ - lying, deceiving parents, stinginess with our money/time, sexual gratification outside of marriage, vanity, fear of what others will do/think, bitterness? We are commanded to remove all that gets in the way of doing His will each day.
3. The participle “perizonnumi” in the perfect tense (having been girded/dressed) indicates that we approach each day already prepared with a heart to serve Christ’s will and interests, a heart of faith and hope in Christ, a heart of love toward Christ. Did you ever begin your day without preparing your heart and mind to serve Christ in the hope being found pleasing in His sight at His return? I’ve heard some of you say to yourselves or to a family member after an angry response or cutting remark or sour attitude, “You haven’t been with the Lord today, have you.”
4. The command in 12:35 includes literally, “let your lamps be burning,” a present continuous participle, indicating that this attitude of preparedness for Christ’s return is not to describe occasional moments in life, but a continual way of life. Be like the servants in 12:36-37 who remain alert, always in a frame of mind and body ready to serve Christ (and not like the 5 foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 who were not prepared to wait long for the coming bridegroom, taking no oil for their lamps).

Matthew 25:1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.² **Five of them were foolish**, and five were prudent.³ **For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them,**

- B. Do we see the kindness and love of Christ in His words, intended to make us wise, unlike the foolish virgins or the rich fool described earlier in chapter 12? Did you ever notice that what we think and hope the future holds for us impacts how we live in the present? Think about it. What did the rich fool think and hope his future would hold? Years of prosperity and ease. So instead of using the increased wealth God gave him to be rich toward God, he planned to spend it on himself. He was unprepared to live in the service of the Lord, and it cost him his soul that he was preparing to pamper.

Luke 12:19 'And I will say to my soul, "**Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.**"²⁰ "**But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you;** and *now* who will own what you have prepared?"²¹ "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

- C. We also see the remarkable kindness and love of the Lord in what He promises to do for those who live in daily preparedness for His return. The same verb (*perizonnumi*) that is to describe our present heart of service to Him describes His service to us when he returns for us. It was astonishing enough that our Lord humbled Himself in His mortal flesh to serve His disciples, but for Him to return in His Father's glory as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to serve us - Remarkable!

Luke 12:35 "**Be dressed (*perizonnumi*) in readiness,** and *keep* your lamps lit.³⁶ "Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open *the door* to him when he comes and knocks."³⁷ "Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; **truly I say to you, that he will gird (*perizonnumi*) himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait (*diakoneo*) on them.**"³⁸ "Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds *them* so, blessed are those *slaves*."

John 13:3 *Jesus, ...*⁴ got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, **He girded (*diazonnumi*) Himself.**⁵ **Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded (*diazonnumi*).**

II. 12:39-40 Jesus illustrates why constant preparedness is necessary to avoid suffering the loss of our souls.

Luke 12:39 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into."⁴⁰ "**You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.**"

- A. Jews had 3 watches in the night - sunset - 10 PM - 2 AM - sunrise. Romans had 4 watches in the night - 6-9, 9-12, 12-3, 3-6 AM. Regardless, this image points to a deep night watch when one would not normally be ready.

(Jewish) Judges 7:19 So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the **middle watch**, when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.

(Roman) Mark 13:35 "Therefore, be on the alert-- for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning--"

- B. Jesus warns us to be ready at all times for His return, especially when we least expect Him, for He will come with sudden, unexpected destruction upon those whose hearts and minds do not belong to Him.

1 Thessalonians 5:1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.² For you yourselves know full well that **the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.**³ While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then **destruction will come upon them suddenly** like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.⁴ **But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;**

Revelation 3:2 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.'³ 'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore **if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief,** and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

- C. Christ's coming will bring blessing upon the faithful and judgment upon the faithless.

Revelation 16:15 "Behold, **I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake** and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame."

III. 12:41-48 Jesus both encourages and warns us to live in constant preparedness before Him.

- A. 12:41-44 Jesus encourages us with a beatitude, especially those in leadership, to be prepared for His return by being about their Master's business. Life after Christ's return for faithful servants will involve the joy and privilege of increased service to Him in His presence.

Luke 12:41 Peter said, "Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone *else* as well?"⁴² And the Lord said, "**Who then is the faithful and sensible steward,** whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?⁴³ **Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.**⁴⁴ "Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

- B. 12:45-46 Jesus warns us against unfaithfulness and its consequences.

Luke 12 **"But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk;**⁴⁶ **the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces (in two), and assign him a place with the unbelievers.**

1. Notice in vs. 45 that "eat, drink, get drunk" echos the rich fool of 12:19

2. vs 46 The place with the unbelievers = hell

Matthew 24:50 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know,⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; **in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

- C. 12:47,48 This warning should get the attention especially of us who have long sat under the teaching of God's Word, who know His will. While all the disobedient will be punished by Christ at His return, and while there is no comfort or consolation in Hell, it will somehow be worse for those of us who had a greater knowledge of His will and did not do it.

Luke 12:47 "And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes,⁴⁸ but the one who did not know *it*, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. **From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.**

Luke 10:13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.¹⁴ "But **it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you.**

James 3:1 **Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.**

Conclusion

- A. Christ's teaching begins with an encouragement to faithfulness and ends with a warning. He speaks both ways to us because He loves His children and wants us to reap His reward and not suffer the loss of ourselves.
- B. Remember, what we think and hope our future will be impacts how we will live in the present. So as we look back in celebration of Christ's first Advent, also look forward to His Second Coming, and do as our crucified, risen, now reigning, and one day returning Lord Jesus Messiah commands us through Luke and Peter for our benefit ...

Luke 12:35 "**Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps burning.**

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, **having girded the loins of your minds for action, keeping sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**