

Scripture Reading:

Luke 12:35-53 “32 Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 35 "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; 36 and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. 38 And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. 39 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 40 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

41 Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?" 42 And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. 45 But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47 And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

49 "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!

51 Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. 52 For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. 53 Father will be divided 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 her mother-in-law.'"

"Dressed for Action"

I took the sermon title this morning from the English Standard version's rendering of verse 35, "Be dressed for action and keep you lamps burning." We read the NKJV which is more faithful to the original when it says, "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning" In today's terms we might say, "roll up your sleeves and be ready!"

We are studying the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts: A two-part orderly account that Luke has put together, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for his friend Theophilus, so he and any who read them, can understand what the coming of Jesus really means. From the first chapter of Luke until the final chapter of Acts we see this simple message:

- Jesus has come to save His people from their sins
- These people will become His church, the New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ
- And then, through His Church, Christ's Kingdom will fill the whole earth.

In Luke chapter one the Angel Gabriel tells Mary, "and of His kingdom there will be no end," and in the final verse of Acts we see the Apostle Paul, "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence."

When Jesus tells us to roll-up our sleeves and be ready for service, he is not just talking about the "honey-do" list we have ignored, those dirty dishes that did not get done, the room that needs to be cleaned or even working hard to provide for our families or assisting the poor... Jesus is talking about advancing His Kingdom, which by the way, will include doing everything I have just mentioned, but performing these and ALL our tasks, in the context of the MAJOR battle we will learn about this morning!

- Luke has also told us that Jesus is now making His final journey to Jerusalem to be the sacrifice that pays the FULL price for the sins His people

Last week we were told how God cares for His people and how we are not to be anxious:

- Those who are in Christ are to be anxious for nothing, casting all their cares on God
- Those who are not in Christ can ONLY be anxious about EVERYTHING, having no one to carry the burden of their sin!

This week we are told to be dressed for action and to be ready to serve Him in His Kingdom as we await His return:

- **These duties are expected of those who are in Christ and will bring great blessings amassing those treasures in heaven we learned about last week.**

But as Jesus warned in the Sermon on the Mount, “21 'Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” To be rightly engaged in the battle we are discussing this morning, you must FIRST heed the answer to the question in John 6:28 “'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?'” Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

- **Jesus came to forgive sins and ALL who enter His Kingdom must begin at the cross**

Our text began with Jesus giving several examples of how servants might act while their master is away from the house:

- **God the Father is giving His son’s bride the Kingdom that will fill the whole earth!**
- **As this is happening, Jesus will be seated at the right hand of God in heaven commanding ALL authority in heaven and on earth.**

Jesus is NOT physically present with us again until His second coming, just as the Angels explained to the Disciples: “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” We don’t know when Jesus will return to the earth, but whether it is tomorrow or far into the future, we must be ready day by day, because as we learned last week, God has appointed the day of death for each and everyone of us... For us as individuals that brings the return of the master: That day we will be in the presence of Jesus, and we will give an account of what we did in His absence!

Listen and learn what we might expect on that day:

In verse 42, Jesus first gives an the example of being a “faithful and wise steward,” saying, “Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.”

- **Jesus said the Father takes good pleasure in giving us the Kingdom!**
- **Jesus will delight in rewarding those who serve Him faithfully**

Jesus then gives a severe warning to covenant breakers who forget their master and abuse his goods and servants in his absence, “the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.”

Let me ask the children a quick question here: *Is it a good thing to be cut in two?* Just want to make sure the adults understood the full impact of what Jesus was saying here!

- It is clearly a covenant breaker who is discussed here because he is now given the portion WITH the unbelievers... a sober warning to all of us!

BUT we must see that in context, this is a determined covenant breaker and not simply a Saint who fails to live as they should: Jesus goes on in verse 47 to describe a servant who does not prepare himself and do those things expected of him...

[Like someone raised in a Godly home that does not take his or her faith seriously]

- That servant receives many stripes, reminding us of the willful child who seems to need an endless number of corrections, but remains a member of the family

And we see the Lord's patience and mercy in verse 48 with a servant who "did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes" saying he or she "shall be beaten with few."

- Jesus concludes by saying that "for everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required."
- Those of us who are in covenant together here at Church of the King are certainly among those to whom much has been given, especially you children.
- Truly Jesus expects us to be dressed for action!

With verse 49 Jesus begins to explain the specific battle that we are to be engaged in... The action we must be dressed for!

- You should hear passion and pain in His voice, remembering that Jesus is on that final journey to Jerusalem where He will be crucified for the sins of His people

"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!"

The writer of the Hebrews reflects on this passion of Jesus when he says in chapter 12: "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross"

The words of Jesus in verse 51 may seem strange to our modern ears: "Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division."

To understand what Jesus is saying here we must go all the way back to the first promise of the Gospel...

- The Good News that Jesus would save His people from their sins:

Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

- As Mike rightly pointed out in Thursday's study of Revelation, it is God who put the enmity there!

God has set up a conflict that rages down through history until Christ crushes the head of Satan at the cross. God's work brings redemption to His people! Jesus now says He did not come to bring peace but a sword, or division. Righteousness must be separated from wickedness...

The world wants there to be peace: "can't we all just get along" asked that famous Los Angeles philosopher Rodney King.

- **This so-called Peace can only bring total destruction... As demonstrated by the great flood in Noah's time.**

Christ has come to save His people from their sins and that is what divides the sheep and the goats!

- **This is the division that Jesus is talking about and He goes on to give practical examples of where it will appear, especially in families.**

BUT wait, someone will say, what about that Christmas carol about "peace on earth" isn't that what the angels sang about? Yes, and the concept of peace has already been presented several times in Luke's Gospel:

- **The angel said that John the Baptist would "guide our feet into the way of peace."**
- **In Luke 2:14 the angels did sing, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"**
- **And later in that same chapter Simeon says "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word;**
- **In Chapter 7 Jesus says to the woman who washed His feet at the Pharisee's table, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."**

So do we have a major contradiction in the Bible when Jesus now says, Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all but rather division."? If one is a skeptic or covenant breaker looking for excuses to deny the authority of the Bible, this might seem like a grand opportunity to reject God!

- **BUT not for those who HEAR the words of Jesus.**
- **The peace that Jesus brings to His people comes in the midst of the enmity that God has placed between Christ and the serpent.**

Do you remember what happened just a few short months after those angels sang about "peace on earth?" Herod sent his troops into that very region killing all the male children two years old and younger, some of which may have been sons of those very shepherds

- **What Jesus wants us to understand is that there is a REAL battle raging...**

A REAL battle that consummates in real victory as Paul tells the Corinthians in chapter 15:24 “Then comes the end, when Jesus delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”

- **The division that Jesus says He brings is between those in Christ and those in Adam.**

We are all born in Adam, dead in our sin and trespasses. Those who God chose from before the foundation of the world to be His people are taken from the Kingdom of darkness and placed into the Kingdom of light: This is why we are baptized into the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit and we belong to Jesus!

This is the sign of the division: How, here on earth, we see the difference between those in Christ and those outside the Kingdom

- **This is why we rejoice that the promise is given to us and to our children and to all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.**
- **As His servants or warriors, we put on His Name and then we are expected to be dressed for action**

For far too long the American church has been wrongly obsessed with the return of Jesus, thinking that the Kingdom the Father takes pleasure in giving us is ONLY in the future...

- **The Bible says that Christ’s Kingdom is filling the earth NOW!**

We must remember that Jesus can come for us at any time, with His final coming in judgment or with our death

THEN we will give account for how we have served as His servants in His absence...

What will Jesus find us doing when He returns?

First there are some obvious things we should avoid because they would be difficult to explain to the Master:

- ⇒ **Finding ourselves?**
- ⇒ **Entertaining ourselves?**
- ⇒ **Amassing earthly treasures?**
[those barns or last week’s lessons]
- ⇒ **Exploiting others?**
[not something we often think about but where the text says we can be cast out with the unbelievers!]

William Wilberforce in Real Christianity, points out that real Christians are those with authentic faith, those who according to Colossians 1:13 “God has delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of His beloved Son.”

He says that we demonstrate this faith “when we love the things God has given us – His Book, His special day and service done for Him” If Mr. Wilberforce is right, then these additional questions should be easy to answer:

If the master returns suddenly in the morning would you rather be reading your Bible or getting a few extra minutes of sleep?

If the master returns on Sunday would you rather be found you worshiping and fellowshiping with the Saints or off at an event the world or your family planned for Sunday?

On whatever day He returns would you rather Him find you serving yourself, or serving Him, contented in your vocation or homemaking, taking all your cares to Him in prayer and always dressed for action!

Once again we find in Luke’s Gospel a simple but profound lesson:

- **We are to be dressed for action, ready to serve Jesus day by day as His Kingdom fills the whole earth!**

In conclusion, let me return to the Book of Hebrews and ask you to meditate on these words: 12:1 “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”

Communion Meditation:

John 14: " 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Children: Who comes to the Father by some other way?

Time headline: Christians: No One Path to Salvation

Pew Survey: “57% of evangelical Christians were willing to accept that theirs might not be the only path to salvation...”

Pew spokesman: “Just because they don’t want to believe that there’s only one way to salvation doesn’t mean that they don’t take their religion very seriously”

Pagans can be SO serious that they sacrifice their own children: They can be serious and even sincere, but they are seriously wrong and this is why we must proclaim Jesus, His death burial and resurrection until He comes!