

## Ready or Not Here I Come

Luke 12:35-59

A few of you have met our dog, Hailey. She's getting old for a dog. She'll be 12 this year. At her recent vet appointment we were told she's losing her hearing and has full blown cataracts. Her nose is working just fine though. In the summer time we are able to leave her outside when it's nice. As we pull into the drive way we find her in her favorite spot in the front yard lying in the grass napping. As soon as she sees the car pull in she immediately jumps to her feet, nose to the ground, tail pointed to the sky as she runs back and forth pretending she is tracking some scent. She wants to give us the impression that she has been on the lookout all day long alert to any animal that may otherwise attempt to enter the yard. It is quite humorous because we know she's probably been there the whole time.

Take your Bible and turn to Luke 12:35-59 where Jesus continues His teaching. As I thought about an outline for today's passage I am using one from Warren Wiersbe, so I'm letting you know up front that the outline is not my own and want to give credit where credit is due.

In the middle of what Jesus is teaching, Peter, the self-acclaimed spokesman for the disciples asks a very important question. Notice what he asks in vs 41. "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?"

"Lord, does this apply only to us or does it concern others as well? Who is this intended for?"

This passage is about being ready for the Lord's return and provides us with insight into the reward for those who are and the consequences for those who are not. Now let's go back and begin from verse 35. Beware of carelessness.

## I. BEWARE OF CARELESSNESS – v. 35-53

Jesus has just spoken about two besetting sins that can overtake us if we are not careful. They are the sins of greed and anxiety caused by a fixation on the present, consumed with the pursuit of things. He concluded by stating that where our treasure is our heart will be there also. To overcome greed and anxiety we are exhorted to seek first the kingdom of God which involves looking at what is to come.

But then He shifts the focus of His message. We can be so consumed and concerned about the present that we give little or no thought about the future and in what Jesus now has to say, we are told to beware. To illustrate His point, He tells two parables that teach us about waiting and watching.

## A. Waiting and Watching – v. 35-40

The first story Jesus shares is about a familiar custom in Jewish life, something they would all be acquainted with. It's a wedding. Weddings are joyous occasions. Tradition indicates that the bride to be would keep her veil by her bedside so that when the trumpet blast and shout of the bridegroom coming was heard she could quickly get ready for his arrival. She wanted to be prepared.

Typically the procession was done at night for a couple of reasons. The first is that the guests worked during the day and couldn't leave their job and the second was because the torches they carried to light the way gave a certain ambiance to the whole wedding procession. The groom would arrive with his friends and together take his bride back to his home for a seven day wedding feast.

There is an old oriental proverb that says "He who does not invite me to the marriage, will not have me to his funeral." To reject an invitation to a wedding was considered a great insult. This helps us better understand the story Jesus told about the father who invited the guests and became indignant when the servants said they refused, so he invited others.

Although the story includes a wedding scene, the story isn't really about the wedding couple; it's about the servants of the groom. If they were obedient servants they would be waiting and watching for the return of the groom so that when he came, they could open the door and welcome him in. The insinuation is that like the servants, we are to be dressed and ready to meet the Lord and that there is an eagerness about his coming.

From time to time Robyn will head over to visit her sister and spend some time with her. I'm glad she can go, but I also look forward to when she returns. I can't wait to see her. I'll ask her what mile marker she is at on I-69 because I can calculate an approximate time she'll get home. I like to be ready.

Our attitude as believers in Jesus Christ is to be one of readiness. We are to be looking for His return. One day, someday, the Lord is going to come back and He wants us to expect it and be ready for it. He promised that He would return even if He didn't tell us when.

John 14:1-4

Revelation 1:8

Revelation 2:25

Jesus not only testified of His own return but so did others.

Paul -

I Thessalonians 1:8-10

I Thessalonians 2:19

I Thessalonians 3:13

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

I Thessalonians 5:23-24

John -

I John 3:2-3

Revelation 1:3, 7

James -

James 5:7-8

Peter -

I Peter 1:3-7, 13

If we don't believe Jesus is coming back, how can we believe anything else He said about things like salvation, forgiveness of sins, or eternal life?

Was the promise to the thief who hung next to Him on the cross just a psychological ploy to get the man to think about something other than the excruciating pain he was experiencing through the torture of the crucifixion?

Was the promise of forgiving the sins of the paralyzed man nothing more than empty words?

Was the promise of sharing a place for eternity, a place that has many rooms prepared for all who believe in Him, just a figment of a delusional mind?

Is the promise He made to us about coming back again because He wants us to be with Him where He is, just a hoax?

Do we believe what Jesus said that He is coming back? Are we dressed and ready for service when He returns?

God's Holy Word given to us by the One who does not lie, attests to the coming of Christ. Paul and the early church fathers believed it was imminent.

There are a number of reasons for His return among which are the prophetic promises made in Scripture directly related to His bride the church and to Israel. Yet there are those today who deny that Christ will return a second time at all. This view of eschatology is called hyper-preterism. Mainstream preterism believes that the tribulation events of Revelation 6-19 occurred in the past, that all eschatological prophecies were fulfilled when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. They further believe that the present universe is the new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21 and 22. They believe that sin will never fully be eradicated and that Satan will not

completely be defeated regardless of the claim of Revelation 20:10 where he is cast into the Lake of Fire to spend eternity. They believe that passages like I Thessalonians 4:16-17 are only allegories and that there is no bodily resurrection. We will spend eternity as disembodied spirits in the presence of God. Yet Jesus, through these parables, is teaching us to be ready for His return.

The second story strengthens our understanding of the first. At first glance, they don't appear to be related. One is the setting of a joyous occasion at the conclusion of a wedding celebration. The second is the story of a robbery. A robbery is anything but joyous. But there is an obvious tie in.

If you have ever been robbed you know how violated you feel. It's difficult to shake the feeling of vulnerability, even shame and helplessness. You feel paralyzed even isolated. Jesus described the scene in this way: If the home owner had known at what hour the thief would have come to rob him, he would have been prepared for the break in.

We don't think it will ever happen to us, but when it does, we act surprised. But that's the whole point. The thief doesn't want to advertise his coming. He isn't going to tell us when he will arrive to rob the place but instead arrives when we are not prepared.

Jesus concluded that His coming will be at a time when we least expect it, not that He wants to catch us off guard and surprise us like the uncle who shows up at your door unexpectedly announcing that he'll be staying with you for the month. Jesus uses both stories to urge us to a state of readiness. Because the home owner expects that he may at some point be robbed, he prepares for it. Because the servants don't know when the groom will arrive with his new bride, they prepare for it. We need to watch and wait. Understand that the nature of His coming is going to be at a time we do not know which heightens the need for readiness. He wants us to understand the nearness of His coming is soon.

I have already mentioned that some deny that Christ is going to return. On the other hand there are some who sensationalize it and suggest dates when He will return and provide reasons they believe their proposed date is correct. In 1988 a pastor wrote *88 Reasons Jesus Will Return in 1988*. He believed that Jesus was going to return in September of that year during the time of Rosh-Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. When it didn't happen, he wrote another book. Guess what the title was: *89 Reasons Jesus Will Return in 1989*. Dating the time of Jesus' return isn't a new thing. People have speculated it for centuries. And when those dates come and go they rationalize the error due to missed calculations and people believe them. The whole thing is hyped up.

Why are people so willing to believe some guy who has a theory about the exact date of Jesus' return when Jesus Himself said that His coming would be at a time when we least expect it?

Why are people so willing to believe some guy who has a theory about the exact date of Jesus' return when Jesus said that only the Father knows? Be ready because it can happen at any time.

But there is something perhaps even more alarming than either those who deny it or who sensationalize it; it's the people who are indifferent to it. Too many people are indifferent to the return of Christ. They haven't prepared their soul to meet Him. Even many Christians don't really look with much interest or concern at His coming. They scurry around here and there worried about the here and now with little or no concern about being prepared for His return. They have listened too long and given in to the taunting voice of skeptics who ask where the coming of Christ is. They mock us for believing that Jesus is coming. After all it's been 2,000 years since He made that promise. Maybe He changed His mind. Maybe He didn't mean it. Maybe He can't. Don't believe the scoffers. II Peter 3:1-10

Marvelous message we bring;  
 Glorious carol we sing!  
 Wonderful word of the King:  
 Jesus is coming again!

Even though we don't know when it will be, how attentive are we to His return? How prepared are we? At the close of the service we're going to sing What if it Were Today?

Now sandwiched in between these two stories is something of importance. There is a promise that has been given to those whom the master finds watching, prepared for His arrival. We find it in verse 37. Notice what it says. "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."

What an unexpected turn of events. The servants who are expected to serve the master when he arrives are told to take a seat at the dinner table while the master puts on the servant's apron reversing the roles and serves them. What a great gift. Jesus will serve those who have served Him.

So how do we ready ourselves for His return? The first way to prepare is through salvation. We need to prepare our heart. That comes when we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ who became our substitute on the cross, dying for our sins, when it should have been us. The penalty for sin is death and God accepted the sacrifice of Jesus in our place. If you want to be part of the place that has been prepared, then you must be saved and Jesus is the only way. Too many people think they can wait until the last minute. It would be like trying to put your seat belt on when you realize you're going to be in an accident.

Others think they will get a second chance when Jesus returns. He's loving and merciful so they

bank on that to get them through the pearly gates. Jesus says we need to be prepared now.

The second way that we can be prepared is through sanctification. Once we are saved, sanctification is the process of becoming more like Christ in character each day. The simple definition is to make holy. When we become saved God sees us through the holiness of His Son. He sees us as already holy, but there are plenty of days I don't feel very holy. As a matter of fact, there are days I don't act very holy. I still sin. Sanctification means that I am not allowing the world to squeeze me into its mold. It's living every day in the power of the Holy Spirit who is making my character like the character of Christ. Every day I'm trying to live for Christ in my actions and in my words.

I Thessalonians 4:1-3a

I Peter 1:14-16

II Peter 3:10-14, 17-18

I John 3:2-3

We are to beware of carelessness by waiting and watching – be prepared for the Lord's return. We are to beware of carelessness by working.

B. Working – v. 41-48

Peter asked his question about the intended audience of Jesus' words. Jesus doesn't respond with a direct answer but instead tells another story. A master is about to go on a trip. While he is away he needs to have someone look after his estate and so he leaves one of his servants in charge to oversee everything in his absence.

The faithful servant represents the believer. The word faithful in the New Testament always speaks of the believer, so in this story Jesus is referring to those who are saved. The faithful servant understands that the master, in this case referring to the Lord, will return at any time and is busy doing the work he was given until the master returns.

But with a little twist in the story, Jesus changes the scenario. Suppose the servant left in charge isn't faithful and reasons that the master has been gone a long time and so he begins to mistreat the others and doesn't administer his duties faithfully, what will happen to such a servant when the master returns and finds that he was an unfaithful servant? He will face the consequences for being unprepared.

Notice that there are two degrees of punishment or judgment meted out by the master. We see the first one in verse 47. This servant knew the will of the master and yet ignored his responsibilities anyway. He was defiant and was given a severe punishment of many lashes for acting so wickedly.

The second punishment is given to the servant who did not know the masters will, but whose actions still oppose the will of the master, this servant will still be punished, but it is not as severe.

Jesus concludes by noting that whoever is given much, much is required.

The teaching is clear. The second guy lived under the illusion that he had all the time in the world to do the master's will, but he wasn't prepared when the master returned and he was punished. Many people think they can live as they want and then follow the master just before they die, but just like we don't know the day of the Lord's return neither do we know the day of our death. That's why Scripture is clear that if you hear His voice, today is the day of salvation. Don't put it off, be prepared. If you are caught unprepared at the return of Jesus, the punishment is clear; you too will be assigned the same punishment as unbelievers. That place of punishment is hell, a real place with a real and eternal torment.

Beware of carelessness by working. We have responsibilities that the master has given us to do until He returns. Let's be busy doing those tasks so

that He might find us faithful.

We also need to beware of warring.

### C. Warring – v. 49-53

As we wait for the return of the Lord, it won't be an easy time. Peter tells us we are strangers living in a foreign land. It's never easy and for the Christian it can especially be difficult in homes where other family members do not share the same beliefs. We don't have this problem here in western culture, but in other countries where Christianity is a crime against the state punishable by imprisonment or even death, Christians are often thrown out of their home. Businesses owned by Christians are targeted. Christians run the risk of non-believing family members turning them in to the authorities. Some of you have experienced division in your family

When Jesus speaks of fire, it is in reference to judgment, not His own or for those who are believers but judgment for the unbeliever. It is a judgment He says He wishes was already kindled, but He adds before that time comes, He must go through a baptism, not a baptism by water, but the baptism of suffering that He would endure on the cross at His crucifixion on account of our sin. It would be the judgment God would mete out on Him because of our sin. Its completion would come when He uttered those words "it is finished".

But there is another division that will occur as well. It is the division between the saved and the unsaved. In this division, the saved will be given their reward and the unsaved will be given their punishment. It is a final declaration of judgment given by God for those who were prepared and those who were unprepared.

We are to beware of carelessness knowing that the Lord's return is near. We need to be ready.



## II. BEWARE OF SPIRITUAL DULLNESS –

v. 54-59

Jesus finishes with two more illustrations that teach us about discernment and diligence.

### A. Be Discerning – v. 54-57

With the advent of the internet it has become easy for us to check the weather on our computer or our smart phone. We can look at a 5-10 day trend and make decisions about activities based on the weather. Before the dawn of meteorologists telling us what the weather was like people watched patterns in the weather. Certain kinds of clouds meant rain. If a banner was blowing it was windy. If a rock was wet, it had been or was raining.

Many of us know the old saying “Red sky at night, sailors delight. Red sky in morning, sailor take warning.”

Jesus talked about the discernment people had with regard to the weather as they would evaluate certain conditions to predict what the weather was going to be like. But Jesus continues by chastising them for knowing what the weather was going to be like but unable to discern the times as to the coming of the Lord. The Jews had the Old Testament with all its prophetic passages pointing to the coming of Messiah and yet they ignored those signs. Instead of being concerned about what was really important they were concerned with trivial matters. Consequently our spiritual senses have become dull. We are more concerned about the present than about the future. Signs of His return are evident and yet many ignore them.

Jesus is giving us a wakeup call to arouse us from spiritual lethargy. Discern the times and be ready.

### B. Be Diligent – v. 58-59

People will do whatever they can to stay out of

prison. Jesus says if you are on your way you're your enemy to the judge, do what you can to make amends before you get there. Otherwise the judge will do what he must and pronounce judgment. We need to settle accounts before we get to the judge. We need to be diligent to make sure we settle spiritual accounts before we arrive before the judge.

The point Jesus is making is that we need to properly assess our guilt before we stand before the judge, because His judgment is final. This is a picture of the Great White throne judgment where sinners will stand before the righteous judge who will give them their sentence of eternal punishment in hell. Jesus encourages His hearers to be diligent in doing what they must to avoid that punishment.

We have been shown the way to have eternal life. Don't wait, be prepared. Seek pardon. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. But then we still have work to do.

John Calvin wrote “By His obedience, He has wiped off our transgressions; by His sacrifice, appeased the divine anger; by His blood, washed away our sins; by His cross, born our curse; and by His death, made satisfaction for us”  
 “Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.” (Isaiah 5:6)  
 “The one who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37)

People get ready Jesus is coming  
 Soon we'll be going home  
 People get ready Jesus is coming  
 To take from the world His own (1292471)

The signs of the times for Jesus' return are evident. They are becoming more strikingly clear each day. Some people will be careless about His return. Some people will be calloused about His return. Some people will be careful. If it's today are you ready?