



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: Luke 12:35-48*

Luke 12:35-48

35 “Be **ready for service** and have your lamps lit. 36 You are to be like people **waiting for their master** to return from the wedding banquet so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him at once. 37 Blessed will be those servants the master **finds alert** when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will get ready, have them recline at the table, then come and serve them. 38 If he comes in the middle of the night, or even near dawn, and finds them alert, blessed are those servants. 39 But know this: If the homeowner had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

41 “Lord,” Peter asked, “are you telling this parable to us or to everyone?”

42 The Lord said, “Who then is the **faithful** and sensible manager his master will put in charge of his household servants to give them their allotted food at the proper time? 43 Blessed is that servant whom the master finds **doing his job** when he comes. 44 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 45 But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and starts to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, 46 that servant’s master will come on a day he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unfaithful. 47 And that servant who knew his master’s will and didn’t prepare himself or do it will be severely beaten. 48 But the one who did not know and did what deserved punishment will receive a light beating. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be expected. (CSB)

### Summary:

The Bible is clear that Jesus will return one day. In some passages, His coming is portrayed as sudden and unexpected. In others, certain signs point to His return, though those signs are not always unmistakable or definitive. The question for us is this: what are we doing today to prepare for His coming?

This passage in Luke 12 emphasizes two main points. First, we are to anticipate His return and live in readiness for it. Those who remain alert and prepared will be blessed when He comes. Second, we must faithfully carry out the responsibilities God has entrusted to us. If we are unfaithful, we will face loss and judgment. Consistent with earlier passages in Luke, we are urged to seek first the kingdom of God.

### 1. This section follows:

- a. Keep seeking God's kingdom (12:31)
  - *"But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you.*
- b. The Father delights to give the kingdom (12:32)
  - *Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom.*
- c. Where your treasure is there is your heart (12:34)
  - *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*
- d. The certainty that we will meet the Lord
  - "...This very night your life is demanded of you..." Luke 12:20
  - "... depart and be with Christ..." Phil. 1:23
  - "...away from the body and at home with the Lord" 2 Cor. 5:8
  - "Then we who are still alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord." 1 Thes. 4:17

### 2. Jesus will return

- a. The promise of His return
  - a. Revelation 22:12 "Look, I am coming soon, and my reward is with me to repay each person according to his work."
  - b. Revelation 22:20 – "He who testifies about these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."
  - c. At his ascension: Acts 1:11 "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven."
  - d. In Matthew 25: the bridegroom delays his coming
  - e. Will meet him either sooner or later – rapture or death
- b. Jesus is coming – secret coming and open/public coming
  - "Believers should be continually expecting and ready for Christ's return, because the time of his coming is unknown." ESV Study Bible
  - a. Secret coming for the believers (Luke 12: 35-48)
 

**1 Corinthians 15:51–52**  
 "Behold, I shew you a mystery... we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump..."  
**Rev. 3:3** "...If you are not alert, I will come like a thief, and you have no idea at what hour I will come upon you."  
**1 Thess. 5: 2** "For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night."  
**Rev. 16:15** "Look, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who is alert ...."
  - b. Open coming – all will see
 

**Matthew 24:30**  
 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then **all the peoples of the earth will mourn**; and **they will see** the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."  
**Acts 1:11**  
 "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven."

**Revelation 1:7**

"Look, he is coming with the clouds, and **every eye will see him...**"

- c. Certainty that He will come; uncertain when He will return
  - a. Luke 12:40 "...the Son of Man is coming **at an hour you do not expect**
  - b. Luke 12:46 "that servant's master will come **on a day he does not expect him** and **at an hour he does not know...**"
  - c. Not the public coming but secret coming

**3. Expectancy and watchfulness for the kingdom (12:35-41)**

- a. The first parable – Servants waiting, expecting, and being prepared for the bridegroom's return (vv. 35-38)
  - "In verses 35 and following the kingdom orientation continues, especially under the notion of expecting the Lord. And so in verses 35-40 Jesus speaks of the expectancy of the kingdom." Dale Ralph David, *Luke 1-13*, p. 229
  - "The situation assumed in v. 36 is that the master of the house has gone to his bride's home to be married. His servants await his return, but they don't know when he will come. Verse 37 is a beatitude announcing blessing on those who are watchful. The promise of the master's generosity towards his servants takes the form of a dramatic reversal of roles. Instead of serving the master, the servants will find that he serves them...Verse 38 reiterates the beatitudes but as the need for watchfulness even late into the night." (Alan Culpepper, Op Cit, p. 217)
  - "Believers should be continually expecting and ready for Christ's return, because the time of his coming is unknown (see note on ... the point that Jesus is making is that "the master" could come at any time, even when one is not normally prepared." ESV Study Bible
- b. Blessed (rewarded) by the master for watchfulness – v. 37
 

*Blessed will be those servants the master finds alert when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will get ready, have them recline at the table, then come and serve them.*

  - "Verse 37 is a beatitude announcing blessing on those who are watchful. The promise of the master's generosity towards his servants takes the form of a dramatic reversal of roles. Instead of serving the master, the servants will find that he serves them" Alan Culpepper, Op Cit, p. 217
  - "This is a reversal of roles, the master taking the place of the servant (cf. [22:27](#))." ESV Reformation Study Bible
  - "Jesus' image here (and in [22:27](#)) is jarring. Apart from one Roman festival that deliberately and temporarily inverted the social order, slaves always served slaveholders, never the reverse." NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible
- c. The second parable – The householder (vv. 39-40)
  - a. The unexpected nature of Christ's return like a thief.
    - "This parable, similar to but separate from [37-38](#), uses the imagery of a thief to indicate the unexpected nature of Christ's second coming." ESV Study Bible
    - "The second parable (v. 39) warns of the alternative [being unprepared for the master's return]. For some the master's coming will be like the approach of a thief in the night...From instructions in earlier contexts, the reader may assume that readiness means trust in God as a heavenly Father,...handling one's material possessions faithfully, obeying the ethic of the kingdom, and making life a matter of constant prayer." (Alan Culpepper, Op Cit, p. 217)
  - b. Loss for those not expecting and not prepared – a kind of judgement
- d. Be watchful, be ready (v. 40)
  - "The sayings that follow [in Luke 12:35-40] move directly to the theme of...12:1-13:9 watchfulness. They contain at least the rudiments of two parables: 1) servants awaiting the bridegroom and 2) the householder. The first assures blessing on the faithful; the second warns of judgment on the unprepared." (Alan Culpepper, Op Cit, p. 216)
  - "[Luke 12:35-40] exhorts listeners to watchfulness, which means living in such a consistently moral and obedient way that we would be ready to give an account to God of how we have lived. [But] there is more. Servants need to be devoted to their tasks, refusing to let distractions, fatigue, or delay divert them from their duties. They must make the fulfillment of what their master has asked them to do their highest obligation and their greatest concern." (Alan Culpepper, Op Cit, p. 219)

- “Jesus then uses the picture of the thief to illustrate his point: The reality of the master's return coupled with its uncertain timing demands watchfulness. Accountability to the Lord is a major NT theme. God's immense grace does not end our personal accountability.” NIV Application Bible
- “The details of the story concerning the man returning **from the weddings** should not be pressed as far as the prophetic future is concerned. We should not identify the wedding here with the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, or the man's return with the Rapture. The Lord's story was designed to teach one simple truth, namely, watchfulness for His return; it was not intended to set forth the order of events at His coming.” William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*

e. Not waiting for some sign

a. Not looking for signs and then getting ready – procrastinating

- ““Christians must avoid any fascination with...the end[time events]. The nature of the [NT] documents *does not encourage or allow drawing of charts and schedules to plot the sequence of [end-time] events.*” [Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 504]
- “In the biblical narrative, the quest for signs is often portrayed as a spiritual pitfall, reflecting a lack of faith and understanding of God's nature and purposes. **The Bible provides numerous instances where the demand for signs is met with rebuke or caution**, emphasizing the importance of faith over the need for miraculous evidence.” BibleHub.com, The Danger of Seeking Signs
- “People that spend their time making rapture predictions or trying to figure out what all the signs mean ultimately get distracted. They usually end up not doing what God wants us to do which is to preach the gospel and make disciples with the power and strength of the Holy Spirit. In other words, **don't be a sign watcher be a disciple-maker.**” Clarence L Haynes Jr., *com, Why It's Dangerous to Guess Rapture Predictions*
- ““He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’” – [Revelation 22:20](#) Remember Jesus said this almost 2,000 years ago so whenever you talk about the rapture or the return of Jesus, this is all you ever need to say. Jesus is coming soon. Soon means you know he's coming but you don't know when. Soon means because you know he's coming you will be ready. Soon means because he can come at any time you want to be doing what he requires of you when he comes. Soon could be in the next thirty minutes, the next thirty years, the next three centuries, or longer than that. Regardless it is going to happen soon. **Your job and mine is not to guess rapture predictions as some have foolishly tried to do and failed. We must simply do what he has asked us to do until he comes or until he calls us home, both of which could happen soon.**” Clarence L. Haynes Jr. (ibid)

b. Ready for the Lord every day.

- “Disciples must be on constant watch, even during the darkness of the night. Disciples should be like servants who do not know exactly when the master will return. They should be ready to open the door when he arrives. Blessing awaits those whom the master finds ready and waiting at his return, even if he comes at a time when others might not be ready.” NIV Application Bible
- “The Lord changes the picture by alluding to a home owner whose house was **broken into** in an unguarded moment. The coming of **the thief** was entirely unexpected. **If the master of the house had known**, he would **not** have **allowed his house to be broken into**. The lesson is that the time of Christ's coming is uncertain; no one knows the day or the hour when He will appear. When He does come, those believers who have laid up treasures on earth will lose them all, because as someone has said, “A Christian either leaves his wealth or goes to it.” William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*
- “The expectation of Christ's return demands watchfulness and readiness. Jesus' parables, such as the Parable of the Ten Virgins ([Matthew 25:1-13](#)), emphasize the importance of being prepared. The wise virgins, who kept their lamps filled with oil, represent those who live in constant readiness for the bridegroom's arrival. This readiness is not passive but involves active engagement in the work of the Kingdom.” BibleHub.com

c. Don't know the time of his coming

Matt. 24:36 “Now concerning that day and hour no one knows—neither the angels of heaven nor the Son — except the Father alone.

Matt.25:13 “Therefore be alert, because you don't know either the day or the hour.

Mark 13:32 “Now concerning that day or hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven nor the Son —but only the Father.

- “By common consent imminence means that so far as we know no predicted event will necessarily precede the coming of Christ.” Robert H. Gundry

#### 4. Our responsibility of faithfulness in the kingdom (12:41-48)

a. Who does this refer to? – v. 41

- “Peter listens carefully and asks whether Jesus meant His parable (vv. 35ff.) ‘for us... or also for all’ (v. 41.) ... Jesus' answer (v. 42) suggests He is speaking of servants who have special responsibilities for

other servants; He implies He is speaking, first of all, especially to Peter and his associates." Dale Ralph David, *Luke 1-13*, p. 230

- "Peter asks if the Lord is only speaking to the leaders or to everyone. Jesus then tells another parable about the benefits of watchfulness. Jesus pictures an accountability here that varies depending on what we know and what we do. Personal action makes a difference; we are accountable for our action as well as our inaction (v. [48](#))." NIV Application Bible
- "Peter responds, in his accustomed role as spokesman for the apostles, with a question about the extent of their responsibility. Jesus answers, as often, with a counterquestion. Although he says elsewhere that exhortations to "watch" apply to everyone ([Mk 13:37](#)), in this case the parable that follows ([42-46](#)) shows that the apostles have a special responsibility. Jesus emphasizes the importance of faithfulness in doing the will of the master, especially for one who has others placed under his leadership." The Expositor's Bible Commentary, p. 966
- "At this point **Peter** asked if Christ's **parable** on watchfulness was intended **only** for the disciples or for **all people**. The Lord's answer was that it was for all who profess to be stewards of God. The **faithful and wise steward** is the one who is set over the Master's household and who gives **food** to His people. The steward's main responsibility here concerns people, not material things. This is in keeping with the entire context, warning the disciples against materialism and covetousness. It is people who are important, not things." **Believer's Bible Commentary**
- "Jesus does not actually answer Peter's question, which would seem to indicate that the application is for "everyone" to whom much has been given (see [48](#)). ESV Study Bible

b. We all are required to be faithful based on what we have received.

- "The faithful and wise manager is the person who faithfully and fairly cares for those for whom he is responsible, giving them their portion . . . at the proper time. When the master returns, the faithful manager will be rewarded—a metaphorical picture of the rewards that will be given to faithful believers at the return of Christ." ESV Study Bible
- "The house manager is a slave (*doulos*, v. 43) who has oversight and is responsible for providing for the other slaves who make up the household." Dale Ralph David, *Luke 1-13*, p. 231
- "I think the 'ministers of the word' in the early church would have found Jesus' picture of the faithful house manager rather encouraging. There is a certain *simplicity* about it. He is to give other slaves their 'food allotment.' Then Jesus declares a blessing on that slave who is 'doing just that' when his master returns. That is, he is simply doing what Jesus called him to do." Dale Ralph David, *Luke 1-13*, p. 231

c. We should be faithful today and tomorrow; faithful until the Lord returns

- "Jesus not only taught the certainty of his return at an unexpected moment but also implied, through various instructions for his disciples, that the community of believers would continue for an unspecified time serving their Lord till his return in the indefinite future." The Expositor's Bible Commentary, p. 967

d. Judgment

- "Jesus concludes this section by explaining God's principle of judgment. The servants here represent those who sin willingly and knowingly (cf. [Nu 15:30-31](#); [Ps 19:13](#)) and those who sin unwittingly (cf. [Nu 15:27-29](#); [Ps 19:12](#)). In both cases there is some definite personal responsibility and therefore judgment, because the servant should have made it his business to know his master's will. All have some knowledge of God ([Ro 1:20](#)), and God judges according to individual levels of responsibility ([Ro 2:12-13](#)). The closing statement ([48](#)) would apply especially to the apostles and church leaders throughout the successive centuries." The Expositor's Bible Commentary, p. 967

## 5. Application

- a. What does faithfulness look like for you in your present situation?
- b. What is the Lord's assignment for you today?
  - a. Frequently God asks something of you outside your preference.
  - b. Sometimes we may do too much, other times not enough.
- c. What does it look like for you to seek first the kingdom?
- d. Examples:
  - a. Who is on your heart and what are you doing about it?
  - b. Where is the Lord asking you to serve at this time of your life?

c. Do we have a heart that strives to please God?