

To Seek and To Save the Lost

You Must Be Ready

Luke 12:35-48

Rev. Freddy Fritz

November 30, 2014

You Must Be Ready

Scripture

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem from Galilee. He only had a few months left to live before his death. He knew that he was going there to die to pay the penalty for sin. He would sacrifice his life in order to reconcile sinners with a holy God.

Along the way to Jerusalem Jesus gave his followers some very important teaching regarding how to live as one of his disciples. Jesus' instruction covered a number of different topics regarding Christian discipleship. Jesus' next topic was about how to live between his ascension and his second coming.

Today, let's read about Jesus' command to be ready in Luke 12:35-48:

³⁵ "Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. ³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸ If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! ³⁹ But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

⁴¹ Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" ⁴² And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you, he will set

him over all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶ the master of that servant 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 and put him with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. (Luke 12:35-48)

Introduction

I am happy to inform you that today is the last day of this year's hurricane season! Many of you know what happens when a hurricane heads our way. We usually hear about the formation of a hurricane about fourteen days before it strikes land. About ten days out we start hearing about the possible track of the hurricane. As each day passes, we get more accurate information about where the hurricane is expected to strike land. Then, with a week or less to go, and with information that the hurricane is bearing down on our homes, we all go to the stores for supplies and get ready to board up our homes. During the last two or three days we pay careful attention to the news about the approaching hurricane. Finally, with hours to spare, we make sure that our homes are as secure as possible. At this point we have done everything possible for the arrival of the hurricane.

Just as we make preparations for the arrival of a hurricane, Jesus wants his disciples to be ready for his return. But one difference between his return and a hurricane is that, unlike a hurricane, we do not know when Jesus will return.

Lesson

The analysis of the concept of Jesus' return as set forth in Luke 12:35-48 teaches us to be ready for his return.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Information Regarding Jesus' Return (12:35-40)
2. The Results Following Jesus' Return (12:41-48)

I. The Information Regarding Jesus' Return (12:35-40)

First, let's look at the information regarding Jesus' return.

Jesus had been teaching his disciples not to live for earthly treasure, but to seek first the kingdom of God. He had warned them of the danger of greed and called them to avoid anxiety by trusting that God cares for them.

Then Jesus urged his disciples to be ready for his return. At the time Jesus first told his disciples to be ready for his return, they may not have been exactly sure what he meant. However, we now know that Jesus went to the cross a few months later, and died to pay the penalty for sinners. He was buried but three days later was raised back to life, a certain sign of affirmation that God the Father had accepted Jesus' sacrifice for sin. Forty days later Jesus ascended into heaven and assured his disciples that he would return one day (cf. Acts 1:11).

A. *The Command (12:35-36)*

First, we see the command.

Jesus commanded his disciples to be ready for his return with the following command in verse 35, "**Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning.**" The *King James Version* says, "Let your loins be girded about." In those days it meant taking their long, flowing robes and tucking them into their

belts, so as not to trip on their robes when they hurried into action.

Jesus went on to give them a parable about readiness. He said in verse 36, “. . . **and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.**”

The master’s servants were to be ready for his return **from the wedding feast**. Weddings in those days were different than weddings in our day. Today, you receive an invitation in the mail about an upcoming wedding. You know the time and place for the ceremony and the reception (if you even get invited to the reception). The entire wedding and reception is over in a matter of hours.

Weddings in Jesus’ day were different. The groom was not ready to get married until he had finished building a place for him and his bride to live once they got married. When it was ready he called his best man and groomsmen together. They then went and collected the bride and her attendants. At the same time they issued an invitation to all the guests. They all gathered together for the wedding ceremony. The reception after the ceremony then lasted for several days, sometimes as long as a week!

So, Jesus said that the master had been invited to a wedding. His servants did not know when he would return. But good servants were to be ready for their master’s return.

B. The Celebration (12:37-38)

Second, notice the celebration.

Notice what happened when the master returned. Jesus said in verse 37a, “**Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.**” Perhaps the master wondered whether his servants would be awake when he re-

turned. But he need not have wondered! Indeed, the servants were awake. They were even dressed for action and had their lamps burning in anticipation of their master's imminent return. And so Jesus said that servants who are ready when their master returns will be blessed.

Then, the parable takes a surprising twist. Instead of the master sitting down and being served by his servants, he in fact serves the servants! Jesus said in verses 37b-38, **“Truly, I say to you, he [that is, the master] will dress himself for service and have them [that is, the servants] recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!”** Scholars differ on whether Jesus was referring to the second or third watch according to the Roman or Jewish system. It really does not matter which system Jesus was using because the point is that the master came in the wee hours of the night and he still found his servants ready. He was delighted with their readiness to receive him upon his return!

Now, perhaps the people listening to this parable might have thought it far-fetched to have a master serve his servants. However, for us who know Jesus we know that it is not far-fetched. Just a few months later, on the night of his last supper and betrayal, Jesus took on the role of a servant and washed his disciples' feet. Jesus is the Master of the entire universe, and yet he took on the role of a servant in order to secure the salvation of his elect. What a Savior!

C. The Caution (12:39-40)

And third, be aware of the caution.

Not everyone is as ready as the servants in the parable. And so Jesus used a different illustration as a word of caution. A thief does not announce his arrival. Generally, he is able to break into a house when no one is at home or when no one is

alert to his break-in. **“But know this,”** said Jesus in verse 39, **“that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into.”** Jesus was describing someone who was careless and did not prepare himself for the arrival of the thief. He suffered a preventable loss. If only he had been ready!

Jesus applies his parable in verse 40, **“You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”**

Here is how Philip Ryken presses Jesus’ application home:

Are you ready, or not? Jesus says we always need to be ready, because we never know when he will come again. Being ready means getting right with God by trusting in Jesus Christ. Unless we have prayed to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, we are not ready. How can we possibly be prepared to meet Jesus if we have not asked him to forgive our sins? Being ready also means having a sense of urgency about sharing the gospel. Other people need to be ready to meet Jesus, too. He is coming very soon. But how will people be ready to meet him unless someone loves them enough to give them the gospel?

Being ready means praying for the kingdom to come, asking God to expand his rule in our own lives, in the church, in our community, and around the world. It also means devoting our lives to Christian service. Given what the parable says about servants and masters, probably this should be our primary application. If we are God’s servants, then we need to be busy teaching God’s Word, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, visiting prisoners, caring for children, helping the elderly, or doing whatever humble service we have the ability and the opportunity to do. Time is short, and we need to make the most of it. The Son of Man may come today, tonight, or tomorrow. But whenever he comes, Jesus says we must be ready. Are you ready, or not?¹

¹ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 1, *Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 686–687.

II. The Results Following Jesus' Return (12:41-48)

And second, notice the results following Jesus' return.

Peter asked Jesus a question, **"Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?"** (12:41). Peter had noticed that sometimes Jesus spoke only to the disciples and sometimes Jesus spoke to everyone. And so he wanted to know who Jesus' intended target audience was in regard to being ready for his return.

Jesus did not directly answer Peter. Instead, Jesus indicated that there are two groups with respect to his absence prior to his return. One group is faithful and the other group is not.

A. *Faithfulness During Jesus' Absence Will Result in Rewards at his Appearance (12:42-44)*

First, faithfulness during Jesus' absence will result in rewards at his appearance.

Jesus said in verses 42-44, **"Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions."**

Jesus is calling all disciples to faithful stewardship. Throughout this discourse Jesus has been challenging his disciples to make wise use of their material goods. The parable of the rich fool, the ravens, the lilies, the call to trust God's care, and to put our heart where our treasure is was all designed to teach disciples the proper use of God's resources. And here again Jesus is teaching disciples to be faithful stewards.

So what does a faithful steward do? A faithful steward recognizes that all that he has is a gift from God. So, a faithful

steward uses all his time, treasure and talents in God's service. A faithful steward constantly focuses on advancing the Master's agenda, and not his or own agenda. It is living for the glory of God and the expansion of his kingdom.

Are you faithful?

B. Faithlessness During Jesus' Absence Will Result in Punishment at His Appearance (12:45-48)

And second, faithlessness during Jesus' absence will result in punishment at his appearance.

Jesus went on to say in verses 45-46, **"But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant 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 and put him with the unfaithful."** Jesus is describing a false professor. He is describing someone who calls himself a Christian but is not a Christian. He acts in decidedly unbiblical ways and is certainly unprepared for Jesus' return. And when Jesus does return, he will find himself cast into hell among the unbelievers.

Then Jesus described a second kind of unfaithfulness in verse 47, **"And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating."** Jesus is describing an informed non-Christian. Here is someone who has been exposed to the truth of the gospel but has not responded in faith and repentance.

Then Jesus described a third kind of unfaithfulness in verse 48a, **"But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating."** Jesus is describing an uninformed non-Christian. This is a person who has never been exposed to the gospel.

In all these cases there is punishment. Here is one of the

clearest passages regarding degrees of punishment for the disobedient.

Jesus concluded his teaching with this final application in verse 48b, **“Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.”**

Commentator Norval Geldenhuys puts it this way, “For those servants of Christ who labor faithfully and devotedly in His service every moment expecting the coming of their Lord and joyfully looking forward to it, the second coming of Jesus will be a matter of the greatest joy and of the most glorious gain. But for those who doubt His promises and who live in selfishness, imperiousness and worldly-mindedness, the second coming will be fraught with terror and irrevocable loss.”²

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the concept of Jesus’ return as set forth in Luke 12:35-48, we should be faithful in our daily discipleship.

Every Christian should think about, pray about, and be ready for the return of Jesus. When will Jesus return? I don’t know. But I do know that every day is one day closer to his return. And I also know that Jesus calls all his disciples to be ready for that day when he does return.

Hachi: A Dog’s Tale is a delightful movie based on real story from Japan. When Parker Wilson, a college music professor, steps off his commuter train at the end of the day, he finds a stray Akita puppy. Wilson (played by Richard Gere) soon discovers the puppy escaped a damaged crate after being shipped from Japan to Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

² Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), 364.

Parker takes the dog home determined to find the owner. While waiting for responses to the posters he's placed around town, the professor and the little dog become fast friends. In spite of his wife's initial resistance, she agrees to let Parker keep the dog. A Japanese colleague at the university notices the collar tag on the Akita is Hachi (the Japanese word for the number 8). And that becomes the name by which Parker calls his new pet.

One day Hachi follows Parker several blocks to the train station as he leaves for work. The dog refuses to return home and so his master has to walk him back to the house. At the end of the day, Hachi hears the train whistle and runs to the train platform where he curls up waiting for Parker to disembark. Parker is stunned by this demonstration of loyalty. The next day the dog is there to greet him again. A pattern has been established as this goes on day after day. Hachi's uncanny devotion to his master is remarkable.

One day, Parker suffers a fatal heart attack in the classroom. Unaware what has happened, Hachi waits for hours at the station for his master to step off the train. For the next ten years the loyal dog waits at the train platform each evening.

One day, as Hachi drifts off to sleep one last time, he sees his master welcoming him fully alive as the dog runs toward him. His faithful waiting has paid off.³

Jesus calls each one of his disciples to be ready for his return. He is coming back. And when he comes back, will he find you faithful or faithless? Will he find you ready or not?

I pray that Jesus will find each one of us faithful and ready for his return. Amen.

³ *Hachi: A Dog's Tale*. DVD. Directed by Lasse Hallstrom. 2009; Culver City, CA: Stage 6 Films, 2009.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp
3. www.sermonaudio.com/source_detail.asp?sourceid=FredFritz

Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

Answers for Life!

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org

Web site: www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org

PRAYER:

Our Father, Jesus calls his disciples to be ready for his return. He said that he will return and that we need to be ready for his return.

Perhaps there is someone here today who is not ready for Jesus' return. Will you grant that person faith and repentance? Will you enable that person to be ready for Jesus' return?

And will you also grant those of us who are already disciples faithfulness so that we will be ready for Jesus' return?

And for this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!