

The title of this morning's sermon is, *"Who Then Is the Faithful and Wise Manager?"*

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through Luke's gospel. Go ahead and turn to chapter 12. We will cover **verses 41 through 48**.

Please stand for the reading of God's Word.

I'd like to back up to verse 35 because this morning's verses flow from last week's verses...

Luke 12:35 "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."

This is as far as we got last week. Here are the new verses for this morning...

Luke 12:41 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.

You may be seated. Let's pray.

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Look with me at **verse 41**...

Luke 12:41 Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?"

Peter wants to know if verses 35-40 were for everyone or just the 12 disciples.

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For the last few years I have been working with my children on answering the question that they are asked. For example, if I say, "Did you clean your room?"

This is a yes or no question:

- If they cleaned their room they will quickly say, "Yes."
- If they didn't clean their room, I usually get a very long response that doesn't really answer my question.

I tell my children how important it is to answer the question that is asked, but it seems like Jesus was terrible at this...unless you consider he had the ability – which we do not – to look past the question to the person's heart. He saw what they really needed to hear, and so that's what he would tell them.

You see this throughout the Gospels when it looks like Jesus isn't answering what is asked.

Verse 42 is another example. Peter asked if the parable is for the disciples or everyone and look what Jesus says...

Luke 12:42 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?”

Jesus said it is important for everyone to be a faithful and wise steward, or manager, and he described what they do...and this brings us to lesson one...

Lesson one: prepare for Christ’s return by serving.

Let me illustrate what Jesus wanted to prevent by showing you an account at the beginning of Acts. Go ahead and mark your spot in **Luke 12** and turn to the right to **Acts 1**.

Listen to these verses about Jesus’s ascension...

Acts 1:6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

They were so convinced that Jesus was going to physically establish his kingdom on the earth during his first coming that right up to his ascension they were still expecting him to do it!

Acts 1:7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

This is pretty similar to what we talked about last week: nobody knows the day or the hour.

Look at **verse 9**...

Acts 1:9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,

More than likely these were angels.

Acts 1:11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Jesus ascends and the disciples just stood there staring into heaven, waiting for him to return.

Now go ahead and turn back to **Luke 12** and I’ll explain the connection.

In **Luke 12:35-40** Jesus preached about being ready for his return. We could almost think that what those guys are doing in **Acts 1** is the best example of doing what Christ wanted. They just stood there, staring into heaven, waiting. And if we want to be ready for Jesus’s return, we should do the same thing.

But then Jesus preached verses 41 to 48 to prevent us from thinking this.

Briefly look back at **verse 42**. Jesus 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?”

In other words, being ready for Christ’s return doesn’t mean staring off into heaven. It means serving.

So if we want to know if we are ready for Christ's return, all we need to do is look at whether we are serving him while he is gone.

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In particular, it seems to look like serving others...

The steward would be the person who had the care over the master's home in his absence. The master would have lots of possessions, and the most valuable would be the other servants. The faithful manager is going to feed them at the proper time.

The lesson for us is, if we want to be ready for Christ's return, we should be busy serving others. Or another way to say it is, we prepare for Christ's return by serving others while he's away.

It seems like the way we serve others, especially those who are part of God's household, is a good reflection of our faithfulness as stewards.

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Then he follows this up by describing what's in store for faithful versus unfaithful servants. Look what he says about the faithful servant in **verse 43**...

Luke 12:43 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.

It will be a happy day for the servant who is doing what his master wants when the master returns.

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When believers are faithful stewards notice how the master rewards them...

He sets them over all his possessions.

What does that really mean?

He gives them more to do! They have greater responsibility. Their job becomes harder.

Typically, when we think about a reward, we probably think about:

- More vacation
- Higher pay
- Greater benefits

But in God's economy the reward for faithfulness is greater service in the future.

This is far from the only place in Scripture making this point. Think of the parable of the talents...

Matthew 25:20 He who received five talents came forward saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I made five talents more.' 21 His master said, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I WILL SET YOU OVER MUCH. Enter into the joy of your master.'

What did the faithful servant get for his faithfulness?

More responsibility...being set over even more! And it was the same for the second servant.

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Think about the parable of the 10 minas, which is similar to the parable of the talents, but contains some significant differences...

Luke 19:16 The first [servant said], ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’ **17** And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’ **18** The second [said], ‘Lord, your mina has made five minas.’ **19** And he said to him, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’

Again, they were faithful and they were given more responsibility.

This refers to the authority we have with Christ during the millennial kingdom when he reigns on the earth. Those who have been faithful in this life, when Christ returns, are given more to rule over with him.

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But now look what Jesus says about the unfaithful servant...

Luke 12:45 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,

This servant reveals an important lesson...

If we aren’t looking forward to Christ’s return, it shows in our lives...and this brings us to lesson two...

Lesson two: our lives reveal if we don’t expect Christ’s return.

This man is clearly the opposite of the faithful servant. He does exactly what he’s not supposed to do. Instead of feeding and caring for the Master’s servants, he beats them and gets drunk. This shows he has no regard for the master’s return.

And this is why it’s so important to look forward to Christ’s return, because it can shape our lives. When people believe Jesus is not coming back soon their lives begin to deteriorate spiritually.

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The motive for service in the Christian life is a desire to please Christ, and it is found in striving to be found faithful at his return.

There is no way that people can live the same way when they believe Jesus won’t come back soon versus when they believe he will be back soon.

You could take the most spiritually mature people and if they learned Jesus was going to return in the next few hours, even their lives would change for the better.

Listen to this verse...

1 John 3:2 (NKJV) We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. **3** And everyone who has this hope in Him PURIFIES HIMSELF, just as He is pure.

What is this saying?

It’s basically saying everyone who looks forward to Christ’s return, **purifies**, or readies himself.

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But what’s the other side of this?

If you were to take spiritually immature people, who already lack desire to serve Christ, and they don’t think he could return soon, they’re going to be given over to any number of sins. They have no incentive to be faithful.

Listen to the way one commentator put it...

“Jesus here clearly connected the readiness for His return to a life of love, spiritual focus, and self-control. Likewise, the heart that says, ‘My master is delaying his coming’ is connected to this kind of low and fruitless life.”

And look what will happen to the unfaithful servant...

Luke 12:46 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.

When we see language, such as **cut him in pieces**, we probably cringe! It definitely is cringeworthy to think of that happening to someone.

We could easily wonder why God would use such strong language and graphic imagery.

Let me tell you why you see this, not just here, but other places in Scripture too...

First, let me say it isn't a mistake:

- God wasn't having a bad day
- He didn't write this in anger, regret it, and then wish he had written something else.

Instead, this strong language is used to indicate the severity of the judgment. God wants us to know just how terrible it will be for people who have been unfaithful and neglected serving him throughout their lifetimes.

Christ will return and he will punish them severely...and he uses this language to make that point.

I was reflecting on something in this account that I had never seen before, and it's contained in the words **the master of that servant**.

This stood out to me for two reasons:

1. The master of the servant doesn't look like a master, because the servant didn't serve him
2. The servant doesn't look like a servant, because he didn't serve

But it still says **the master of that servant**.

- The master is still the master even though the servant didn't serve him.
 - The disobedient, unfaithful servant is still called a servant even though he didn't serve
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Something similar occurs in the parable of the talents...

All three men are called servants even though it's evident the third servant was an unbeliever...

Matthew 25:26 HIS MASTER [said to] him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?’

The master was still the master of the servant, even if the servant didn't serve him.

Matthew 25:30 Cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

This unfaithful servant is cast into hell.

The reason I mention this is I think it reveals something important about accountability.

Even unbelievers who:

- Don't serve God
- Reject Him
- Deny God's existence

Still have a master.

He will judge them and hold them accountable whether they recognize him or not.

When we see these unfaithful servants it can look like they went to hell because they didn't have any works...as though we are saved by works. This isn't the case and it leads us to lesson three...

Lesson three: unfaithfulness is a strong evidence of being unsaved.

In the New King James in **verse 46** it says **the unfaithful servant is appointed his portion with the unbelievers.** In the ESV it says **the unfaithful servant is put with the unfaithful.**

So which is it? Was he an unbeliever or was he unfaithful?

He's both, because they are synonymous:

- Unbelievers are habitually unfaithful
- Habitually unfaithful people demonstrate they are unbelievers

You could look at these verses and almost think they're implying that being faithful gets you saved and being unfaithful gets you cast into hell. But instead the idea is faithfulness and unfaithfulness are revelations of being saved or unsaved. The servants are faithful because they're believers, or they are unfaithful because they are unbelievers.

Some years ago I taught during Sunday school and preached some sermons about tests we can administer to see whether we are saved.

My desire was twofold:

1. That those who are unsaved would be convicted, repent, and put their faith in Christ
2. That those who are saved would have greater confidence in their salvation.

It's unfortunate when unsaved people think they're going to heaven, but it's also unfortunate when saved people doubt their salvation.

Now we have reached an interesting verse in Scripture...

Typically, we think of two categories of people: believers and unbelievers...which is true.

But in the following verses Jesus teaches us that unbelievers also fall into two categories:

- Those who knew the master's will and disobeyed
- Those who didn't know the master's will and disobeyed

Look with me at **verse 47**...

Luke 12:47 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.

The graphic, intense language of the previous verse about being cut in pieces, serves another purpose: it allows God to create a contrast. If there wasn't a terrible judgment – such as being cut in pieces – he wouldn't be able to describe

a lesser judgment – such as being beaten. Obviously, a severe beating sounds bad, but it doesn't sound too bad when compared with being cut in pieces.

And this brings us to lesson four...

Lesson four: the punishment will match the offense.

Here are the four categories I see looking back over these verses:

1. In verse 43 the faithful are rewarded
2. In verse 46 the blatantly disobedient are punished severely
3. In verse 47 the disobedient are punished moderately
4. In verse 48 the ignorant are punished a little

We clearly see degrees of punishment associated with degrees of disobedience:

- There are those like the servant in verse 45 who knew the master's will, and they will be punished much worse
- And there are those who did not know the master's will and their punishment will be much less

Go ahead and turn to the left to **Matthew 10** so I can show you some verses that make this even clearer.

Do your Bibles have headings around verses 1 through 15?

Probably something about sending out the 12 apostles. With that in mind look at verse 15...

Matthew 10:15 It will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

What town?

What could possibly be worse than Sodom and Gomorrah? What would you have to do to receive punishment that's worse than theirs? Fire rained down from heaven and destroyed them. You almost can't imagine worse punishment.

Jesus is talking about the towns that rejected the 12 apostles when they visited them, and he says that it will be worse for them than Sodom and Gomorrah.

Why is that...is it because these towns were worse than Sodom and Gomorrah?

From a human perspective, no, in that they did not seem to engage in the wickedness that Sodom and Gomorrah engaged in.

From a heavenly perspective, yes, because they were visited by the very apostles of Jesus Christ, which gave them high accountability...but they wouldn't repent.

Look one chapter to the right at **Matthew 11:20**...

Matthew 11:20 Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent.

Think about this for a moment...

What would give people high accountability? Wouldn't it be seeing Christ's **mighty works** or miracles?

Absolutely!

So look what Jesus says to those cities that fail to repent...

Matthew 11:21 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. **22** But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

Tyre and Sidon were notoriously wicked, but Jesus said it would be more bearable for them than Chorazin and Bethsaida – which never engaged in as much wickedness as Tyre and Sidon – because they saw Christ’s mighty works but wouldn’t repent.

Matthew 11:23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. **24** But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”

Again, we’ve got the wicked city of Sodom, yet God said it will be more tolerable on Sodom than on Capernaum, because Christ never visited Sodom, preached there, and performed miracles there. For a city to experience all that means it has immense accountability...and to fail to repent is to bring on immense judgment.

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Go ahead and turn back to **Luke 12**.

Listen to this verse...

James 4:17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

You could read this and wonder...

“Okay, so people who know the right thing to do, but don’t do it, for them it is sin and they will be punished. What about people who DON’T KNOW the right thing to do and don’t do it? Is it sin for them?”

Something we learn in these verses is ignorance is no excuse...and this brings us to lesson five...

Lesson five: ignorance is no excuse.

Look back at **verse 48**...

Luke 12:48 But the one WHO DID NOT KNOW, and did what deserved a beating, WILL RECEIVE A LIGHT BEATING.

You could almost read these verses and think, *“Well, I want to be ignorant! If I’m ignorant I won’t be punished.”*

Punishment for the ignorant is less severe, but there is still punishment.

Matthew Poole said...

“Ignorance of the Divine shall not wholly excuse the sinner, he shall be beaten, but his stripes shall be few, his damnation shall be gentle compared with a minister’s, that knows his Master’s will but does it not; teaches it to others, but does it not himself...God looks upon wicked, loose, and scandalous and mischievous ministers as the greatest transgressors, and he will deal with them as such.”

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Back in **verse 41** Peter asked who Jesus’s parable was for, and Jesus said that it is for everyone, and now we see why...

Everyone – believer who knows or unbeliever who doesn't – must be ready and waiting for Christ's return.

Nobody has an excuse.

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Now if we're going to talk about ignorance and accountability, I don't think I could finish this sermon without talking about...us!

It's easy to look at the unfaithful servant who receives the severe beating and is cut in two, and look down on him, and feel good about ourselves.

I'm not going to defend him, but I will say - for me personally - it is much better to focus on the words:

- In **verse 47** when it says **that servant who knew his master's will** – because that's me
- In **verse 48** when it says **everyone to whom much has been given, of him much will be required** – because that is also me

Most of us have heard lots of Bible teaching and sat through many sermons. Our accountability is high.

This should encourage us to look forward to Christ's return and strive to be faithful.

He expects much from us.

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Let me conclude with this...

When it comes to judgment and punishment you might wonder why there are multiple categories for unbelievers, but only one category for believers.

It is because if you are a believer Christ has received all the punishment you deserve. There couldn't be multiple categories, because:

- When Christ takes your punishment, he takes all of it
- When Christ forgives you, he forgives you for everything
- When Christ makes you righteous, he gives you all of his righteousness

There can't be two categories, because what Christ has done for us can't be improved on.

If you have any questions or I can pray for you in any way, I'll be up front after service and it would be a privilege to speak with you.

Let's pray.