

BE READY FOR THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

Luke 12:35-59

Key Verse: 12:40

“You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

In today’s passage, Jesus tells us that we must be ready for his Second Coming. This world as we know it will not continue, as many people assume. Jesus will come again one day to judge the living and the dead, and to establish a new heaven and a new earth. This will certainly happen, but we don’t know exactly when. So we must be ready. Unfortunately, not everyone will be ready for it. It will be a terrible day for those who are not ready. May God help each of us to be ready!

I. BE READY (35-48)

Look at verses 35-36. *“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.”* Jesus teaches us what kind of life we should live as we wait for his Second Coming. We must be like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet. In Jesus’ time, a wedding banquet lasted for a long time, maybe until the wine ran out. So the servants did not know exactly when their master would return. He could come early, or much later. It was impossible for them to predict the time. So they had to be ready. As soon as the master knocked, they must immediately open the door for him. They could not do this, if they fell asleep or held a wild party. Likewise, we will miss Jesus’ coming if we are not ready. Jesus said two things: first, to be dressed ready for service. Second, to keep the lamps burning.

To be dressed ready for service was the attitude that Jesus had in serving God and people. While on earth, Jesus was dressed ready to serve. He served all kinds of people by teaching the word of God, healing the sick and driving out demons. Jesus served his disciples by sharing common life with them and showing them the secrets of the kingdom of God. Jesus was ready to serve anyone and anywhere. Jesus urges us to be dressed ready for service.

Another person who was dressed ready to serve was Abraham in Genesis. One day, he was sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day when he noticed three strangers coming. He hurried to meet them and bowed low to the ground, ready to serve them. He hurried to Sarah and asked her to bake some bread. He ran to the herd and found a choice, tender calf for the main course and prepared it. He also brought yogurt and fresh milk and served a most delicious meal. As they ate, he stood by, ready to meet their every need. Abraham was an old man, but he ran around like a young man to serve his guests. Abraham didn’t know who these men were. It turned out that it was the Lord with two angels (Ge 17:1). Referring to what Abraham did, this is what the Bible says: “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have

shown hospitality to angels without knowing it” (Heb 13:2). Likewise, Jesus wants us to be dressed ready for service as we wait for his return.

Jesus also tells us that we must **keep our lamps burning** as we wait for his return. This is much more than to turn the switch on for our porch light. In Jesus’ time, to keep lamps burning, servants had to prepare oil and fill the lamps before the wicks burned out. They had to be prepared and vigilant so that the oil did not run out and the light did not go out. So Jesus is telling us that we should be prepared, ready and available to serve the Lord while we wait for his return. We must keep the light of Jesus burning in our lives. We must keep the light of Jesus shine in this dark world, by living a life of faith that reflects the love of God. We must share the word of God with young people until the morning star rises in their hearts that are darkened by sin.

So Jesus wants us to be ready for his second coming. But how certain is his coming? After all, he has not returned for 2,000 years, when the first-century Christians thought he would come back in their life time. Let us make a couple of things very clear here. We can be 100% certain Jesus is coming back. It is a promise of God that is written down in the Bible. And God never reneged on his promise. We can be sure that he will keep his promise of Jesus’ second coming. But we do not know the timing of his coming. No one does. Not even angels. Not even Jesus himself. Only the Father knows (Mk 13:32). And the Bible says that God is delaying the timing because he wants one more person to repent and be saved before the day of the Lord. St. Peter says: “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2Pe 3:9).

Just to make sure you know, let me quote several Bible verses about the promise of Jesus’ second coming. Jesus told his disciples that he would come again in power and glory to judge the living and the dead. He said in Luke 9:26, “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 says, “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.” Revelation 1:7 says, “Look, he is coming in the clouds, and every eye will see him”

Knowing that Jesus is coming back and we don’t know the time, it is important for us to be ready. And this is the main thrust of Jesus’ teaching in today’s passage. Look at verses 37-38. *“It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak.”* Those who are watching for the Master’s return and are ready for his coming will be blessed. The blessing they receive is really amazing. The Master will dress himself to serve them and let them recline at the table and wait on them. This is

unbelievable. So Jesus helps us to believe it by repeating it in Luke 22:29-30, which says, “And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” There will be a glorious feast in the kingdom of God (Lk 13:29; Rev 19:9). Those who suffer much in the hope of Jesus’ Second Coming will share this glorious feast with Jesus as co-heirs of his kingdom (Ro 8:17). When this hope lives in our hearts, we can keep our lamps burning.

Look at verse 39. *“But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.”* The Bible declares that “the day of the Lord will come like a thief” (2Pe 3:10). A thief would not rob a house by giving the owner a heads-up. Jesus will come like a thief at the hour no one expects. If we knew the exact time in advance, many of us would live a sinful life until the last minute. But Jesus warns us that his coming will be as sudden and unexpected as that of a thief in the night. No one knows when he will come. If anyone tells you they know the time, they are lying (Mt 24:36). Since we do not know, we must always be ready. Let’s read verse 40 together. *“You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”* May God help us to be dressed ready for service and to keep our lamps burning until Jesus comes again.

Look at verse 41. *Peter asked, “Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?”* Peter asked Jesus to clarify something. Who must be dressed ready for service and keep the lamps burning? The disciples like himself or everyone? In his answer, Jesus made it clear that everyone must be ready for his return, but those who are in leadership positions will be held accountable. In verses 42-46, Jesus contrasts two servants who were entrusted with the task of feeding God’s servants. The first one is a faithful and wise manager. A faithful man is a trustworthy man. If he is given a task, he will carry it out to completion, no matter what the cost. This man was not only faithful, but also wise. He understood people well. He knew how to motivate coworkers and how to solve difficult problems. He was creative and inspirational. The task he was given was to feed the servants under him at the proper time. Here, “feeding” refers to giving the word of God for the nurture of their souls. The best way to prepare for Jesus’ Second Coming is to teach the word of God to his children. This is God’s wisdom. But sometimes it is difficult. In this troubled world, we seem to need all our wits and strength just to survive and to help our children survive. Some people in history thought that the way to prepare Jesus’ Second Coming was to go to mountains and live like a hermit. But a truly wise man studies the Bible and teaches the Bible to others for their everlasting salvation. That is why Daniel 12:3 says, “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

On the other hand, there was a servant who said, “My master is taking a long time in coming.” He was smart at least in his mind. He figured out that it would be a while before the master returned. So he abused his leadership by beating the other servants, and indulged in physical pleasure. He thought he could enjoy a corrupted life for a while, thinking he had plenty of time to change his life. But when he indulged in

corruption, he became senseless and faithless. He forgot the grace of God upon his life and acted like he was king. Jesus said, "The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers" (46). When we hear about this man, we shudder. But we must realize that anyone who abuses Jesus' trust in order to gratify his sinful nature will become just like him.

Look at verses 47-48. *"The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."* Jesus is very clear. We who know the gospel must be faithful and wise managers for the work of God as we wait for Jesus' coming.

On a visit to NASA, President Kennedy noticed a janitor who was hard at work in sweeping the floors and complemented him for being a best janitor he had ever seen. The janitor replied, "Sir, I am helping to put a man on the moon." This man had a purpose in what he did, even though he cleaned the floors, so he did his best in what he did. I think this is very important for us who serve the Lord as we wait for his return. Many things we do seem small and insignificant, such as studying the Bible 1:1 with students or preparing lunch for our Sunday fellowship, or setting up tables for a meeting. But if we do them before the Lord with a sense of serving him, we can do so joyfully and with a best effort.

II. KNOW HOW TO INTERPRET THE TIMES (49-53)

Look at verse 49. *"I have come to bring fire on the earth and how I wish it were already kindled!"* This is a scary statement about the judgment of God. The humanity was destroyed by God during the Great Flood, except for the eight members of Noah's family. Then God promised that never again he would judge the world with water. From the scriptures, we know that the world will be judged by fire instead. Revelation 21:8 declares: "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." I don't mean to scare you, but do you know how painful a burn injury is? I learned that on the scale of 1 to 10, the pain from delivering a baby for the first time is 7.5, while you would feel 8.0 when your arm or leg is cut off. But the most severe pain comes from being burned (8.5). There is no other pain more severe than this. You get only 5.0 from cancer. So imagine being thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur in eternity. We should not take this warning lightly. We should know that Jesus said this not only because it is the truth but also his heart was broken for those who refused to repent their sins and accept the Savior.

Jesus wanted to establish the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven as soon as possible. But first he had to suffer, die and rise from the dead. Jesus' death and

resurrection would set believers free from the power of sin and death. And he would come back to reign with us in the kingdom of God forever. But sadly, not everyone would believe. That is why Jesus said he came not to bring peace to the world but a sword (Mt 10:34-36). We know Jesus does not want us to use a sword. He rebuked Peter and told him to put away his sword, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword” (Mt 26:52). So what did Jesus mean? Actually, Jesus came to bring peace to us, by dying for our sins and restoring our relationship with God (Ro 5:1). But those who reject the gospel of salvation through Jesus remain at war with God. They do not have peace. And there is always conflict between those who believe in Christ and those who reject him, even among family members.

Jesus turned again to the crowd. They knew how to forecast the weather based on cloud activity and wind conditions. But they did not know how to interpret the present time. They failed to see the humanity under curse because of sin. Jesus rebuked them in verse 56. *“Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time?”* They saw time and again how Jesus demonstrated God’s power, love and mercy by healing the sick, driving out demons, and most of all, preaching the kingdom of God. But they did not repent their sins and accept the Savior. Jesus knew these very people would soon be shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Jesus was broken-hearted. He appealed to them in verse 57, *“Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right?”* Jesus really wanted them to make a decision based on the facts and what their own consciences taught them about the present time. Jesus really wanted them to accept him as the Messiah and make a decision to live by faith in him.

In order to help them further, Jesus urged them to work things out before it was too late by telling them a parable. Look at verses 58-59. *“As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled on the way, or your adversary may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”*

In today passage, we learned that Jesus is coming again at an hour when we do not expect him. We must be ready. We must serve God and others with the attitude of Jesus on a daily basis. We must teach the word of God to others as faithful and wise managers of God’s work. May God help us to live each day with the hope of reigning with our Lord Jesus Christ in everlasting glory in the kingdom of God!