BE READY, JESUS IS COMING BACK!

LUKE 12: 35 – 48

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When was the last time you heard a sermon or read a book about "Heaven" or "Christ's second coming"? It is not often we hear. WHY?

Jesus promised the disciples that he goes to prepare room for them in heaven and he will come back to take them (John 14: 2-3).

> "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.
>
> (John 14:2-3 ESV)

They took it seriously. They believed Jesus will be back during their lifetime. The same thing happened during the centuries that followed. Christians had exactly the same belief until today. The church today believes the same thing. Maybe les in our western world, but millions of believers living in Africa, Asia, South America are convinced Jesus is coming back soon. They took it seriously and they are preparing for it. It is the hope for a lot of persecuted Christian living under dictatorships, oppression and poverty. I know it is true because I have lived the first part of my life under communism and the hope of the Lord's coming back soon was very much alive amongst the Christians in our churches.

Because this is such an important thing and there is so much at stake, I would like to challenge us, as a congregation, to take Christ second coming seriously and to be ready and faithful in our waiting for the Lord's appearance.

1. Christ's second coming:

How do we know that it is really about the "Second Coming" and why does Dr. Luke place this topic right here in the chapter 12?

In the passage we just red, Jesus is using some examples from Israel's day-to-day life, but he wanted to make a point: *He is coming back and with his coming the consummation of the Kingdom* that he is talking about so often in his discussions with his disciples and in his speeches to the crowds. Last week we've seen Jesus encouraging the disciples not to worry about the basic things of life, but instead to seek his kingdom first, and all the other things will be added to them (v.31). There are few indications that Jesus is referring here to more than earthly things. The most important I think it is his reference to one of the OT prophecies (v.40).

"You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

(Luke 12:40 ESV)

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a *son of man*, and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him".

(Daniel 7:13 ESV)

Son of Man = Messiah

(Jesus used this name referring to himself, many times). This is a prophecy referring to Christ's second coming.

We will come back later on this.

Since Jesus is talking about being ready and being faithful in his examples of this passage, and knowing that it refers to his second coming, it's worth to try to better understand what the Bible say about Christ's second coming.

As one author says, "the biblical doctrine of the second coming is the most important one, in one sense, because everything else converges towards it…"

a. Jesus is surely coming back;

If someone has a doubt about this, just consider it again, because…..

i. The OT writers have prophesied about it;
ii. Jesus himself has often mentioned about it;
iii. The angels at his ascension announced it;
iv. The disciples / NT writers have emphasized it in their writings.

What it is interesting to notice is that often the word "*cloud(s)"* is linked to his second coming reference. This might mean that he will come back literally "on the clouds" or "with the clouds of heaven", but it is most probably referring to his glory (coming in glory).

i. OT: Daniel 7:13: "…coming with the clouds of heaven…"

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him."

(Daniel 7:13 ESV)

ii. Jesus himself: Mark 13:26 & Mark 14:62;

"And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.

(Mark 13:26 ESV)

"And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." (Mark 14:62 ESV)

iii. The angels: Act 1:9-11

"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." (Acts 1:11 ESV)

iv. John: Rev 1:7.

"Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, …" (Revelation 1:7 ESV)

a. His coming is imminent;

The NT writers emphasize this aspect of imminence. They use expressions like "the coming of the Lord is "at hand" and the Judge is "at the door".

> "Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is *at hand*.
>
> … behold, the Judge is standing *at the door*".
>
> (James 5:8-9)
>
> "Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is *at hand*;"
>
> **(**Philippians 4:5)
>
> "The end of all things is *at hand*; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers."
>
> (1 Peter 4:7)
>
> "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day *drawing near*."
>
> (Hebrews 10:24-25)
>
> "Yet a *little while*, and the coming one will come and will *not delay*;"
>
> (Hebrews 10:37 ESV)

"I am coming *soon*. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown."

(Revelation 3:11 ESV), (Revelation 22:7 ESV)

The disciples / apostles believed Jesus will come back during their lifetime:

- "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then *we who are 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 Thessalonians 4:16-17 ESV)

- "And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming."

  (1 John 2:28 ESV)

- "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."

  (1 John 3:2 ESV)

Now, what if he delays?

"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

(2 Peter 3:9 ESV)

b. Nobody knows 'when';

The disciples asked Jesus about "the timing"….

- He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority."
  (Acts 1:7 ESV)
- "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."
  (Mark 13:32 ESV)

Many people tried to "guess"……, but unsuccessfully. Even this year…….

SINCE WE DO NOT KNOW "WHEN"……

2. Be ready! Jesus will come back unexpectedly (v35-40).

The key verse in this passage is v.40. First he starts with a couple of parables (examples) and then he makes the point:

> "You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."
>
> (Luke 12:40 ESV)

a. Example of the servants waiting for their master to come back (v35-38);

WAITING:

"…so that you are not lacking in any gift, <u>*as you wait*</u> for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,…"

1. Corinthians 1:7 ESV)

BE READY:

- Dressed for action (with the belt on / the robe tucked in under the belt)
- With the light on;

In this example, the master could have been delayed in his coming (2nd, 3rd watch). The servants did not know WHEN is he coming, therefore their duty was to be ready at any time.

What does it mean for us today to be…

> <u>*Dressed for action (with the belt on):*</u>
>
> "Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, …"
>
> (Ephesians 6:14 ESV)

If you are not a believer yet, and you wonder what it means to be ready for Christ's second coming, here it is: THE TRUTH! You have to come to the truth. Jesus said:

> "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
>
> (John 14:6 ESV)

And again:

> "So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.""
>
> (John 8:31-32 ESV)

If you are a believer, the ap. Peter has an advice for you:

> "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."
>
> 2. Peter 1:13 ESV)

So brace up your minds; be sober (circumspect, morally alert); set your hope wholly and unchangeably on the grace (divine favor) that is coming to you when Jesus Christ (the Messiah) is revealed. (AMPLIFIED BIBLE)

> *With the light on*
>
> "Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."
>
> (Romans 13:11-12 ESV)

REWARD: Exceptional! Out of this world! The master will serve them at the table!

Example of the thief and the house owner (v39-40);

THIEF: idea of *suddenness*, *unexpectedness*, *surprise arrival*, *without warning*.

Since the owner of the house does NOT know WHEN the thief will come and attack, he has to be prepared at all time. So is it with Jesus' coming.

> "You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."
>
> (Luke 12:40 ESV)

For the one prepared, Christ's second coming is of no surprise for him, he is even expecting / waiting for it.

For the unprepared, it is disastrous, as noted in the next scriptures:

"For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober."

(1 Thessalonians 5:2-6 ESV)

"Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you."

(Revelation 3:3 ESV)

"Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, …")

(Revelation 16:15 ESV)

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, …"

(2 Peter 3:10 ESV)

3. **Be faithful! Fulfill wisely your responsibilities! (v.41-48a)**

Introduction: Peter is asking the question

> "Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?"
> (Luke 12:41 ESV)
> Jesus answers: Who then is the faithful and wise manager….?

Jesus does not actually answer Peter's question, which would seem to indicate that the parable was meant for "everyone" to whom much has been given (v. 48).

We will come back to this a little later.

a. The example of the manager of the estate (v41-46);

MANAGER of ESTATE / STEWARD: In that time he was a slave (dulos) to whom was given the task to manage the whole estate. This freed the owner from routine administration and it meant that manager had considerable freedom of action.

If he was "faithful and wise" (as Jesus mentions), he would see that the estate is properly run, which included making sure that all members of the household were duly fed

> DEFINITION OF FAITHFUL:
> According to the dictionary:
> Faithful implies long-continued and steadfast fidelity to whatever one is bound to by a pledge, duty, or obligation

Faithful, along with constant, loyal imply qualities of *stability, dependability, and devotion*.

- Constant suggests firmness and steadfastness in attachment: a constant affection.
- Loyal implies unswerving allegiance to a person, organization, cause, or idea

.What does the Bible say about FAITHFULNESS?

1) God is faithful (OT & NT);
2) Jesus is faithful.

"Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house."

(Hebrews 3:1-2 ESV)

3) Faithfulness is the fruit of the Spirit:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,"

(Galatians 5:22 ESV)

4) We (believers) are required to be faithful :

"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

(1 Corinthians 4:1-2 ESV)

The Bible is talking about the believers as being *faithful to the truth*…..

Jesus is asking us, as church (and as individuals) to be faithful and promises the reward:

"… Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."

(Revelation 2:10 ESV)

Two groups: believers and unbelievers;

As I have already mentioned, Jesus does not answer directly Peter's question, but he seems to say that everybody (without exception) is accountable to God for what he / she received from God (life, talents, goods, etc).

The Bible says that everything belongs to God, he blesses everybody (unbelievers, as well as believers), he is entitled to ask us to give account to him, if we like it or not.

> "… each of us will give an account of himself to God."
>
> (Romans 14:12 ESV)

> "but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."
>
> (1 Peter 4:5 ESV)

Everyone on earth lives one life and after that comes the judgement.

> "…it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,…"
>
> (Hebrews 9:27 ESV)

In this context, coming back to our Luke's passage, the unfaithful servant which represents the unbeliever is asked to give account and is punished severely for his unfaithfulness:

> "… and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful."
>
> (Luke 12:46 ESV)

A picture of the punishment that awaits the unbeliever at Christ's return

> "and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
>
> (Matthew 24:51 ESV)

Degrees of punishment (v47-48a);

The Bible teaches about degrees of reward in heaven;

It seems that Jesus is talking about degrees of punishment in these verses.

It means that not only indolence and carelessness are punished, but even ignorance is not acceptable before God. By-the-way, there is no such a thing as "absolute ignorance". According to Romans 1:

> "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them."
>
> (Romans 1:19 ESV)

4. **Be careful! "*Much is given to you much is required from you*" principle (v48b).**

"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 12:48 ESV)

Not all people received the same gifts / talents from God:

"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them;"

(Romans 12:6 ESV)

"… you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

3. Corinthians 1:7 ESV)

Whatever gift you received from God, it is to use it for the advantage of the others:

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace"

(1 Peter 4:10 ESV)

SO, do not be indifferent and do not neglect the gift you received:

"Do not neglect the gift you have,…"

(1 Timothy 4:14 ESV)

"… I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,

(2 Timothy 1:6 ESV)

5. What are you going to do?

b. Readiness: live in the light, with God's perspective in mind.

"as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

(2 Corinthians 4:18 ESV)

b. Faithfulness: act responsibly / wisely in accomplishing the tasks God gave you; you received gift(s) from God: they are for the building of others in the church; use them wisely and faithfully!

c. Self examination: If you know that you received much from the Lord, do not be laid back! Do not relax! Work hard for Him. You do not have the choice! We will all give account to the Lord!

Final Encouragement:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

(Colossians 3:1-4 ESV)

"so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

(1 Corinthians 1:7-9 ESV)