

The Ministry of Christ, Part 15

Jesus just spoke about not being consumed by life's cares but instead focusing on God's kingdom. He emphasized that if we prioritize seeking the kingdom of God, all our needs will be met. At the conclusion of the Lord's encouragement on the Father's care and provision, Jesus said: Luke 12:32 *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* The kingdom of God is both the glorious and eternal realm where the sovereign God now reigns in heaven, on earth, and in the age to come. God's kingdom is both physical and spiritual. The receiving of the kingdom is part of the heritage of the redeemed of the Lord. The promise still stands for those who seek first the kingdom of God. The ultimate outcome of having a God-centered and kingdom-focused mindset is experiencing His blessings in this life and in the kingdom that awaits us in the future. After giving this short encouragement on the Father's care, Jesus entered into a discussion on being prepared for His second coming.

Parable of the Wedding Feast - Luke 12:36-40

The Lord wants all who belong to Him to be prepared and watchful for His return. The importance of this is evident in the urgency of the words He spoke. While ministering to the needs of the sick, dying, and sinner, Jesus encouraged them to be ready.

Luke 12:35–36 NKJV Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; ³⁶and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.

Jesus was saying, *"Be prepared for action at a moment's notice."* To be prepared for action, men tucked the waist of their robe into their belts so they could move freely.

1 Peter 1:13 NKJV Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

This represents a readiness for action.

Luke 12:35–36 NKJV Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; ³⁶and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.

A lamp was used at night so they could move freely without stumbling in the darkness. Remember since we are children of the light and of the day, we should be ready for action by embracing and walking in the

light. We must do everything that we can to be ready and live in expectation for His return. Those who are watchful and ready will have a special place of fellowship with Him. The believer's attitude is to be ready to respond to His call or return.

What must be done to be ready?

To illustrate, Jesus referred to servants who are ready for their master.

Luke 12:37–38 NKJV Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.

³⁸And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

Jesus did not indicate a specific time for His return but indicated that He could come in the second or third watch of the night. The second or third watch refers to specific time periods during the night. The second watch of the night was from 9:00 pm to midnight and the third watch of the night was from midnight to 3:00 am. The servant knows the master is going to return, but he does not know when. So they are watching and waiting for him.

Luke 12:39–40 NKJV But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

The “*master of the house*” is the individual who governs your life, thoughts, and activities. Each of us must maintain control of our thought life and daily activities so that we live with a readiness for the Lord's return.

Why did Jesus change from talking about a bridegroom to a thief?

Jesus changed the illustration to emphasize the unexpected nature of His returning. With the coming of the bridegroom, there is a degree of expectation and anticipation that is natural. The arrival of a thief is totally unexpected and unplanned. Regardless, we are encouraged to be ready for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 NKJV For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

This warning is also given in Matthew 24:43, 2 Peter 3:10 and Revelation 3:3; 16:15. In every case, watching and preparedness is emphasized.

How can we be prepared for the coming of the Lord like we would

for a thief in the night?

We should live in such a way that we have no regrets and are ready to respond to His call.

Luke 12:41 NKJV Then Peter said to Him, “Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?”

Parable of the Faithful and Wise Steward - Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-48

Luke 12:42–43 NKJV And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* master will make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of food in due season? ⁴³ Blessed *is* that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

Preparedness is related to doing and making sure everything is in order for the return of the Master. A steward is one in charge of running the household and was entrusted with the affairs of his master that was gone. This servant is one who is busy doing what His master wants him or her to do.

What is the wise steward doing?

The wise steward was busy doing and keeping everything ready for his master’s appearing. He has a genuine interest in the Master’s business. Verses 42-48 discuss several responsibilities of this steward from faithful obedience to blatant disregard and disobedience. If we are truly expecting the Lord’s return, we should be busy doing in the same manner we would if Jesus was present with us. As a believer, we have responsibilities that are related to the Lord’s coming. We are not just waiting for His returning, but are to be working and preparing for His returning.

Luke 12:45–46 NKJV But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, ⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the unbelievers.

Jesus indicated the possibility of a lengthy interval before He returns. This parable addresses three possible responses to the timing of the Lord’s return.

First, mishandling of authority

Second, laziness in conduct and preparedness

Third, expectancy and being ready

Our lives should be lived with the expectation that the Lord could return at any moment and that we will have to give account of ourselves to Him. Whenever He comes, we will be required to give an account of ourselves.

Luke 12:47–48 NKJV And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. ⁴⁸ But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

If Jesus truly intends to fulfill His promises, we must remain vigilant and diligently perform all our duties, refraining from succumbing to complacency due to His apparent delay. This reference refers to those who are not ready or prepared for His appearing. They assume that it is enough to be in the master's service. According to Jesus, if a person knows to do right but does not do it, their punishment will be more severe. We must know for certain that when He comes, we will be judged.

Luke 12:40 NKJV Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Since the coming of the Lord is at an uncertain time, we must live with expectation.

2 Corinthians 5:10 NKJV For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Cost of Discipleship - Luke 12:49-53

As Jesus begins this discussion about the cost of discipleship, He addressed His death on the cross.

Luke 12:49–50 NKJV I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!

Some feel that the fire that Jesus is talking about is the fire of God's judgment on those who refuse to accept Him. Looking at the text, it is apparent that He was talking about a different fire than the fire of judgment. "I wish it were already kindled" indicates the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire. His death, burial, and resurrection were prerequisites for the fire's appearance, which is connected to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as described in Acts 2. Christ's death must transpire before

the appearance of Holy Spirit fire. This paragraph is a prophecy of what will happen when people are truly saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ did not come just to bring division and judgment but His appearing brought about the possibility of our salvation. Division happens when individuals accept Jesus Christ as Savior and receive the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Luke 12:52–53 NKJV For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

Consider the ways being a true believer brings division. How can a believer be in harmony with the perverted nature of ungodly relatives and the world? Jesus did not come into this world to bring about a universal brotherhood of believers and unbelievers. There is a definite distinction between those who belong to Him and those who are of the world. Our lives, thoughts, activities and anticipation changes when Jesus becomes Lord and Master. “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world,” (1 John 4:40.) We are to be living in the victory that overcomes the world.

Warning of Not Discerning Times - Luke 12:54-59

Luke 12:54–56 NKJV Then He also said to the multitudes, “Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming’; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, ‘There will be hot weather’; and there is. 56 Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?

We must be aware of what is happening in the world and the significance of what is happening. Jesus warned about being able to interpret signs of the weather changing but not being able to see what God is doing. We must be sensitive to what we are seeing happen in our world and in the church and what God is doing and saying. Jesus asked, “*How is it you do not discern and interpret this present time?*” Many times in the Midwest, we heard sirens go off in cities in which we lived. We knew that these were related to severe weather conditions and the threat of tornados. We knew there were certain things we needed to do when the early response warnings came.

Parable of the Barren Fig Tree - Luke 13:6-9

Luke 13:6-7 NKJV He also spoke this parable: “A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷ Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’

Luke 13:8-9 NKJV But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize *it*. ⁹ And if it bears fruit, *well*. But if not, after that you can cut it down.’

The fig tree is a symbol of Israel. In this parable, Jesus is revealing Israel’s failure to bear the fruit that God expected. The owner of the fig tree came expecting fruit and he found none. God has every right to expect fruit and to bring judgment when there is none. If God can do that to Israel, we must be careful to produce the fruit that God requires of our lives. This parable refers to God’s grace to the non-productive person. If God has given us grace, we must bear fruit. Fruitfulness is a direct result of our connection to the Lord and the work of the Holy Spirit within us.

Why did Jesus spend so much time talking about the end, judgment, and His second coming?

What is the fire that Jesus came to send on the earth?

Why did Jesus coming bring division instead of peace?