

*Are You Ready?*

His side of the aisle was crowded with three relatives; her family refused to attend. After the ceremony, she returned to her houseboat in San Rafael, CA; he returned to death row. Doreen Liroy said Richard Ramirez proposed several years ago but that it wasn't until recently that she thought he was ready to settle down (presumably because he just got out of several years' solitary confinement). Said one observer, "Doreen brings out the best in Richard. They complement each other.

People can have some strange views of what it means to be ready, can't they?

We worry about being ready for first grade, ready for college, ready for marriage, ready to start a family, and being ready for retirement. It seems like most of our life we're getting ready for something. But there's one area that isn't even on a lot of people's radar screen, and that being ready to meet Jesus Christ face to face.

When I started to read the Bible in my early 20's I was shocked to find how much scripture was devoted to the second coming of Christ. In all of my growing up years I don't remember ever hearing that Jesus had promised to come to earth again.

There are 260 chapters in the New Testament, and Christ's return is mentioned 318 times in those chapters. Statistically, one verse in every twenty-five mentions the Lord's return.

In fact the very last recorded words of Jesus are "Surely I am coming quickly" (Revelation 22:20) It's clear that Jesus return is a major topic in the Bible and so it ought to be a high priority for us to find out more about it.

**Turn to Luke 12 pg 1008**

The key verse in the section we're going to look at today is verse 40. Jesus says:  
*"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

The consistent theme of the Bible, when it comes to the return of Christ is "be ready." You don't know when it's going to happen, so be ready at all times.

Just to kind of set the stage here for us, all true Christians agree that Jesus will physically return to earth and rein in power. One of the fundamentals of the faith is the bodily return of Christ. What Christians differ on is the timing and sequence of events regarding his return.

At Faith Community Church we hold to and teach the pretribulational and premillennial viewpoints. This morning don't be too concerned if those terms are unfamiliar to you. They simply mean that we believe the Bible teaches the following sequence of events concerning the Lord's return. First we believe that the church, that is all true Christians, will be raptured (caught up) to meet the Lord Jesus in the air.

*I Thess 4:16& 17: For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

Now all Bible believing Christians believe that this will take place but they differ about when it will take place. We believe that it will take place before the tribulation. The term tribulation usually refers to the last seven years of time, as we know it, when God will pour out judgment upon the whole Earth for their sins. These seven years are described in the Book of Revelation as a time of trouble and tragedy like has never been seen before. During this time a world leader will arise who is known in the Bible as the Antichrist. He will lead many astray so much so that people actually worship him.

Interestingly, the thing that the Antichrist will do to gain worldwide notoriety will be to bring peace to the Middle East. That will only last for a short while but it will make people look to him as a world leader.

At the end of the seven years Jesus Christ will return with his church. This is sort of like "stage two" of the second coming. The first stage will be the rapture of Christians. The second stage will be when Jesus destroys the Antichrist and sets up God's kingdom on earth to rule for 1000 years. Jesus will rule from David's throne in Jerusalem. After that will come the new heavens and the new earth and eternity.

This 1000 years is referred to as a millennium. We see the Bible teaching a premillennial viewpoint which means that we believe that Jesus literally comes back before (pre) the 1000 year reign. Some people believe that Jesus does not come back before the thousand year reign and some people believe that the millennium teaching is only figurative.

Any teaching on end time events is known as eschatology. You've just received a very short course in eschatology. I wanted you who may be unfamiliar with the Bible's teachings on this subject to have some understanding before we dealt with today's passage which challenges us to be prepared for the return of Jesus.

If you knew for certain that Jesus Christ was going to return in 12 hours from now, what would you do in those 12 hours?

Would you go home and clean the house? Do the laundry? Polish your furniture? Take a bath? Wash your car? Those things sound ridiculous don't they? None of us would do them because they wouldn't make any difference when the Lord returns.

I have a feeling that if we knew He was coming back in just a few hours we'd do things like: restore broken friendships, ask forgiveness for words spoken in anger, we'd call all the people we love the most and try to share the message of salvation with them. We'd do the things that we know are most important.

We'd make sure that we we're ready.

That's what this section of Luke 12 is about. Being ready.

I want us to begin with verse 35 this morning and I'd like us to see Jesus admonition in light of the fact that He's coming back again.

### **Read vs 35**

*KJV Let your loins be girded about*

*NIV Be dressed ready for service*

*NASB Be dressed in readiness*

Out of all the translations the KJV is the most literal in this verse.

Now, none of us here are dresses in a way that would really make us appreciate that statement. But picture how men were dressed in biblical times.

Men and women wore long flowing robes. The women wouldn't do this, but if a man wanted to do any strenuous work or get somewhere quickly, he'd take the hem of his garment and tuck it up under the cloth belt that he'd have around his waist so it would be out of his way.

That's girding up your loins. That's dressing in readiness. Today we'd say, "Roll up your sleeves."

So Let your waist be girded and let your lamps burning.

### **Read 36 & 37 through "watching."**

The imagery here is servants waiting for the master to return to his household. They obviously didn't have streetlights or porch lights so instead they used lamps. A good servant would listen for the sound of his master's return (a dog barking in the distance?) and would have his light already lit, so that he could light up his way.

The master shouldn't have to bang on the door and wait while his servants get up and wander to the door all groggy and sleepy, stumbling over things in the dark. When the master arrives, the servants are to be ready. His coming is their most important priority; their own weariness and self-indulgence isn't to take over. They're servants.

That's the way a ready disciple waits for his Lord's return.

It's the attitude that says that Jesus may come today so I'm not going to leave anything undone and I'm not going to have anything in my life that I would regret or be ashamed of if I were face to face with Jesus. Are you prepared for Jesus return?

Is everything in your life what it should be? Will Jesus be able to say to you, "well done my good and faithful servant?" It means there's no sin that we haven't confessed and forsaken. There is no area of ministry that we always intended to do but never got around to. There's no apology we never made and no prayer we never said.

That's the readiness that God wants us to have. And you know what's really fascinating? In this story the master ends up serving the servants!

### **Read rest of 37 & 38**

Did you catch that? When the master returned home and the alert servants immediately opened the door and ushered him into his own home, he looked around and found not only his servants ready for his return but also the house in order and all the lamps lit.

In order to fulfill their master's wishes the servants had set aside their own personal goals, hopes and dreams. And this faithfulness so filled the master's heart with joy that he calls in all his faithful servants and ordered them to sit down at the dinner table. Then he begins to serve them at the table and meet their needs.

No master of the day would ever do something like this. It was unheard of. But a few months from now this is what happens in John 13: *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose*

*from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.*

It was the job of a slave to wash the dusty feet of travelers. Here's Jesus washing His disciples' feet. That simple act of servitude was a foreshadowing of His ultimate service on the cross.

It's a powerful picture, isn't it? The Creator of the universe serving His faithful servants throughout the ages. It's going to be awesome!

I have to admit, I've always spoken of Jesus coming the first time as a servant and the second time as a ruling king as if there was no overlap.

Obviously He came with a priority of serving the first time. But he didn't stop being the king. In fact in Luke 23 Pilate asks Jesus: "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answers him, "It is as you say."

When He comes again, He comes to rule the nations with a rod of iron. Rev 19 says *He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

There's no doubt He's coming back as King, but just like the servant still was a king the first time, the king will still be a servant the second time. His joy will be to share His blessings with us for all eternity.

He's fulfilled His part at the cross. He's called us to trust in Him as Savior. To be born into His family. And then to serve Him with hearts of gratitude for what He's done for us.

### **Read 39**

Here Jesus uses another analogy to emphasize one of the reasons we need to always be prepared; He'll come suddenly- "like a thief."

Sacramento, Calif accused burglar Brett Woolley allegedly had lined up the owner's stereo and other items by the front door ready to go but then decided to draw a bubble bath; he fell asleep in the tub, the owner returned, and police were called to awaken Woolley.

That's not the usual modus operandi. Thieves don't make announcements about when they will arrive. They don't RSVP. The only way to be prepared is to always be prepared because you never know when they'll show up.

The illustration has changed but the application is the same: **Read 40**

1. Jesus is Coming Back - So Be Ready
2. Jesus is Coming Back - Be Faithful

### **Read 41**

Remember, as we saw in the past weeks, all 59 verses of this whole chapter are Jesus' words of warning to His disciples about the dangers they're going to face in the future. He's warned them about hypocrisy, covetousness, worry, and now He's warning them about the danger of carelessness.

He's warning His disciples, but this warning is being given in the midst of a very large crowd. In fact this crowd was so big that at the beginning of the chapter we're told they were stepping all over each other.

Now Peter wonders, "Jesus, is this just for us, or are you warning everybody?"

The focus of Jesus' isn't going to be on this crowd in general. The crowd's made up of a bunch of people who are out for entertainment. They wanted to see a miracle or two.

His focus is on His disciples. And what He has to say not only applies to them, but it applies to every person who trusts Christ as Savior. There is a sense though, in which His words are going to apply to Israel. We'll see that in just a minute.

### **Read 42**

The word translated "steward" means "household manager." Every wealthy household would have a steward. A steward didn't own the master's possessions, but he'd be in charge of taking care of them. He'd pay the bills, order the food, make sure the grounds were taken care of.

The NT calls all believers "stewards." We all have a responsibility to faithfully manage what our Lord has entrusted to us.

Someday Christ will return and reward His faithful stewards. The reward isn't heaven. Heaven is a gift that comes through faith in the work of Christ on the cross. It doesn't come through our works or it wouldn't be a gift.

But God does promise to reward us with crowns in heaven and thrones in the kingdom.

He rewards those who are ready. He rewards those who are serving.

### **Read 43 & 44**

Almost 50 years ago Wilbur M. Smith wrote, *"The whole subject of rewards for the believer in heaven is one that seems to be thought of only seldom by the ordinary Christian, or even by the average student of the Scriptures. It is at once both a joyous and a solemn theme, and should serve as a potent incentive for holiness of life."*

Things haven't changed much. The idea of rewards still isn't something you hear much about but it's a conspicuous part of Jesus' message. Notice, it isn't entrance into the kingdom that's the issue, but being made a ruler in the kingdom. The master makes the faithful servant a ruler, verse 44.

A faithful steward will be rewarded by the master. But what about unfaithful stewards?

### **Read 45 & 46**

There's advantages to preaching through books of the Bible. It gives people a sense of the context of the book instead of just hearing isolated passages. It keeps me from focusing on favorite subjects and ignoring or downplaying other less familiar or less popular passages or topics of Scripture.

There's some disadvantages for me though. It means that I can't skip the tough verses. These are some tough verses!

There are two basic ways commentators take this passage. Some say this man is a believer, or he wouldn't be called a servant. He becomes self focused and eventually lives for self at the expense of others.

When the Lord returns there are consequences. "...appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." Heb 10:31 says, *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

The word “unbelievers” in verse 46 (*apistos*) literally “without faith” is defined in the lexicons as: “disbelieving, i.e. without Christian faith”, or “untrustworthy, unfaithful.”

The parallel passage in Matthew 24 says The Master will, *assign him a place with the hypocrites.*

If that’s the case, the point is at the coming of Christ the Lord will separate the faithful believers from the unfaithful and reward the faithful. 1Jo 2:28 *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

That’s a possible interpretation.

Other commentators think that Jesus is saying that this unfaithful servant is a person who claimed to be a servant but wasn’t.

I have to admit I’ve gone back and forth on this one, but the more I look at it the more I think we need to put this back into it’s historical context.

**To get some perspective turn to Isaiah 65 pg 721**

**Read vs 1-2**

God promised back in 700 BC that because Israel wouldn’t listen to His voice He would have another “people.” That people turned out to be the church, which is made up of believing Jews and Gentiles.

**Read vs 13-15**

I believe that God is saying to Israel that He would turn to the Gentiles because of the rebellion of Israel. His "servants" who eat, and drink, and rejoice are those who have turned to Him in faith, and they include both believing Jews and believing Gentiles. The ones that God will "slay" (Isaiah 65:15) are His disobedient people.

**Back in Luke 12** that would make the "servant" who is "cut in pieces" the unbelieving nation of Israel. Unbelieving Israel would be "cut in pieces" and have their part with those heathen they disdain and despise so much. The faithful servant is God's church, those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as God's Messiah, and who wait expectantly for His return.



Now, the question is what does all this have to do with faithfulness? How does the nation Israel relate to Jesus' teaching on stewardship?

Here's how. The nation Israel was given great privileges and responsibilities. Israel was the nation through whom "light of God" was to be shed abroad to the nations. Israel was the steward through whom the Scriptures were given to the world. But Israel, it turns out, didn't want this to happen.

Israel resisted it all the way. Israel consumed its blessings on itself. Israel not only abused the Gentiles, they abused their own people and prophets and ultimately killed Jesus Christ.

Now catch this: **Read Luke 12 vs 47-48**

Here's the principle. *Privilege brings about proportionate responsibility.* Those who know a lot are more responsible than those who know a little. Those who have a lot of revelation and reject it will receive a greater judgment than those who know just a little and reject it.

This applies to believers and unbelievers. Those who have heard the gospel over and over and have rejected it will suffer more judgment than those who have little or no knowledge of Christ.

Just like there will be degrees of reward in heaven, there will be degrees of punishment in hell.

The real question is this... what are you doing with the truth that's been committed to you?

You live in a country with free access to the Bible in your own language. You live in a land of Christian book stores, radio stations, and churches.

You've been exposed to the Bible's teaching that Jesus suffered for our sins on the cross, and is coming again.

Are you ready? Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you've recognized that you've sinned against God and you've personally placed your faith in Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross when He paid for your sins?

That's step one. That's the way of forgiveness and eternal life.

Step two is be faithful to God while you're waiting and watching for Jesus' return. Can you imagine trusting Christ as the way to heaven and then living with His priorities as your priorities? Living with His Spirit as the source of your power? Being a faithful steward of the things of God?

And then one day, hearing the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, and suddenly your standing in the presents of the Lord Himself.

Or turn that around. Can you imagine trusting Christ as the way to heaven and then living to please yourself? Being an unfaithful steward of the things of God? And one day find yourself toe to toe with the one who has the nailprints still in His hands?

1. Jesus is Coming Back - Be Ready
2. Jesus is Coming Back - Be Faithful

- 1) The Bible Says the Lord is Coming Back
- 2) Signs are Right
- 3) We are 2000 years into the Last Days
- 4) We are warned to be ready at any time