

3. The Faithful Servant

Matthew 24:45-51; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:42-48

Matthew 24:45-51

⁴⁵ “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Luke 12:42-48

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^[a] 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.

Mark 13:32-37

³² “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. ³⁵ Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—³⁶ lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

1. Read Matthew 24:1-45 & Mark 13:1-31. describe the context in which Jesus is telling this parable.

****Note****

The context in Matthew and Mark are virtually identical while Luke tells this parable in the midst of other parables and many of the passages that are attributed to the sermon on the mount in Matthew. Luke, in contrast, allots 30 verses to the sermon on the mount while Matthew allots three chapters. This can be explained using the words of John 21:25

John 21:25 *Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*

Jesus may have used this parable in two different circumstances or else in many circumstances, or else the narrative of the gospel events and words may not be in an order as they happened. The introduction to the Gospel of Luke explains that the purpose of the book is to provide an orderly account of the narrative of the life of Christ – perhaps he was trying to place the events in order simply to communicate accurately. The word “in order” seems to convey a chronological narrative. We simply don’t know

Luke 1:1-4 *Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*

The context of Matthew and Mark are in the discussion of end times. Jesus is telling His disciple the signs of His return and is telling them that no one knows the times or the season. There is a string of examples in the ending of this chapter of no man knowing when He will return beginning with the parable of the fig tree and ending with the parable of the faithful servants (vs. 32-48)

The context in Matthew & Mark is to tell us to be ready because we do not know when Christ will return. We can read the signs, but the exact day and hour is still unknown to us.

2. Read Matthew 24:1-3, Mark 13:1-4, & Luke 12:1. To whom is Jesus speaking to in this passage?

Matthew 24:1-3 - Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ² But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”³ As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

Mark 13:1-3 - And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” ² And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”³ And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?”

Luke 12:1 - In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Jesus was speaking to his disciples (the 12) and possibly a crowd of people as well. This crowd was following him because of the signs that he did as well as the things that he said. There are many times in the Gospels when we learn that the crowd was following Him for wrong reasons, and certainly, in the end, there were less than the 12 at the cross, so we can only assume that many were following Him not because they believed but for various reasons.

He told these parables to a crowd of followers who may or may not have believed in Him. Probably a lot like a crowd of people in a church on Sunday morning.

- Many who believe in Christ, and have surrendered their lives to Him,
- Some who are considering the costs, and deciding if they will follow Jesus.
- Some that are rebelling and there for other reasons.

3. Although it can be sometimes dangerous to identify all of the characters in a parable, the main characters are presented to help us to understand the heavenly meaning of the story. Identify the following main characters and events in this parable from Luke 12.

- a. **The master of the house:** Jesus – portrayed in this parable as returning to judge the earth and the inhabitants. We know that Jesus is coming back. The Bible tells us that he will and He will come back the second time to judge the world.

Acts 1:9-11 - 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,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.”

Matthew 25:31-34 & 41 - ¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

- b. The faithful and wise servant:** The one who accepts Jesus as their savior and repents of their sin. This is the only servant that can be ready for the return of Christ. The Bible is clear that we can do nothing to deserve our salvation or to be ready for Christ’s return apart from Him.

Isaiah 64:6 - We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

The faithful servant cannot be one who does something to deserve His reward, but one who trust in Jesus and waits eagerly for His return.

Philippians 3:12-21 - ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

- c. **The servant that was not doing the will of the Master:** Those that do not accept Jesus as their Savior and do not come to repentance for their sin. **There are many in these categories, but all of them are punished.** Some are rebelling against the master's commands, some are ignorant of the master's commands, and some just think they have a lot of time left to quickly get things in order before the master arrives. The Bible tells us that Jesus is coming back as a thief in the night – when we are not aware. The main point of this passage is to alert us that the time to repent and seek Christ is now. We simply cannot put it off another day.

1 Thesalonians 5:1-11 - Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers,^[a] you have no need to have anything written to you. ² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ 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. ⁴ But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵ For you are all children^[b] of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 - Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." **Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**

This passage seems to represent different degrees of punishment. This coincides with Matthew 11:22 & John 19:11

Matthew 11:20-25 - ²⁰ Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. 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. 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."

John 19:9-11 - ⁹ He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” ¹¹ Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

- d. **The master’s return** – Jesus return is coming like a thief in the night (1 Thes 5:2). He will judge everybody and everybody will give an account for their life. The question will be from God to each of us, “What have you done with my Son?”

Romans 14:10-12 - ¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ¹¹ for it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall confess^[b] to God.”

¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

4. What does Matthew 24:50, Mark 13:35, and Luke 12:46 tell us about the return of Jesus?

Matthew 24:36 - ³⁶ “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son,^[a] but the Father only.

Matthew 24:38-39 - ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Matthew 24:42 – ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Matthew 24:44 – ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Matthew 24:50 - ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know

Mark 13:35 - ³⁵ Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows,^[a] or in the morning—

Luke 12:46 - 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.

5. What are some of the things that are evidence of being awake and waiting for the return of Christ?

Matthew 22 tells of a time when Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment. His reply gives us an insight into the nature of sin and all of the commands in the Bible

Matthew 22:34-40 - ³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

So to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself is the most important command. This is the nature of all sin because when we disobey we are loving ourselves and our wishes over God. When I sin against you I am preferring myself over you, and hence not obeying this most basic command.

John 14:15 - ¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Understanding this command is the basis for repentance. We cannot love God like we should and we cannot love our neighbors like ourselves. That is why we need a savior.

So the fundamental element of being ready for the master’s return is repenting from our in-ability to fulfill God’s commands, and clinging to Jesus as the price for our sin – isn’t that the Gospel?

6. How does this parable help us to understand how we should live our lives because we do not know when Jesus will return?

If you haven’t come to that place where you have acknowledged our sin to God, and repented of your life of living for our own glory, and rested on Jesus gift of forgiveness, then you need that immediately. Romans 1 tells us that continued refusal and rebellion against God causes a hardening in your heart that will ultimately result in God giving you over to your sin. If you are putting it off for another day, then stop. This parable today is a warning – a street sign – that tells you the bridge is out. Continue down this road and you will face certain doom.

William Barclay (1907-1970) tells this fable in his commentary on Matthew 24

There is a fable which tells of three apprentice devils who were coming to this earth to finish their apprenticeship. They were talking to Satan, the chief of the devils, about their plans to tempt and ruin men. The first said, "I will tell them there is no God." Satan said, "That will not delude many, for they know that there is a God." The second said, "I will tell men there is no hell." Satan answered, "You will deceive no one that way; men know even now that there is hell for sin." The third said, "I will tell men there is no hurry." "Go," said Satan, "and you will ruin them by the thousand."

The most dangerous of all delusions is that there is plenty of time. The most dangerous day in a man's life is when he learns that there is such a word as tomorrow. There are things which must not be put off, for no man knows if for him tomorrow will ever come.