

Title: Ready, Set ...
Text: Luke 12.35-40
Theme: Ready for Christ's return
Series: Luke
Prop Stmtnt: Christ is going to return and life will never be the same.

Imagine that you were a founding partner and investor in a company that has enjoyed an impressive record of growth and revenue to the point where it is ready to go public on the NYSE. That the shares you own have a potential of being worth way more than what you invested. And, let's say, that tomorrow at 9.30a is the day the stock goes public. However, your 5-year-old has a solo in his class play that is some cheesy song about flowers, or the months of the year and wants you to come see him and of course, it is at 9.30a. Do you go to the play? Do you go but spend the entire time checking your phone and see how your stock is doing? What do you do? What you do depends on what you treasure. Jesus told us that where our treasure is, our heart will be there. If your biggest treasure is the stock, then even though you are at the play, you aren't really at the play. Or vice-versa. Let's say that you have to be in New York for the opening bell. If your biggest treasure is your son, then even though you are at the NYSE, you aren't really there, but hundreds of miles away in your son's kindergarten class.

What you treasure is revealed by what you give your attention to, that is what you prioritize. In this discourse, Jesus has told us that our greatest priority is his kingdom. Yes, Jesus is the rightful king who is overall. However, there is coming a day, when his rule will be visible and recognized. This will be the day when we will live seeing and savoring God. We won't be living by faith; we will be living by sight. The promises that we believe now, will be realized and fulfilled. The God we do not see but have heard about and pray to, and trust in, will be the God that we see and hear with our own ears. Eden will be a city, the New Jerusalem. Creation will be set free from its curse and will display its glory. Our joy in beholding God in all of his glory and creation in all of its glory, will only be exponentially increased by the fact that we will get to share this with others who are sharing this with us. What I am describing is what saints of old used to call the beatific vision. That is, seeing the face of God. There, before the face and glory of God (Samuel Parkison writes) *"we will trace out the great and marvelous things he accomplished through all our suffering and confusion and tension. We will piece together chords of sanctification he wove through heartbreak, church discipline, death, and separation, and we will all be enriched for all of it. We will regret nothing. We will resent nothing. We will harbor no bitter grudges. Instead, we will glory in the beatific vision, side by side with all the saints, forever."*¹

The kingdom of God is to be our ultimate priority because God has designed it to be our greatest joy. So, what does it look like to seek the kingdom?

Read text:

¹ https://www.9marks.org/article/enjoying-god-together-forever-the-beatific-vision-and-friendship/?mc_cid=d93a995d70&mc_eid=6ef5b4d053

I've gone to a couple of NASCAR races with my son. These races often feature a flyover by the military at the conclusion of the national anthem. If you are not ready, it can feel like Armageddon just showed up. So, you learn to start scanning the sky for the jets that are waiting to put the stadium into A-fib. You know it's coming, where is it, where is it, where is it? That's the idea of this text, which Jesus intends to describe how we live. We know that Jesus is coming back. So, where is he, where is he, where is he? We are to be looking, crooning, anticipating so that we are not caught unawares. In order to seek the kingdom, we have to be looking for it and here Jesus is telling us to always be looking for it. We are to live, in that sense, on our tiptoes looking for the coming of Christ. Jesus tells us that we are to...

1. **Be Ready like a servant.** (35-38)

A. **3 Commands** (35-36)

1) Stay dressed for action (and)

It was common in those days for men to wear long robes which was a problem if you needed to run or fight or take some sort of evasive action. In order to run, you had to gather up your robe and tuck it into your belt so that you could run without tripping. If a man wore his robes tucked up under belt it meant that he was ready and if you saw that, you would naturally wonder what was going on because this man was clearly on edge, and on guard. When you wake up in the morning, this is one of those things that you need to think about such as: Thank-you God for seeing me through the night, thank-you God for a new day, God I need your grace to follow you and enjoy you, I need to have a funeral for my flesh and my agenda, I need to be completely at your disposal and I need to be ready because you could return. I need to be on my tiptoes looking. But what if Christ returns at night?

2) Keep your lamps burning (and)

For us this would be like making sure that your cellphone battery is charged and that you have a back-up supply. More to the point, you would keep a lamp with you and extra fuel for it, so you would be prepared even in the night. Jesus is telling us to live ready and even to sleep ready. I've often thought in the morning that Christ could return on that day, but not so much before going to sleep, and I should. Whenever Christ returns, it will be night somewhere.

3) Be like men who are waiting

This 3rd commands describes the anticipation of servants who are waiting for their master to return from a wedding feast. It's kind of like this. I've listened (or tried to listen) to Cathi and her peeps have a conversation. It is a cacophony of sounds. Multiple people are speaking at the same time about multiple things that seem to me to be completely unrelated and yet she claims that they all hear each at once. I cannot discern any sense of ebb, flow, direction, aim and therefore any hope of this coming to a conclusion in this millennia. If that event of intense decibility were taking place at a restaurant, or was going to be taking place at a restaurant and I

were to ask her what time she thought she would be home, she would likely be frustrated with the question. How does that end? Can it end? Will it ever end? That is a question that deeper minds than mine have yet to unravel. I would like to know when she is going to be home, but I have learned that she has no idea when that will happen. But if I am going to be home and if I have agreed to have a project done while she is gone and the Tigers are on TV, I would like to have some reasonable sense of time when she may be home so I am not surprised by her coming home before the restaurant closes only to see my project not complete but the ice cream containers empty.

If the master of the house went to a wedding feast, he did not know if the feast would last 2, 3, 4 days or a week. I'll be home when I get home. Be ready. That means that the servants had to be ready. What does it look like for them to be ready?

B. The Purpose

They are prepared to answer the door when he knocks. They and the home are ready to receive him. The way Jesus tells this parable emphasizes the responsibility of the servants to be ready and the blessing and reward for those who are. This is the Jesus version of "You had one job." This is our job! There are many things that happen to us when we become followers of Christ and this is one of them. Our job is to be ready.

This makes sense. We understand these roles, jobs and expectations. Masters hire, fire, have expectations and servants follow instructions and are held accountable for their actions. But what Jesus says now, is jaw-dropping, stunning! Over and over, we see and hear from Jesus how he is a king that is so unlike any king we've experienced. This means that his kingdom operates so differently than we could ever imagine. One of the reasons why I believe so wholeheartedly in the Bible is because the message of the Bible really is otherworldly. Here is an example of that. Jesus says that the servants who are ready to receive their master are going to receive a special blessing when he returns from the wedding feast. Look at what it is.

C. The Blessings

Jesus says that when the Master gets home that he will reserve roles with the servants. He will put on the clothes of a servant and have them recline at the table and he will come and serve them. Lest you think that you didn't hear Jesus correctly, he prefaces this statement with his trademark, "Truly I say to you." This only underscores the emphasis that Christ is making. This is not a one-off statement. Jesus talks about this again in Luke 13.29, then again in 22.30. This is addressed again in Revelation 19.9 as the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb." This is the ultimate wedding feast that celebrates the union of Christ and his bride.

Jesus is So thrilled and pleased with those servants who believed him and waited and watched for him that when he returns and sees them doing this, that he is going to serve them. Jesus then underscores this point in v.38 when he talks about the blessing that is for those watchful servants, even if it means watching in the 2nd or 3rd watch of the night (9p – 3a).

Jesus wants us to be ready for his return, not simply as a duty, but as a desire driven by our delight. He wants us to be so convinced of the goodness of our King and the generosity of our King, the grace of our King that we are faithful now that his delight is to honor us and serve us. We are to be ready servants in order to delight our master and enjoy our master's enjoyment of our faith. Later when Christ is in the upper room with his disciples preparing to celebrate the Passover meal with them, Christ gives them a preview of this event even as he gives them a picture and a lesson.

John 13.1-7

When traveling to different regions of the world, it is common to see many people travel by foot. We may hop in the car to grab a loaf of bread and milk, but that luxury is not enjoyed by all. Years ago, the idea did not exist. Traveling by foot was the main form of transportation for mankind for thousands of years. In the NT days, the care of one's feet was very important. Socks, stockings, thick-soled shoes and boots were absent. Sandals, low shoes and simply going barefoot made it important and necessary to wash your feet every day. Cities then did not have water and septic systems. The refuse of normal life tended to reside alongside of the roads and would often dirty and defile one's feet. To this day, in many regions of Asia, the Middle East, and Russia it is considered to be offensive to show or point the sole of your shoe toward someone. One would never, ever, ever wear sandals in someone else's home. And, one of the most basic acts of hospitality and manners was to have water and a towel available for people who came to your house. In a poor home, water and a towel were provided. In a home where there was a measure of comfort, a servant would be assigned to this task. If the home or the estate had more than one servant, then it would fall to the task of the lowliest servant to wash the feet of those who came to the home. Therefore, if anyone ever washed your feet voluntarily, it was a statement of complete and total devotion expressed in the humblest manner possible. 1 Sam. 25 illustrates that.

That night, in the upper room, there was a basin and a towel, but no servant. Who would step up by stepping down? When no one was willing to be that humble, Jesus did and in doing so, he did it as a preview of what would happen in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, an event he even spoke about later that night. Beloved, this is how much your King and Savior loves you. He died for you that you could be in his family so that he could serve you. That's incredible! What Jesus promised in Luke 12 is previewed in John 13. But Christ's serving is also a picture of his life and ministry because this is the kind of merciful God we serve.

In 13.3, we are reminded of who Jesus is, and in verse 4, we see that in spite of his position, he humbled himself to wash the disciples' feet. In v.12, he returned to his place and sat back down. That action is an illustration of his life and ministry on our behalf. He left his place in Heaven, setting aside the prerogatives and benefits of royalty and humbled himself to become one of his own and not only that, he became our servant. He lived for the purpose of serving us. When He finished His mission, he returned to his place and put back on his royal robes and sat down.

This is exactly what Paul described to the Philippian believers in chapter 2 of his letter to them. When he wrote this about Christ: *“Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Here in this text where Jesus is talking about servants, he shows that he is the ultimate servant. He never asks of us what he hasn't already done. What a remarkable contrast to the idea of leadership that Satan has. Christ lived to serve and in serving, he sought to advance the life and joy of others. He died serving, and was raised to life and exalted at the right hand of the Father. Satan on the other hand lives to take. He lives to be served. He uses others to advance himself and disposes of people and property after they have served his purpose. He is temporarily successful, but will never succeed. He lives with the sentence of death hanging around his neck.

Question to consider:

- Do you think at all about the reality of the return of Christ?

Does the reality of his return make any discernible difference in your day? Is this even something that you considered as a possibility?

- If you think about the return of Christ, what do you think about it?

Do you think about the return of Christ the way Christ calls servants to think about it? Do you assume that it will not be today, or tomorrow, or this week, or even in your lifetime? Does the potentiality of the return of Christ have any discernible difference in your life?

As the master of the house, Jesus has authority over the servants. How does Jesus use his authority? He uses it to serve the servants which motivates them to serve him even more. Speaking of a house master...

2. **Be Ready like a house master.** (39)

Emphasizing the need to be ready, Jesus uses another example to make a similar point. The master of the house was tasked with the stewardship and protection of the house. There are always people who are looking to break in to steal and they target homes that are not well defended. Not long ago a group of guys from South America targeted a number of high-end homes in Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties. Their work was sophisticated. In one of the homes, they stole between \$500,000 - \$750,000 in jewelry.

It may be a habit in your family to watch some of the Home Alone movies around the holidays. They are funny, but the kid knew that the thieves were coming so he was home and he was

ready. Jesus is saying that if the master of the house, who, as the owner, or steward is tasked with managing and protecting the home, knew when the thieves were going to hit, he would not have been gone. So, what if you don't know? Then you have to live on guard as if the thief is going to come today. You cannot leave a door unlocked, nor the house unattended. You have to safeguard your resources. How do you safeguard your resources? Where is the only place where your treasure is safe? 2 Peter 3.5-13 (Guadalupe River 7.3.25 rose 26' in 45 minutes) Because here is the point...

3. **Be Ready, Jesus is Coming.** (40)

Earlier I asked you if you thought at all, this week about the return of Christ. I suspect that most of you did not really think that much about it. Now, whenever another major event takes place in Israel, then you may think a bit more about it. But Jesus said very clearly that he is going to return when you do not expect it. There is nothing that has to take place in order for Christ to return. I know that many people have tried to give us the chain of events on this, but since everyone missed his first coming, I'm not thinking that anyone has his return all figured out. We read the accounts of the birth of Christ and shake our heads at how everyone missed it, yet here we are with significantly more revelation from God and I think we are far too easily distracted with the dailyness and details of life that we risk missing the very reason God made us. The return of Christ is certain. The timing is unknown, but there is no doubt that he is coming.

That is the point. Live as if he could return any moment. If you did that, even today. How would it affect how you think about your plans? If you think that the return of Christ would interrupt your life, or would somehow disappoint you because you didn't get to do what you wanted, I don't think you grasp what the return of Christ means. The coming of Christ changed everything. The return of Christ will change it again.

What does this mean for those of you who are not believers?

What does this mean for those of you who have become complacent?

What does this mean for those of you who have been faithful?