

Caught in the Act

Luke 12:35-53

Driven by Deadlines

What things do we tend to delay until the deadline? What things do we do without the need for a deadline?

What are some important things that might not happen because we don't have a deadline?

What should shape our lives as Christians, especially when we don't know when the deadline is?

A Christian View of Past, Present, and Future

Eternity Past → God

"In the beginning was the Word [the Son of God], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." *John 1:1*

Creation → All good

"Through [the Son of God] all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." *John 1:2*

Fall → Sin

"There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." *Romans 3:22-23*

"The wages of sin is death" *Romans 6:23*

Jesus → Salvation

"All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." *Romans 3:24*

Jesus is the perfect Son of God who lived a perfect life

yet He died as if He were the worst of sinners

in order to rescue sinners and all creation

from the just consequences ("wages") of sin

and He offers this rescue as a gift to all who trust in Him

Church

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day [of Jesus' return] approaching." *Hebrews 10:24-25*

Jesus' return → Eternity future

Jesus said: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ... And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." *John 14:1,3*

No one on earth knows when Jesus will come back

It is taking longer than probably anyone expected

"Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.

They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 2 Peter 3:3-4

Jesus was concerned about the temptation for us to give up waiting...

Luke 12:35-53

35-40: Always keep doing what Jesus taught, expecting Him

Lamp burning = active awareness of the presence of God

Especially when His presence is not currently felt (night)

Concern: people won't be ready because...

Jesus' return is taking longer than expected

Jesus' return is no longer even expected

"Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed." *Revelation 16:15*

Radically surprising image: Master clothes himself to serve the servants!

Jesus said: "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table?

But I am among you as one who serves." *Luke 22:27*

Danger: distraction, tiredness, giving up, disbelief, ...

41: Peter asked: Is this radical promise open to all?

"This parable":

radical promise: the Master will dress himself to serve His servants when He comes

warning: keep obeying, even when it seems to be such a long time waiting. If not, you will be shamed

Question: Is this just for the Apostles or for all people?

An important question to ask!

Why did Peter ask? We don't know

Peter knew it applied to apostles. But was it only for them?

It is for our sake: Jesus' radical promise is for all who will keep serving with what God has given them

42-48: Parable is especially for all who know God's will

Master had many servants, and one was appointed manager

Jesus was not endorsing slavery, and especially not race-based chattel slavery (people owning other people as property)

Note that he expressed severe judgment for the manager in the story who mistreated his fellow servants

Jesus used imperfect life situations they understood to teach about our relationship with God

Jesus highlighted four situations...

What they knew	What they did	Outcome
Knew the Master's will	Still doing His will: serving others with what was entrusted to them	Master serves them He entrusts more to them
	Did evil: used what was entrusted to them selfishly and to the harm of others [sins of commission]	Cut in pieces and cast out [covenant ceremony]
	Didn't get ready or do as commanded [sins of omission]	Severe beating
Didn't know the Master's will	Things deserving punishment	Light beating

This is a parable, not an allegory

Allegory: there is a direct application of each part of the story

Parable: the story is to teach a powerful idea

The idea: it is critical that all who know what Jesus wants done actually do what He wants done

Responses that are highlighted

Those who **continue to obey**

Those who **actively rebel**

Those who **fail to obey** → perhaps the bigger concern

49-53: Today is the day to choose

Fire represents God's presence

Power and glory of God: Holy Spirit

Refining/purifying gold through testing

Judging for those outside of the grace of Christ

Jesus' death & resurrection (His "baptism")

opens the way for God's presence to be a blessing

to all who come by faith

Not all live by faith in Jesus, so not all are saved!

Emphasis: divisions even within households

Prophecy when Jesus was born:

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." Luke 2:34-35

The Big Idea: Jesus taught...

**Jesus Christ will return at a time we can't predict
and then He will judge people
based on what He finds when He comes
which should lead us to constant expectancy
and to eager and active obedience to His call**

Our Statement of Faith: 9. Christ's Return

We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

Application

Not: hoping for good timing

The point is to be still doing what the Lord wants
Ongoing actions are the visible expression of the invisible heart

Not: only doing "ministry"

God still values the whole of human experience
Rest is still a good thing...He wasn't saying that we should stay up all the time, hoping He won't catch us sleeping
The master's return late at night is a metaphor for the times when we are tempted to give up waiting

It is about what we do and why we do it

The what and the why of our lives should be shaped by the reality of Jesus' return at any time

Constant expectancy

The Kingdom of Heaven is the real thing!

Not my career, or country, or family, or political views, or (dis)abilities, or social standing, or education, or...

Keep our lamps burning = active awareness that what we are experiencing now is only a shadow of the real thing

Especially important to keep our lamps burning the longer that time goes on ("and all the more...")

"I'll think about it later" = not "keeping" our lamps lit

When Jesus returns, the Kingdom of Heaven will become the most visible and real thing

And that could come at any time...

Godly living

Jesus' return makes our actions today matter more, not less

What is contrary to Jesus' teaching always brings harm

To us AND to others

When Jesus returns, we will answer for what we have done

"We make it our goal to please God... For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." 2 Corinthians 5:9-10

Christians will not be condemned

Christians will be rewarded based on what we have done

Sacrificial service

"Jesus said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.'"

Luke 9:23

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:26-28

We are called to follow the model of the One we worship

Energetic mission

Make disciples of all nations

Near and far

New believers

Maturing believers

Because when Jesus returns, the opportunity for people to turn to Him will be past

Conclusion

“Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods [that the world around you serves], and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods [that the world around you serves, or the gods of your childhood]. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” *Joshua 24:14*

We all have a literal deadline: death

One day, Jesus will come and bring this age to an end

And we don’t know when either of those will be

“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.”

Reflection Questions for later today or this week...

1. When you think about Jesus’ return, what comes to mind? How does that relate to what Jesus taught in this section and what we read elsewhere in the Bible?
2. What does it mean to “be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning”? How might we help each other do that?
3. Considering the image of someone knocking at the door, which part of your life is more like those who were mistreating others and using what had been entrusted to them for the good of others on their own happiness?
4. Which part of your life is most like the people who may not have been doing bad things, yet they were not getting ready for the master’s return nor doing what the master had asked?
5. How should the expectation of the second coming of Jesus Christ motivate us to proper living today?