

Be Ready

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Preacher: Dr. Daniel Heeringa

[0:00] Chapter 12, Luke, chapter 12. I've never been a fan of high-pressure sales. Somebody who does high-pressure sales will tell you, you know, you better buy it because if you don't, it'll be gone and you'll miss it.

And I always tell them, well, it wasn't the Lord's will for me to have it. That's the one reason why I hated the housing market looking at Pickens County because it was, you like it?

Pay it to window right now, you know. I mean, there was no thinking about it at all. I remember specifically when we had the joint service weekend with Griffin Ebenezer, we had a picnic on Saturday, and I was at that picnic, and I was trying to get somebody who was at that picnic checking on a piece of property for me.

At the same time, I had a deadline to decide whether to put a contract on another house by 3 o'clock. I had a real estate agent who was texting me saying, we're running out of time.

It was 1.30, and I was going to spend a fortune over here, or I was going to be able to get, it was, I said, look, I'm tapping out. I'm done, you know. I'm not doing this.

[1:13] I'm not going to bite with that much pressure. I just don't do well with high-pressure sales, and I don't like it at church either. I don't.

I realize it's my job to try to motivate folks and my job to try to encourage folks and even plead if necessary, but I'm not into high pressure. We need to give faithfully, but I don't like talking about it. Now, don't misunderstand me. I will talk about it, because God's given me that responsibility to do that, but it's just a discipling method. That's why I talk about it. It's just part of discipleship. If you're going to grow in the Lord, you're going to give to the Lord, you're going to trust the Lord.

When you realize that everything you have has been given to you by God, you realize it's a responsibility that you have to honor Him with what you have, and so you respond to that, and we trust God with that.

We need to be faithful to be in church, to be consistently walking with the Lord, but I'm not going to hound you about it, for one, because you're here. You know, so the people I need to talk to aren't here, so, you know, I'm not going to hound you about it.

[2:18] I'm going to encourage you, and I will remind you when needed. I don't like high-pressure prophetic speakers, those folks that have all the answers about what tomorrow holds.

I personally believe that God purposely left out a lot of the coming details, that He left it out, so that we can have faith and trust Him, and that we don't need to fill in the gaps that we don't know about, although a lot of people do it.

I don't like when they ask people to raise their hand while nobody's looking, or to simply repeat a magical prayer. If you'll just say these words, that's not true.

You've got to commit your life. However, I do believe that you need to give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus. I do believe that I have a responsibility to give you the opportunity to do that, and instruct you in how to do that, and I do believe that requires a personal surrendering prayer to the Lord, and I know that Christ is returning to receive His own.

Now, I've said a lot about my style, what I like, but I want to be clear about something this morning. Jesus, on several occasions, including our passage today, was clear, was urgent, and was warning.

[3:44] He will return, and we need to be ready. Judgment is coming.

God has charged me to preach the Word, and like it or not, Jesus clearly says, be ready.

Let me show you. It's in Luke chapter 12, beginning in verse 35, and it says this, stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning.

Be like men that are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.

Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. [4 : 45] If he comes in the second watch or in the third and finds them awake, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house be broken into.

You also must be ready for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect. Peter said, Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?

Matthew Henry was a commentator preacher and commentator that wrote in the early 1700s, and I love a comment he put about this passage. He said, thank God for Peter.

He's always asking the questions, you know, and he does here. And then Jesus goes on to clear up the matter. Who is he speaking to? And notice how he answers this.

It says, 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?

[5 : 51] Blessed is the servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 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, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him.

At an hour, he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. 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.

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 for him to whom they've entrusted much, they will demand the more. I do want to remind you, I didn't make up those words.

That's the words of Jesus. And first I want you to see the truths that we see here about the return of the Lord. What we know about the return of the Lord. I know it's a story about a master coming home after a wedding feast, but it is really speaking of how the Lord will return.

[7 : 00] The themes he gives here are recurring in scripture. And we need to be clear about three certainties, all of us. One is, the return of the Lord is certain. It will happen.

It's not up for debate. Jesus is coming again. I want you to notice what was, what happened as Christ ascended into heaven. Acts chapter 1 tells us about Christ ascending into heaven.

Notice what happens. It says, so when they had come together, they asked, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said to them, it's not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. And by the way, when you throw a rock into a body of water and watch it ripple out like that, when he says Jerusalem, he's talking about right here, Pickens, if you live in this area, that's our Jerusalem, okay?

And then Judea is that county. And then Samaria is, man, taking in them other counties. And the uttermost is the rest of them. We have a responsibility to share the gospel with those that God has put right here with us and not just to stop there, but to continue on.

[8 : 20] And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of sight. And while they were gazing into heaven, he went, as he went, behold, two men stood by him in white robes and he said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into heaven?

This Jesus who has taken you up into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. His return is certain.

The second certainty that we need to understand is this. No one on earth knows when he will return. Nobody.

Don't care how big their church is, how big their ministry is, what book they wrote. Nobody knows. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 2 through 8 says this.

Paul says to Timothy, For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. That whole talk of thief in the night means you don't know when they're coming. Unannounced.

[9 : 28] Okay? While people are saying there is peace and security, then suddenly destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night and of the darkness. So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and sober.

For those who sleep sleep at night and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober having put on the breastplate of faith and love and for the helmet of hope of salvation.

The thief comment speaks of the uncertainty of the time. It's not that we're trying to bar the Lord from returning like I would a thief coming in my home at night.

It's not that. We're not. We couldn't bar him from coming if we wanted to. We're not trying to do that. There's no need to try that. It is that we don't know when he's coming and so we are on the lookout.

[10 : 35] But we know as believers that he is coming. Therefore, we're not in the dark. We're aware and so we live our lives in a way that show we believe that the Lord could return at any time.

No one on this earth knows when he will return. The third certainty is this. He's talking to us. This is relevant to us.

Why? Because he ain't come back yet. Hello? It's relevant to us because we need to live in response to that. We need to be alert and make sure that we and ours are ready.

He mentions that some in their waiting for their master's return got careless. They did wrong. They lived in a riotous fashion. It's very graphic in the things that they did. How they treated other people. What they did at night. How they had a lack of self-control. They treated others badly. They lived in a bad way. Don't be like one of those.

[11 : 35] That's what he's saying. Don't be like those folks. Let's live each day as if it was our last. You know why? It might be. Let's live each day as if our last.

So how do we do that? How do you prepare yourself?

One, be faithful. The faithful will be rewarded. They'll be rewarded. There are two terms used in these passages.

One is for servant. And that speaks of all who come to Christ. When we are saved, we commit to serve the Lord as a bond servant.

As if we have been bought and paid for. Because spiritually, my friend, we have. Now that is not popular in today's time. People don't want to hear that. But it is very timely to the first century.

[12 : 33] And it is also true for us. The other term he uses here is basically a house manager. That's what verse 42 talks about. And that speaks of somebody who's not just a servant, yet they work under the owner.

But they've given, they've been given the responsibility. And because of the responsibility they've been given, much more is expected of them. So much is given, much is required.

And there are wolves in sheep's clothing that may fool a lot of people, but they will never fool God. The Pharisees loved their religion. They loved it.

And they loved to hold it over people. As if what they had nobody else could have. And they rejected Christ as Savior because they didn't want him to change their program. They liked their program.

And so they didn't want him to change it. There are those today that as Paul warned Timothy, folks that have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof.

[13 : 38] And if that be the case, they may look affiliated, but in reality they are without Christ. And without Christ, you'll have hell to pay.

Period. It's true. That's who he speaks of when he says cutting them in half or cutting them out. God sees what wolves are up to and the unfaithful that he puts them with are those who have never entrusted their lives to Christ.

God has given each person a gift to invest and to use for his glory. And when you waste that life, that investment, by never giving it back to God, you lose that opportunity for all of eternity.

Now, boy, preacher, that's unpleasant on Sunday morning. I'm in my soul. It's not fun to talk about. I don't say it with a grin on my face.

I don't say it with zeal in my bones. But I have to say it because Jesus said it so much. He didn't just say it here. He said it again and again. There will come a day when eternal punishment will come to all those who have not surrendered their lives to Christ.

[14 : 51] And those who hear the gospel again and again and never respond, it says here, will face greater punishment or degrees of separation from the Father than those who have never heard the gospel.

Now, I realize that's unsettling, but Christ said it himself. I don't like it. I don't quite understand it. But God is not conditioned to what I like. God's not conditioned to my understanding.

We have to be conditioned to his word. Now, I want you to get this, church, not just about this topic, but about all topics. Okay? I don't really understand what God says about that.

It ain't our job to ascertain why it's wrong or why it's right. It's our job to follow it. The rest of the world, those outside of Christ, will tell us we're ludicrous, we're narrow-minded, we're backwards, we're yesterday, or what?

No. No, we're just people of the word of God. And that cannot change. Amen? That cannot change. The world's gonna change.

[16 : 02] It's gonna continue to spiral out of control. And when it does, we just stick to the word of God. Charles Spurgeon was approached one time about what happens to the heathen that we don't preach to.

And he replied, my great concern is, are we saved if we don't preach the gospel to him? Because the evidence of our walk with God is more than a Sunday morning attendance.

The evidence of our relationship with God is how we live out that faith daily. our salvation is not based upon that. That's based upon our salvation. Hell is certain.

And there are certainly degrees of hell. And I'm not talking about the Fahrenheit. but all of it and everyone in it is separated from God forever.

If you want to understand the hell of hell, that's the hell of hell that you're separated from God forever. Don't try to change that. If you believe something else, you believe a lie. It's not true.

[17 : 12] If you share something else, you share a lie. It's not true. What a shame that is. Be faithful in how you live. Be faithful in how you share. Be faithful.

The other thing we do in response to this is we be ready. Be ready because we don't know when he's coming. And don't try to figure it out because you don't know. Neither does the guy selling that book.

I mean, listen, the first century knew that he was coming back in their lifetime. They knew it. They knew it. They were sure of it. And that's why Paul tells them, you're stealing my punchline, dude. That's why Paul tells them in 1 Thessalonians 4.13, not to worry about those who died and will miss his return. A lot of confusion. Edgar Wisnett was a former NASA engineer when he wrote this little booklet called 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Happened in 1988.

This guy sold nearly 5 million copies of this book. If you can find it, you can get it today pretty cheap.

[18 : 23] It ain't quite as relevant as it was in 1987. He followed it up with a book called The Final Shout, Rapture Report, 1989. That's because he sold 5 million copies the year before.

His next work, listen to how it changes. His next work was this, 23 Reasons Why Pre-Tribulation Rapture Looks Like It Will Occur on Rosh Hashanah, 1993. No certainty anymore, it just kind of looks like it.

You know, and the next year's book was not near as specific and it was the last book. Every time there's a Middle East war, people think it's Armageddon. You know what Jesus says about it?

In Matthew 24, 6 through 8, he says, and you will hear of wars and rumors of wars, see that you're not alarmed, for this must take place, but in the end, but the end is not yet.

For nation will rise up against nation and kingdom against kingdom and there'll be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. Please tell me when there hadn't been wars in the Middle East.

[19 : 30] At midweek service this week, I spent time talking about generation after generation, century after century, how the Jews have been attacked over and over and over again.

Jerusalem's been at the middle of it over and over and over again. You can't tell me when there's not been wars in the Middle East and every time that there is one, somebody thinks it's the end.

Every time there's a government mandate, people think it's the mark of the beast.

I remember particularly when Bilo came out with the Bilo bonus card and on the back of the Bilo bonus card, although it was personalized for each one of us to get values like none other, there were 10 digits on the back of it.

Somebody, and when I researched this this weekend, I found out somebody in Pickens County came up with this. So, I'm about afraid to say it because I might offend somebody, but anyway. But there were 10 digits on the back of that card and they took the first six digits. Why did they pick six? You know why? Because it worked. That's why. They picked the first six digits of that card, which think about it, they're practically all the same number because if you got a 10 digit number, you know, you got four digits.

[20 : 54] You know, you got to get to 9,999 before you even change one of those digits. So, it's going to be a very similar digit, you know. If you take the square root of the first six numbers of the 10 number on the Bilo bonus card, it is 666 point something.

In order for you to get a deal on Doritos, you got to sell your soul to the devil. You got to sell your soul to the devil. It was a PR nightmare.

I went back and looked and it was right, it was just about the time I first arrived in Pickens when all that went down and they were saying, man, do I take the deal or not, preacher?

I mean, what'd I do, you know? I said, dude, I'm going for it now. I'm telling you, it's two for five. You know, I got to, but anyway. The mark of the B is not a grocery store, not a grocery card.

It's not. There is no, even in the Hebrew or the Greek, there's no talk of Bilo in the scripture. It's not there, you know? It's also not a vaccination.

[22 : 03] Sorry. It's not a computer chip either. When the COVID vaccine first came out, I remember people talking and it was being pushed aggressively. I mean, if you love your country, if you love your money, if you love anybody, you got to get the shot.

You know, I got the shot. I got the shot. By the National Guard, a qualified 19-year-old that had just went through boot camp. And we went to a horse park in Octavio County where it started with Mississippi and drove this line like a cow to the slaughter.

Just follow the tail in front of us and raised up our sleeve, still in the driver's seat. Sent us through. I mean, it would have made a good end time movie. You know, it would have, but man, I got my card. You know, I'm bonafide. You know, but I remember when that first happened, there were rumors that Bill Gates' computer chip was going to be in that shot.

And he's going to monitor us and he knows exactly where we are. He already knows exactly where we are. Why? Because we got this in our pocket. They know where we are. Don't you worry about that. It was like something out of a gestopian novel or something.

[23 : 12] Christian end time enthusiast started paralleling it with the mark of the beast. Let me be clear. The Lord's not waiting on a grocery card.

Okay? The Lord's not waiting on a shot. He's not waiting on a chip. He's waiting on the Father to say, go get them.

Be ready. Be ready because we don't know when. So be ready. Be faithful. Be ready. Be rewarded. It's a fun part. Jesus liked to call himself more than anything else. He liked to call himself the Son of Man because a son was thought to be a servant to his father until his father passed. Therefore, he would gain the inheritance because he had taken care of his father, taken care of the farm, taken care of the estate, whatever needed to be done because he took care of what he was doing. He was supposed to take care of. He was a servant to his daddy. And so Jesus used Son of Man because Jesus considered himself a servant of humanity. And that's what he liked to call himself more than anything else.

[24 : 23] And he was because he gave his life for us. But even before he gave his life, he showed what he meant by that when he washed the disciples' feet. That was the job of the lowest servant of the house.

That was like changing somebody who was sick and unable.

That was, in their mind, that was a parallel because they walked where they went. They had nasty feet. It was the job of the lowest servant of the house.

But the Lord knelt down and served in that way. And that is the picture that we get when he mentions here that you'll recline at the table in verse 37 when he talks about that.

He is saying, have a seat. Pull up a chair. Share a meal. And if you think sharing a meal with somebody is a special way to spend time with folks you love, that is biblical.

[25 : 28] You get that from the Bible. Heaven is described as a wedding feast. The joys of heaven are who we sit at the table of the Lord with and who we'll worship with and who we'll worship and the reward that we'll receive.

Understanding that. Let's be faithful. The days are short. They're short, folks. They say, well, how long is that? I don't know. And anybody that tells you they do is a liar. What's the world coming to? I'll tell you what the world's coming to. It's coming to Jesus. So be ready. We ought to live our lives like Jesus died yesterday, rose this morning and is coming back tomorrow because he just might be.

Be ready. With every head bowed and every eye closed. If you're here this morning and you have never surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ and ask him to come into your life and change you, today's the day of salvation.

[26 : 59] It's your opportunity. I've tried very plainly and very nicely to put out before you what Jesus says about the need of your life to commit to him.

And if you feel him speaking to your heart and life about giving your heart and life to God, you didn't come up with that. You didn't wake up one day and realize you needed God. He initiated that. He's stirring your heart.

And so you listen. You obey. You do what God tells you. We'll guide you in that process. I told you we're not manipulative. I'm going to work you over.

I ask anything of you that you don't want. We just want to help you make a right decision about the Lord Jesus Christ. So I encourage you to come. We're going to stand and we're going to sing and when we stand and sing in just a few moments, it's your time to come to be obedient and follow the Lord.

Maybe you're here this morning and you have done that but you've never acknowledged that publicly. It was a private decision that you made. You've never acknowledged that publicly. Last week we began our service with people being baptized. I know that's already stirred the hearts of other people.

[28 : 07] I've shared with them this week because they realize the need in their own lives to be baptized and be made right. First step of obedience after you give your heart and life to the Lord is to be baptized as a believer.

And if you've never done that, there's a hindrance in your life so I encourage you to be obedient and follow the Lord. If you've been baptized as a believer, you don't need to do it again. If you hadn't, you need to. Maybe God's drawing you to be a part of this church.

You want to join us in the journey. Do what we need to do to follow the Lord in the days ahead. I encourage you to be obedient to that. Just follow the Lord. We'll guide you in that process.

Welcome you in and show you what that means. Maybe God's stirring your heart about a personal matter in your life you need to get right. Maybe it's a burden that you have for somebody else that needs the Lord. I don't know what God's laid on your heart but I know that now's the time.

Let's just pause before we go out to the wild world. Let's just pause. Take time to seek the Lord in these matters. Bring our petitions before Him. Maybe bring them to this altar and lay them down at His feet.

[29 : 10] Rest them with Him. Maybe you want me to pray with you. I don't know what you want. But you just be obedient and follow whatever God tells you to do. Lord Jesus, I love you and I thank you for the love that you have for us. And I ask today that you'll help us to simply be obedient.

Simply follow your will and your way and everything that you tell us to do in Jesus' precious name. Amen.