**Be Ready for Jesus’ coming!**

May 31, 2015

Luke 12:35-59

Key Verse: 12:37 “It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.”

Today's passage talks about Jesus’ second coming and our attitude of waiting for his return. I have a question! Is Jesus’ second coming good news or bad news? Some people use the word “the end of the world” to refer to Jesus' return and it sounds negative. Personally, it would be better to call it “the new beginning” to avoid such negative image. The event of Jesus' second coming is the greatest news for the world because Jesus will start a new world where our good shepherd is our Lord and King. Human history is filled with grief, evil, frustration and sufferings. We groan due to our sinful natures and weaknesses. Recently, we saw that many people in Nepal lost their houses and beloved people. Last year, in Korea about three hundreds of young students drowned at sea. ISIS is killing many people and doing horrible things under the name of their god. When Jesus comes, he will destroy all evil, Satan and Death. He will judge everyone according to what he or she did. He will announce that those who put their faith in Him are righteous. He will bring down a new heaven and a new earth to us. We will be invited to the wedding banquet for Jesus and his Church. We will see Jesus, our Lord and Shepherd face to face. We will enjoy his glory and reign forever! We should eagerly wait for Jesus' coming. Let's learn what kind of attitude we should have in waiting for Jesus! We will learn about Jesus' reward which will be given to faithful friends of Jesus!

**I. Be ready and watchful (35-40)**

In verses 35-40 Jesus uses a metaphor to explain what it means to be ready for his coming. Look at verses 35-36. **“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks, they can immediately open the door for him.”** A master went to a wedding banquet. A wedding banquet lasts for many days. I heard that a wedding banquet in Pakistan lasts for even one month. The point is that the master would come in a few days for sure but his servants do not know exactly when he will come. Jesus ascended to heaven two thousand years ago but he did not come yet. This parable teaches us that we should wait for Jesus believing that His second coming is very imminent. This makes us spiritually awaken and alert. Then we can welcome Jesus when he comes on clouds instead of saying “Oh, my goodness!”

 Jesus rewards ready servants with his best blessing. Look at verse 37. **“It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.”** Jesus describes their reward primarily in terms of relationship with him. As they sit at the table table, the King of kings waits on them. Jesus treats us as his best friends. In this way, Jesus honors his ready servants. Jesus appreciates them, provides for them, and shares his reign with them. His love and recognition become the sweet melody of their souls and they rejoice throughout eternity in his presence. Do you believe this? We are now in the season of graduations. Many are receiving honors that will be treasured for years. How much more will Jesus’ appreciation be precious to us throughout eternity! This is how Jesus rewards his ready servants. Jesus is our great reward and He is everything to us!

Jesus’ coming again is a serious matter. It should be of paramount importance to every man, woman and child on the earth. So Jesus warned his disciples repeatedly. Look at verse 40: **“You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect him.”** Jesus warns us to be ready, because his coming will be unexpected. This means that we must always be ready. I thought about the difference between “get ready” and “be ready”. I found a good example to understand the difference. Every morning, Rebecca yells at Ezra. “Get ready for school! How many times I told you to change clothes and have breakfast!” Once in a while Ezra changes clothes and have breakfast before Rebecca says anything. Rebecca would be very happy and say, “Oh, Ezra! You are ready for school!” People want to get ready for welcoming Jesus at the last moment. This reveals that actually they don't want to be ready. Many have speculated about the time of Jesus’ coming. They think that if they know precisely when he is coming, they can take life easy until the last moment, then repent and welcome him. For example, Emperor Constantine thought that baptism would cleanse all of his sins, and after that he would have to stop sinning and live a holy life. So he postponed baptism until just before he died. This is man’s sinful tendency. So our Father God, in his wisdom, did not tell us the time of Jesus’ coming again.

Look at verse 40 again. **“You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”** Being ready is not a matter of knowing times and dates; it comes from devotion and loyalty to Christ in an ongoing relationship. Being ready reveals our love for Jesus and deep desire to meet him and enter eternity with him. **How, then, can we be ready?**

**We must clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ.** Jesus said, **“Be dressed ready for service....”** The devil entices people to take it easy and indulge their flesh. In this way he puts people into spiritual slumber. This makes Jesus’ servants ineffective and useless. How can we overcome this temptation? Romans 13:14 says, **“...clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”** Just as we put on clean clothes daily, we should clothe ourselves with Christ daily. For this, we should pray sincerely and read the Bible. We should practice the love of Jesus in our daily life. We will see more clearly that Jesus is not in heaven but with us always. We should meet Jesus as our intimate Lord and friend. If we meet Jesus as a thief when he comes again, it would be the greatest disaster to us.

When I was in Korea last week, I saw my friends and coworkers praying sincerely with tears and meditating Daily Bread every early morning. I think they are ready for Jesus Christ. We are saved by Grace alone through Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection. Now, we should fix our eyes on Jesus while living on the earth, hoping to receive the crown of life from Jesus. I pray that everyone here may start getting ready for welcoming Jesus through personal spiritual struggle. Let's read 2 Tim 4:7,8 together. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

**II. Be faithful and wise managers (41-48)**

As Peter listened to Jesus’ words, he did not understand what Jesus was talking about. He had not accepted the teaching that Jesus would die and rise again, let alone that he would ascend into heaven and then come back to earth one day. He could not understand why Jesus was saying, “Be ready.” He thought he was already ready. So he asked, **“Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?”** Jesus did not answer directly. Instead, Jesus taught that when he comes again there will be two kinds of servants. He also taught about the reward or punishment of each. We can learn in this part how to carry out our assigned mission as we wait for Jesus to come.

The first servant is the faithful and wise manager. Look at verse 42. **“The Lord answered, ‘Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?’”** A faithful person is one who is trustworthy. He is loyal to his master at any cost. He carries out his assigned tasks without fail, no matter what difficulty he may confront. This servant is also wise. He sees things from the master’s point of view. He knows how to work effectively and to make the most of every opportunity. The master chooses this person to be in charge of food distribution for his household. The manager gives a proper amount of food to the servants at the right time; he does not make them fat and lazy, nor does he make them malnourished. He makes them healthy and strong. They are happy to do their best for their master. Everything goes smoothly and the master’s estate prospers. When he returns and sees this, he joyfully promotes his manager to be in charge of all his possessions (43).

The second servant is different. He says to himself, **“My master is taking a long time in coming.”** He begins to live as though the master will never return. Instead of working hard to feed the other servants, he takes life easy and abuses his authority. He demands others to work hard while he eats and drinks to excess, even getting drunk. When a servant becomes weak or sick or complains, he beats them mercilessly--men and women alike. In the course of indulging himself, he totally forgets that his master will return. Nevertheless, his master does return. Then he finds the wounded servants and his estate in chaos. What will he do? Jesus says, **“He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers”** (46b). This is the awful destiny of wicked and unfaithful servants.

We must know that Jesus rewards the faithful and wise servant, but he punishes the unfaithful and wicked servant. Jesus’ clear principle is stated in verse 48b: **“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”** To the degree that Jesus entrusts his servants with privilege, he holds them accountable to serve their services faithfully. It may not be an option to be a faithful and wise manager for God's flock if you know God's grace and the love of Jesus. Actually, I do not like delivering a message because it gives me a pain like my bones are melting. It is too hard to understand and digest God's words properly. Also I know that there is a great gap between messages I delivered and my life. As for me, preparing this message by denying myself is giving food to God's flock at the proper time. Everyone is in a different situation but we are the same in the sense that we are called to be a faithful and wise servant. We all have been entrusted with something. And we are accountable to Jesus to show how faithfully and wisely we did our jobs. Some have been entrusted with one Bible student. They must do their best to prepare Bible study, pray for that person, and give them the right spiritual food at the proper time. Some have been entrusted with God-given families. Husbands and wives are responsible to love and respect each other, and to make an atmosphere where Jesus gladly dwells, so their home will be godly and happy. They must raise their children in the knowledge of God through sound discipline and proper spiritual education. As a community we have a prayer topic to make University of Toronto a university of priests and a holy campus. We must pray for this and work for this sacrificially. Ultimately, this is a personal matter. God knows our hearts. He rewards the faithful servant.

**III. Judge what is right and reconcile with God now (54-59)**

At last, Jesus turned his attention to the crowd. They followed the leadership of the religious leaders without discernment. Even though there were many signs that Jesus is the Christ, many were pretending ignorance to avoid making a decision. Jesus rebuked them for being able to interpret the signs of the weather, but not the signs of the times. Jesus challenged them, and he challenges each one of us, to judge for ourselves what is right. He wants us to examine the Scriptures, think for ourselves and accept him as our Savior and Lord. Each person will be responsible for their own decision. We are like people on the verge of judgment and imprisonment. It is time to plead for mercy and for a settlement. It is time to accept Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as our Savior. Otherwise, we will pay the full consequence for our sins. The gospel message is a matter of life and death; it demands a response and time is short. When we die, or when Jesus comes again, our opportunity to accept him will pass. Then it will be too late to ask God for mercy. So we must ask now.

Today Jesus has taught us to be ready for His Return. We should build up a solid relationship with Jesus day by day from now on. Then we can overcome the poisonous influence of hedonism and materialism, clothe ourselves with Christ, and have living hope for Jesus' Return. Jesus also urges us to be faithful to our mission, knowing that he rewards and punishes. When we are ready and faithful, we will be rewarded. I pray that each of us may be ready, be faithful and be rewarded.