

The Parables of Jesus

- The Faithful, Watchful Servants

(Luke 12:35-38)

This parable was given to Jesus' disciples at the same setting as the parable of "The Rich Man Building Bigger Barns." They were in the region of Galilee. Jesus was teaching and giving warnings to His disciples and the multitude to beware of the hypocrisy and "leaven of the

Pharisees." Jesus was expressing that the "leaven" and hypocrisy of the Pharisees had to do with the wrong attitude of heart towards God and His people. Jesus was expressing that they had abused and misused their God given position for their self-centered, self-righteous, greedy and covetous ways.

Jesus went on to give the parable of the "Rich Man Building Bigger Barns" as a teaching tool to expose an incorrect attitude of the heart. The point he was making was that it was not about using the kingdom of God for one's own benefits but rather that it should be about building God's Kingdom and building up of His people.

Jesus then taught in Luke 12:22-34, what the correct attitude of heart that His disciples should have and who therefore would be considered "rich toward God."

"... Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." - Luke

Jesus continues this same thought with this next parable of the "Faithful, Watchful Servants."

Luke 12:35-38 - "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

So what was Jesus teaching His disciples through this parable in the context of this setting that began with His warning to beware of the "leaven of the Pharisees" back in Luke 12:1? Let's see... But first let us take a brief look at the "characters" of this parable

- The "servants" - These were basically men who were most likely considered slaves of their master, not just servants. Either way, it was their job to be looking out and to be ready for, their master's return. It did not matter what time their master returned. It was their responsibility to have the household prepared, swept, cleaned and ready for whenever He returned.

These servants were entrusted to watch over the Master's house, ensuring that everything was in order, even if it meant sleepless nights. Their task was not so much to keep looking out the window for their master but rather it was to make sure that the house would be in order and

that everything was in its rightful place for when their master finally did return. It did not matter when or what time their master would return. Their task was to be ready at all times and that the house that they were entrusted with would be in order at all times.

They were to have their, "*...loins be girded about, and your lights burning.*" Having their "loins girded" meant that these servants were to always be "on the job" at all times - not just when they knew or saw their master coming. In other words their attitude was that of doing the best job possible because they were faithful to the master not just when their master was there but even when he wasn't.

Their "lights burning" inferred that there would always be a light on to be a "beacon" that will guide the master home but most importantly it would be a signal that tells their master, "welcome home." This is where we get the expression, "We'll keep the light on for you." It is a signal of welcome to journeying people.

Notice, that the master of the house needed these servants to "open the door" for him (the master knocked) to come into his own home. This meant that the master placed his full trust in them to not only take care of his household but also to "let him back in" when he returned. Having the keys meant that they were also trusted to not let anyone else in that did not belong in the house. In other words they were to be "keepers of the master's house."

- Their "master" - This was a man who had great authority. He also had a good amount of wealth. He owned his home and he had slaves/servants that served him. This "master" was representative of Jesus as He will leave this earth upon His resurrection and ascension and then return at the appointed time to the Household that the Father has given Him.

This "master" of the house in our parable was attending a wedding. We must resist the temptation to make more of this "wedding" than what it really is in this parable. Jesus was not referring to the "Marriage Feast of the Bridegroom (Jesus) and His bride (the Church)." The use of the event of a wedding was more about the uncertainty of when the master would return to his home. It was customary for Jewish weddings to last a week or more. That is why the servants needed to be ready at all times for their master's return. They did not know when the wedding banquet would end or when their master would be leaving the banquet to return home.

Now let's take a brief look at the events that took place in this parable. We see that the servants were ready for their master's return home. They were dressed (their loins were girded which represents a readiness to serve) and their lamps were lit so that no matter what time of day or night their master would come they were ready to let him in. Another thing this shows us is that the house itself was in order. Everything was taken care of. When the master did return, he "knocked," and they welcomed him by "immediately opening the door" to let him in. For both the "master" and the servants, it was a joyful "homecoming."

We then hear Jesus refer to those servants who were ready and watching for their master's return as being "blessed." The word "blessed" used here means "to be happy, joyful and prosperous to the point of being envied by others." They were servants, yet they were considered "blessed." Why?

It was because of the attitude of their heart. They were faithful and loyal and ready for their master's return. They obviously loved their master just as much as they were faithful to him. This attitude of heart by these servants was appreciated so much by their master that he ended up "girding himself" and served the slaves/servants. They were able to sit at the master's own table as he fed, served and ministered to them.

We also see that Jesus then ends the parable with another important thought that His disciples were to always be aware of and keep in mind. He tells His listeners that if the master “tarries” and if he “...*come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.*” Nighttime in the scriptures is divided into four three-hour periods called “watches.” They are as follows: “even,” “midnight,” “cockcrowing,” and “morning.” According to our way of reckoning time, “even,” or the evening watch (first watch), is from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.; the midnight watch (second watch) is from 9 p.m. to midnight; “cockcrowing” (third watch) is from 12 midnight to 3 a.m., and morning watch (fourth watch) is from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m.

In Mark 13:35, Jesus, as He was telling His disciples about the end time and His return, tells them, “*Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning...*” He goes on to say in Mark 13:36, as well as in other scriptures, “*Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.*” We see in these scriptures the same theme concerning what His disciples need to be alert of as found in our parable.

The main thought Jesus was making them aware of was that they were to always be ready for our Master’s return. The second and third watch would be the usual time of deep sleep. Jesus was telling His disciples as well as us today, that even in these “watches” when it would seem as if nothing would be happening and it would be at the time when they would be the most weary, they still must be ready for their Master’s return. If they do... and notice Jesus does use the word “if,” those servants shall be blessed, as well. Anytime Jesus returns, whether it is in the day or in the earliest hours of the night, the true servant of the Lord will always be girded up and ready to welcome their Master – Jesus. The key word for every servant of Jesus, for every disciple, for every believer is the word “watch!!!” Jesus, throughout His ministry always exhorted His disciples to, “Watch; Pray; and be Ready!!!”

So what was Jesus teaching His disciples through this parable? The “servants” in this parable, were representative of what the correct attitude of heart should be of the true servants of God whom He entrusts to keep and tend to His “household” – His people. This should have been the attitude of heart of the religious leaders such as the Pharisees, Scribes, etc (as servants) of God whom He entrusted His “household” (the Jewish people). They were to watch over the Jewish people and be prepared and to prepare His people for their Master, the Messiah (Jesus) whenever He would come. It was the religious leaders that should have manifested the character expressed by the servants in this parable. Unfortunately, they were not doing what they were entrusted to do.

Jesus was teaching His disciples that the attitude of heart which was exhibited by the servants in this parable is the **correct** attitude of heart of a true servant of God. The servants that God delights in are those whose hearts are prepared and ready for their “Master’s” return at any time - day or night. Unfortunately, those who were originally entrusted to keep watch over God’s household, His people, were not being faithful and loyal to the task given to them. This also revealed a lack of faithfulness, loyalty and love towards their God. Because of this, even though it is not said here, these unfaithful servants (the Pharisees, Scribes and other religious leaders) would soon be replaced.

Jesus, in this setting in which He began with the declaration to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,” was now teaching His disciples to not be as the Pharisees and the other religious leaders who became selfish, self centered and self-righteous. They were failing in their appointed task which was to care for and keep the Master’s “household” of faith – the Jewish people. Jesus was beginning to teach His disciples what the correct attitude of heart should be for the leadership that God would now entrust His people to. The leadership responsibility would soon be transferred to them and those to follow until Jesus returns.

Even though they didn't quite get the reference at this time concerning Jesus' departure from them and His future return, He still wanted to impart this leadership attitude. Even though they didn't quite realize that they would be the future leaders of God's household of faith, Jesus still wanted to "plant" this seed of a good, caring leadership mentality. He was teaching them that He believed that their hearts would become hearts that were ready and open for Him, even if they did not realize it at the time.

He was teaching them that it was that kind of an attitude of heart that Jesus, as the "Master of the Household of Faith," and His Father delights in. They delight in the kind of heart that when the Son of God returns He will find them faithfully performing their tasks as His servants keeping the "Household of faith" in order.

Remember, in our parable that the "Master" (Jesus) delighted in that attitude of heart so much that when He comes and finds them so doing, no matter at what hour or watch, He, Himself, will tell those faithful servants to sit and "dine" at His banqueting table. He will "serve" or "bless" them with all that He has and with all His great abundance. In the Song of Solomon 2:4 we read - *"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."* It is because of His great love for us that He delights in pouring out His blessings upon us.

Jesus was telling His disciples, as this parable expressed, that a true servant of God must have the attitude of heart that is always ready to serve their God, as well as His "Household," His people, with faithfulness, loyalty and true reverence. Not because the servant must do this, but rather simply because the servant loves their God and the desire of their heart is to simply "bless the heart of their King."

Unfortunately for the leadership of that day, their lifestyle and actions had revealed quite the opposite. In telling His disciples this, in the context of warning them to beware of the "leaven of the Pharisees," Jesus was obviously saying that the Pharisees were found **not** to have this attitude of heart of being faithful or loyal towards God or His people.

This is telling every believer, anyone who calls themselves a disciple of Jesus that what was expressed in this parable concerning what the attitude of heart of the servants in this parable towards their master should and must be the attitude of heart for us today towards our returning Master – Jesus. We must always be ready for our Master's return. We must always be "about our Father's business" by caring for all who are within His "Household of faith."

This is true especially for all those whom God has entrusted in leadership within His "Household of faith" – the Body of Christ. They must be continually caring for all who are within the Household of faith – not just for those in their congregations. They must be continually preparing those entrusted to them for the soon return of their Master – Jesus. They must continually be always watching and pointing those who they have been entrusted with to do the same. It must be all about the return of our Master.

However, we must not be in error thinking that this concept is only for those in leadership. This should be the attitude of heart for **ALL** believers!!! We must all be, as portrayed within this parable, "faithful, watchful, servants." Truly, blessed **ARE** those faithful and watchful servants whom He will find **so doing** upon His return – in whichever "watch," the "appointed time," our Master's Father chooses for Him to return.