

There was a man in the fifth century who was called by God to be a liberator. He was well suited to bring a message of freedom because he himself spent the majority of his teenage years as a slave. The man I'm referring to is St. Patrick. Patrick is known as the Apostle of Ireland. He and his disciples preached the gospel, saw innumerable conversions, and started churches all over Ireland. He is one of the greatest missionaries the church has ever known. If we were to ask how he could be used so greatly, one of the most sufficient answers we should consider would be his vision of God and the sufficiency of Christ for all of life. Perhaps you have heard of his "**Breastplate Prayer**," called that for its confidence in the protection of God: "**I arise today, Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity, Through belief in the Threeness, Through confession of the Oneness of the Creator of creation. Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.**" Christ. Christ was his eternal salvation and Christ was his daily salvation. St. Patrick was a man with a vision to be consumed by Christ. The words of this prayer demonstrate a desire for Jesus to be the all-pervasive reality of his life.

What would happen if Christians lived lives that matched the most basic confession of our faith: "Jesus is Lord." Christ would dominate our thoughts. Christ would give us unbelievable confidence for each day. Christ would be so real to us that we would desire to honor him, love him, and long for him to return. It's this last thought that I want us to primarily consider this morning. It is one thing to say, "I follow Christ," but all who follow him should be longing for his return and ready for his return. Jesus told us he would come again and usher in his kingdom. Are you...

"Ready for His Return" **Luke 12:35-59**

Luke 12 is going to teach us that...

The Point: Jesus calls his followers to be ready for his return.

Context: Don't worry about the future, but have a future orientation as to how you view life and how God has called you to live.

I. Be ready for Christ's return through faithful and wise living (35-48).

I want to give you

Readiness involves vigilance and watchfulness. (35-40)

- In verses 35-40, Jesus addresses both how we watch and when we watch. First, he says...

We should watch with great vigilance (how we watch)

- "Stay dressed for action." You may have a footnote in your Bible that says the Greek text says the literal translation is to "Let your loins stay girded." What?! The typical attire for people in Palestine was long, flowing robes that were not necessarily built for swift action. They would have to pull up the bottom of their robe in order to move quickly. Everyone loves to lounge around in their PJ's, but Jesus is telling us to wear our work clothes, spiritually speaking, at all times. We should be dressed for mobility and action. No one runs the Boston Marathon in a snowsuit!
- Jesus then gives another metaphor by saying, "and keep your lamps burning," highlighting the need to be able to move in the dark.
- And then he uses a third picture in v. 37: "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes." Awake!! Eyes wide open... Looking, expecting... waiting... All three of these images communicate expectant watchfulness.
- The problem is that so often we are not very vigilant, not super watchful. In fact, many times we would have to confess that our walk with God is not very vibrant and watchful, but dull and sleepy.
- Excursus on Sleepy Christianity: So often times our pursuit of God and our spiritual vitality becomes lethargic. Our Christianity looks so sleepy. Sleepy Christians produce sleepy lives and sleepy results for God. We pray sleepy prayers. We slack in our moral vigor and sleepwalk through opportunities to display and declare to others the difference Christ makes in our lives.
- Are you in a spiritual sleepwalk? Jesus did not rise from the dead so that we could sleepwalk through the Christian life. He died and rose so that we might be alive in him and experience all of the life and fullness of God, and there is nothing tired about the power of God at work in us! We have been raised with him.

Trans: Jesus says we should watch with great vigilance, and . . .

We should be ready at all times. (when we watch)

- One of the key points Jesus is making is to be ready at all times. Whether Jesus is using Roman time (with the second & third watches being between 9pm & 3am) or Jewish time (with the second & third watches falling between 10pm-6am), he is teaching his disciples to be in perpetual "go mode." 5:45, watching, 2am waiting, 6:15am ready.
- Verse 39 reinforces this... Thief analogy.. (Picture: Louisville slugger ready to clock somebody like Big Papi)
- Jesus is calling for constant commitment. Does that mean we won't stumble? No... Does that mean God's forgiveness and grace aren't ready for us to restore us when our lamps are low and we get a little drowsy? No. God is more gracious and forgiving than we can imagine.
- We need to be ready at all times because we do not know when he will return. Let me take that a step further... We can't know! All this nonsense, Noah knew, we can know from false prophet Harold Camping is plainly refuted in verse 40. We do not know when he will return!
- If someone asks you a question about the end of the world, you tell them what Jesus says in Mt. 24:36: "**But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.**"

- Why would we watch like this? Because it is better when the Master is in the house? It's better to be with him. So we watch and wait with great expectancy!
- There are some things in life we can't wait for: the arrival of a new baby, a visit from a friend, a new job, the wedding day.
- We should anticipate the return of Christ more than any of those events. I am troubled that we don't long for and consciously consider the return of Christ enough. How many of us considered the return of Christ just once this week? I often question why we don't long for Christ's return more...
- It may be that we are so focused on the here & now. There is no doubt that we need to focus on the here and now but it is the "there & then" that should drive what we're about in the here and now.
- It may be that we think Christ's return is not immanent. In other words, that he could come back at any time, but I for one, believe that he could come back the next time you blink your eyes. There are plenty of Scriptures that indicate Christ could return suddenly and soon: Mt. 24, 1 Cor. 16:22, Phil 3:20, 1 Thess 5:2,
- Related to that, like the fool in this passage, we think we have all the time in the world. No need to be urgent, relax, chill out, everything will be just fine, because we can live for God tomorrow, or next month, or a few years from now! As Jesus told the rich man, "This night your life will be demanded from you."
- But here's an encouragement for us: **"Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed."** (Psalm 34:5)
- We should always be looking to Christ.

Readiness reflects wise and faithful management/wisdom & faithfulness (41-42)

- Jon talked about stewarding/managing our money last week. Jesus is talking about managing our lives in this parable.
- Verse 42: "to give them their portion of food at the proper time."
- Manage the life God has given you well. This is a gift entrusted to you... Salvation is a gift, and the life God gives is a gift. What kind of steward will you be with the life God has entrusted to you?
- How we serve matters to God. He gives each of us countless opportunities in the course of the day, and most certainly over the course of our lives to glorify him and serve him. He has prepared works for us to walk in.
- Faithfulness pleases God. **William Carey** wrote one of my favorite five word prayers: **"Only let us be faithful."**
- Pic: We've all seen the horrific war stories of the soldier who is off to war who comes home to the unfaithful wife.
- Our work *will be* evaluated. Period. One of the sad aspects of the church's engagement of the topic of Christ's return is that we typically emphasize what is secondary and peripheral (like the timing of his return, with charts and speculation, and a desire to discover all of the minute details) and we miss what is primary and central (namely that Christ is returning and it matters how we live until he comes!
- There is no getting around it. Our work. What we do with the life God gives us. How we spend our time. How we invest in those around us. The words we say. The thoughts we let linger. We see the consequences of our actions bring distinct results. First.. .

Rebellion and neglect bring serious consequences... (45-48)

- In verse 45 we have a servant who is not simply irresponsible, but willfully rejects his master, and on top of that, engages in radical self-indulgence.
 - Says to himself./ Thinks... Preach to ourselves... Truth or lies
 - Causes him to not only fail to fulfill his responsibilities, but blatantly live contrary to the master's expectations. He had no regard for his master, so it's little wonder that he began to treat others harshly. Our love for God is always reflected in how we love others. There is a proportionate relationship. If you are really loving God, it is going to be hard for you not to love others. It will just happen naturally. Conversely, if you find it hard to love those around you, you may want to backtrack and measure your love for God (maybe reword).
 - To make matters worse, he not only mistreats others, but his self-indulgent behavior is actually digging his own grave. He will be dismembered and placed among the *faithless* who have no inheritance in the kingdom of God but will spend eternity separated him in a place called hell.
- Verse 47: The servant fails to do what his master wants. This is less blatant in that it is not necessarily open rebellion, but it is a failure to what the master expected. This is unfaithful stewardship through neglect. It's analogous to what James 4:17 says, "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." This servant will receive a severe beating;
- The final and least severe punishment belongs to a third kind of servant. Neglect out of ignorance – light beating.
- Man on the island Question: Hell... Degrees of reward and punishment...
- "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more." Haunting verse. This verse haunts me, in a good kind of way. It is a motivator. The more knowledge, the greater the responsibility. The greater the privilege, the greater responsibility. God holds those with the greater trust to greater accountability in the judgment.

Faithful service brings serious blessing! (37-38, 43-44)

- More of God. The reward is God himself. (43)
 - "Maranatha" in 1 Corinthians 16:22 means "Our Lord, come!"
- More of the blessing of God. God serving us?!?
 - Christ will serve us!! What?!?!?
 - He did it before... John 13. This will be a bigger moment than that.
 - I know this is hard to wrap our minds around. God himself will be so pleased with those who live for him and long for his presence and return that he will serve them at the great banquet table of Christ, which foreshadows the feast
- More responsibility. Good and faithful service leads to greater service. The reward is more opportunities to serve the King.

With these rewards in mind, let me challenge us to go after it! Gospel devotion. Gospel-motivated obedience. Gospel Community. Gospel witness. (App...)

II. Be ready by seeing and savoring God's work in Christ (49-59).

1) Understand Jesus brings division (49-53).

- The finished work of Christ necessarily brings division. What is the mission of Jesus? I came to set this place on fire. I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished. Here again we see the resolve of Jesus. He was so consumed with his mission to save.
- Fire can be used as a figure for judgment. The baptism he will undergo is a baptism of judgment.
- The Prince of Peace came to bring division. His birth (2:14) "peace on earth..."
- Bock: "with Jesus' arrival comes a period of decision and a crisis for people and between people."
- Many see, but not all savor...
- Many of you have experienced this.... When a person follows Christ they are necessarily divided, at a spiritual level, from all who reject him. We can't play on two teams! The division is inevitable. (52-53)
- Here is one of the great barriers for many. Not so much intellectual, not so much emotional, social!
- Dig down here a bit: It doesn't matter where your mom or your grandmotha stands with God. It matters where you stand with God. Heaven is not a Club where you can ride in on the coattails of someone else. Jesus is the only one who can get you past the bouncer and into the VIP... (probably revise)
- Sword... R u sleepy or are u ready? R u doing your thing or his thing. R u managing your life for him or ur life for you? R u faithful or faithless? Jesus brings division. That is why it is imperative that we not miss...

2) Don't miss what God has done in Christ. (54-56)

- Call to read the signs of the times . . . Weather... (harold taft) I almost feel guilty ☺
- Certain indications tell us that what to expect. "In Palestine, a cloud from the west meant moisture riding in from the Mediterranean Sea." When people say that, they knew it was about to rain. Similarly, if wind comes in from the south, it's about to get hot as the wind would have been traveling in from the desert.
- Oh yeah, we get that... Perhaps they started feeling good about themselves. He understands us. We understand him. Now v. 56: "You hypocrites! You get interpret the weather, but you can't interpret the weightier matters of life? You can discern the temperature but you can't discern the time?"
- What is Jesus implying here? You might be an expert in reading the weather, but you are a novice/so inept when it comes to reading the things of God.
- When Jesus starts calling people hypocrites, he's not a happy camper. He's severely displeased, frustrated, angry, and heartbroken (as we will see next week in the words O Jerusalem... he was a man of sorrows. I could give you the world but you won't accept a mite of dust!
- How many people walked with Jesus, rejected him, and then met God and said, "How could I have missed that!?" How could you be so blind to the work of God? It's happening right before your eyes. What a tragedy it was for those to look back and say, we missed it. What a tragedy it would be for us!
- Jesus is giving mad signs... water to wine, 5,000, raised from the dead....
- You see the blind receiving sight, the deaf hearing, the lame walking, God may just be at work! Hello!
- Exhibit A, Exhibit B, Exhibit C, Exhibit XYZ.... Exhibit Cross and Empty Tomb
- And you can see it in the lives of those around you who know Christ, something qualitatively different about the kind of love and joy and peace and confidence they display.
- God is at work through Jesus. His work verified, validated, and vindicated his message and character.
- Have you seen and savored God's work in Jesus? If not, then I hope you will take this third encouragement to heart this morning.

3) Settle up with God through Jesus

- Ever had a debt... Mortgage!
- Jesus is the mediator through whom we can settle our accounts with God.
- Context....
- Life is a journey.
- Pic: Have you ever been given a gift? After it has all been enjoyed, there is an account: "How was it?"
- You're on a journey to give an account for the one who has given you life.
- Spiritual indebtedness...

Gospel Call.. Settle accounts.

- You need your debt cancelled.
- What's the only thing better than having your debt cancelled? Having your account loaded!
- You need your account full.

Conclusion:

Story – Rich Man and the Builder.

Are you ready?