

LUKE 12 STUDY 6 (12:35-40)

JESUS' DISCIPLES WILL BE WORKING WHILE JESUS IS ABSENT (Vs 35-36)

The picture is of a house of a very rich man, with lots of servants working in it. It's night, the master has been out all day and all evening at a wedding banquet, but the servants are still up and working. It's deliberate that Jesus uses the picture of a household. He is not simply using this image to talk about your individual life as a Christian, but he's talking about what the church will look like while he is absent.

What will his household be characterised by? A household "...dressed and ready for service and keep your lamps burning". It's a picture of urgent activity. *"Dressed and ready for service"* is a bit more urgent in the original. Jesus literally says "keep your loins girded". The image is of the long flowing robe they wore in the ancient world. When you had to do work, or move quickly you needed to hitch them up to move about. The Israelites were to eat the first Passover meal with their loins girded so they could escape from Egypt quickly. So while Jesus is not with us, we don't think "he's away, it's time to relax!" We are active in obedience. Our lamps are burning. You light lamps so that you can get on with life as if it was daytime.

There is an important aspect to this light and activity. It is all done with Jesus as the focus. Verse 36 says we are "like men waiting for their master". It is possible for churches to be full of activity, but not focused on Jesus. There are many churches will full weekly programmes but have had Jesus and his word and true worship of him squeezed out. When that happens it's like the house is having a great big party – the lights are on, there is activity, but no focus on the master who is away.

Individually it is possible to live busy lives, serving, doing good, but not be focused on Jesus. When we do that we are like servants in this house who have forgotten we belong to a master, but we've become self employed. After all the Pharisees lived like that. Don't mistake pure busy-ness for obedience.

JESUS' DISCIPLES WILL BE REWARDED WHEN JESUS RETURNS (Vs 37- 38)

There is a wonderful promise attached to this. He is returning, and Jesus says his disciples will served when he returns (Vs 37-38). There is a remarkable turnaround in the story. The servants in the household have their loins girded and lamps on. But look at what happens when the master returns

"he will dress himself to serve (literally "gird himself"), will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them"

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The master, when he is with his servants, becomes the servant of his people. He girds his loins. He serves and feeds them. When Jesus returns he will come in greatness and majesty and will rule the nations – but he also promises to hitch his cloak up and serve us at the greatest banquet.

It is only followers of Jesus who can appreciate or understand that. Jesus foes ridiculed that kind of talk. The reason Jesus was so opposed was because he came in weakness, to suffer, to serve.

If you are a disciple this will ring true. Because that is what Jesus does for his people. This is what he did when he was here the first time. He is heading to Jerusalem in this gospel as a servant, to serve us, to die for us. He was the one who washed his disciples feet. And he does not change.

In the final analysis we don't serve Jesus. He serves us. And we need to have this promise in view as we follow him. This cuts the cords of despondency in the Christian life. We can have times where we are drained and fed up and tired of obeying and serving. But we look to the past and the future and we see Jesus serving us. This gives us strength to suffer for him. This gives us excitement to look forward to his return. We want him to return because we want him. He will give himself to us.

JESUS' DISCIPLES WILL BE AWARE JESUS' RETURN WILL BE UNEXPECTED (Vs 39-40)

Jesus never gives us the time or day or hour of his return. He may come soon, or after a long time (that's the reason for vs 38). He does however call us to be ready whenever he comes. Look at verses 39-40.

The illustration changes slightly to a house which is burgled. Thieves don't send a card do they telling you when they are going to come. They come unexpectedly. You pop out for an hour and don't double lock the front door – then they come. You don't insure your bike and your front wheel still has a quick release fitting on it – then they come. The nature of being a thief is that you work on the fact that people don't expect you to come. Jesus says, in this way, my return will be like that. You won't know when, so be ready be prepared. It gives urgency to what he's just been saying.

We don't know when Jesus will return. Death is a reality no one really expects. But there is an added danger to that way of thinking I just want to leave us with. Just look at what Jesus says to the church at Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22. Jesus is

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returning to his church. He isn't coming physically back – but it's as if he's saying he's not as far away as they think he is. What is this church like? Not active! Their loins are not girded! Their lights are not burning. To them, Jesus brings a threat and a promise. If they don't repent Jesus will spit them out of his mouth. The warning that Jesus will close the church down. But there is a wonderful promise in verse 20, that he will eat with them (which links very closely with Luke 12:35-40).

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

What did we hear Jesus say at the end of our last study? Where must our treasure and heart be? What challenges are there to doing this?

What is the setting for the illustration Jesus brings to us in vs 35-36? What does this tell us about our situation as the church today?

What must we be like as we wait? (vs 35) What does this mean/look like in practice?

Is there a difference between being busy in church life, and being busy “waiting for our master”? What would the difference look like?

What will Jesus do when he returns and finds his servants awake? Does this surprise us? Should it? (Vs 37)

How does this hope sustain us and enable us to “stay dressed” and “keep our lamps burning”?

Does Jesus tell us when he will return? (vs 38)

What illustration does he use about his return? What is this meant to communicate to us? (Vs 39-40)

Look up Revelation 3:14-22. Jesus comes to a church who are not “dressed for action” and their “lamps are not burning”. What warnings does he give if they don't repent? What promise does he bring if they do? Does this link with Luke 12:35-40.