

Luke Chapter 12 v 35 - 48

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Good to welcome folk. Good to welcome visitors this time of year. It's great to have you with us. Some are well known to us. Some are new to us. We trust that together we might worship the Lord and praise him for all his goodness to us. The Bible tells us that's really our duty, our service of God is that we praise him. Here's the Psalm 113.

Praise the Lord. It means give him glory, rejoice in him, worship him, adore him, delight in him. Praise the Lord you his servants. Praise the name of the Lord. Let the name of the Lord be praised both now and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised. It doesn't just mean when the sun is out on a sunny day we're to praise God, even when it's raining like today. God deserves our praise. He's unchangeably, faithfully the same. And we rejoice in him. And our first hymn is a hymn of rejoicing in God. 314. Rejoicing in him as our king. We're his servants. He is the king. He's the Lord. He's our master. Yes, our friend and our savior. But we come and worship him. Rejoice the Lord is king. Your Lord and king adore. 314. Let's stand as we sing. Let's continue then to praise our God as we pray together, rejoicing in who he is and what he's done. Let us pray. Thank you, Father, that even this morning on a rainy, wet day in autumn, we can rejoice in you. Rejoice in you as our king, our Lord, our God, and our savior. We thank you that you are the God who gives joy as part of the wonderful package of faith. When we put our trust in your son, the Lord Jesus, when we know the forgiveness of his sins, when we turn from our wicked ways and follow him, Lord, we thank you that you pour into our lives blessings and good gifts and things, oh Lord, which we never dreamt we would ever enjoy. Your love for us, which never changes, but is always the same. Your care for us in meeting our needs and providing. Your help in all circumstances and situations and the list can go on and on and on. But most of all, we thank you that you give us joy in Jesus. And we thank you that that joy is not dependent on our circumstances because, Lord, life is changeable. You know that yourself only so well. You do not change, but the world in which we live changes, we change. Lord, we're unreliable, if we're honest. We're not dependable. Lord, we, one minute we're full of joy, one minute we're full of faith, one minute we're full of love for you and for one another, and the next minute, Lord, we find that we're blown by a bit of wind or trouble or difficulty and we become unpleasant and greedy or rude or thoughtless or selfish. Lord, we are changeable people, but we thank you that you do not change and your love does not change. And therefore, when we know that we are loved of God, when we know that we are accepted, when we know that we are precious in your sight, then, oh Lord, whatever happens to us, Lord, we know that we can rejoice in you and our joy can be in you. When people hurt us and let us down, when things seem to be going not our way, we can trust you, Lord, and rejoice in you because you are the king, the king of our lives and the ruler over our lives. And the circumstances of our lives are not chance or fate or luck, but Lord, they are part of your purpose and plan for our good. For you've promised and said that you will work in all things for our good for those who love you. And we do love you. We love you because you first loved us. We love you because of Jesus, your son, who came from heaven to earth to rescue and save us from our sin, our failings, our complete messes. We thank you, Jesus, to save us. You loved us to such an extent that you went and died in our place to take upon yourself the guilt, the blame that is ours, the punishment that we deserve. You took upon your own self that we might be fully pardoned. And no matter what our sins are, and Lord, all of us have got a great list of them, and you know many more besides. We thank you that when we turn to Jesus, they're forgiven.

The slates wiped clean, Lord, not just for the past, but for the present and the future as well. And Lord, if that doesn't make us joyful, knowing that we are accepted and cleansed, and that our past is put behind us, then nothing else truly will. Not the pleasures, not the excitements of this life, they are just stale. They're like bread that's gone off, and it's hard, and it can never really satisfy. But

Lord, the love and the forgiveness that you bring, that satisfies for life now and for eternity too. And so, Lord, we're here to praise you for all these things and so much more beside. We're here, oh Lord, because we know that you're the living God who has something to say to us. You're the God who deals with us. You're the God who has brought us here this morning, not to, in one sense, receive from us firstly, but to give to us good gifts.

And so we pray, make us ready to receive your word, your truth, and your blessing. For we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to do it together now in our Bibles, and I'd encourage you to do that as well.

[6 : 14] And we're going to read from Luke and chapter 12. Now, if you have one of the red Bibles, one of the church Bibles here, then that's page 1045. Page 1045, Luke and chapter 12. Luke is, chapter 12 is a long chapter, and we've been looking at the gospel of Luke and working through chapter 12 these last few weeks. It's one event, and we need to understand that. So even though it's broken up for us with paragraphs and headings, it's one event. Crowds had come to speak, come to visit Jesus. Jesus had spoken to them very much about fearing the Lord, having a right understanding of him. Somebody had shouted from the crowd and spoken to him, come and divide my inheritance, tell my brother to give me the inheritance. And Jesus began teaching about money and trusting God and inheritance. And that's really where we're going to pick up on verse 35. We're going to read from verse 35 of Luke 12 through to verse 48. Jesus has just been speaking about treasure in heaven. And so this is what he says.

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. 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 make them recline at the table, and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or towards daybreak. But understand this, if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. Peter asked, Lord, are you telling this parable to us or to everyone? The Lord answered, who then is the faithful and wise manager who the master puts in charge of his servants to give them food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. Truly, I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose the servant says to himself, my master's taking a long time in coming. He then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour he will not be aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. 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.

We look to the Lord to help us to understand and apply his word as we trust he will. Now, again then turn to Luke and chapter 12, verses 35 and following. That's page 1045. You'll need to do that really if you want to follow what's going to be said. Many years ago, and I don't know where I saw it. It's a long time ago. I saw a sticker in the back of a window or on a bumper. You know, you get these sort of stickers.

Honk if you're happy or something like that. But this one made me chuckle. It was on the back of a really old rusty sort of estate car. It went on the really old big ones, whether it's Peugeot 405 or something like that. Oh, like yours, Paul. Sorry, just like yours. It was on the back of a car, just like Paul's.

[10 : 38] And it said, I was told I would inherit the estate. This is it. Yeah, hopefully you got that.

God asked the rich farmer on the night he died in Luke 12, verse 20. This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you've prepared for yourself? Who will you get? Who will get what you've prepared for yourself? Who's going to inherit all your riches? Jesus in this passage a bit later on in verse 20 tells us, sorry, verse 33 rather tells us, provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail. When no thief comes near, no moth destroys.

This section that I read just a few minutes ago from 35 to 48 seems to be almost a jump away from what Jesus has been talking about. This theme of money and inheritance of God's provision and providing and of the foolishness of living a life for the things of this world, materials, possessions, money. But in fact, that isn't the case. This is a continuation. Jesus is now talking to his disciples. We know that particularly because Peter is there listening. And he's talking again about the matter of inheritance, the future, riches, treasure. And the question really is upon our lips, on our minds, and perhaps upon those who are listening, is this. When will this be? Jesus tells us that the father is pleased to give us the kingdom, his kingdom. When will this be? This promise of eternal life, this promise of riches and treasures, this promise of good things to come. When will this be? We're impatient people. We like to have things now. We like instant coffee, instant communication, instant access. But Jesus points to and tells his disciples and us that all these things, all these blessings, this inheritance is ours when he comes again. He's talking about his own return. After his death, after his resurrection, after his ascension to heaven, there is a time, the time in which we're living now are waiting and looking forward to the return of Jesus Christ. This is exactly what he says there. Now look in verse 40. You also must be ready because the Son of Man will come. The Son of Man is his favorite title for himself, speaking about prophecies in the Old Testament about this Son of Man who would come to fulfill all God's promises. The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is not a fairy tale.

[13 : 50] It's not just some sort of add-on to the Christian faith that you can take or leave. It is fundamental to our faith because it is found everywhere throughout the Bible, particularly, of course, in the New Testament.

Jesus here speaks of it, but again, as we go on later in the coming weeks, we'll find him again returning to the subject. Chapter 17 in verse 24, he is talking about the coming of the kingdom of God.

The Son of Man in his day will be like lightning flashing from the lights in the sky from one end to the other. The coming of the Son of Man. Later on in chapter 21, as he's getting closer to that point where he is going to be murdered and put to death upon the cross. Chapter 21, each day, verse 27. At that time, they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. So Jesus emphasized again and again, he's coming again, his return. But again, when we read the apostles, Peter, Paul, and John, they all, in almost every letter, have something to say about the return of Jesus, the hope, looking forward to. Paul writing to the Thessalonians, for the Lord himself will come down from heaven. 1 Peter chapter 1, when Jesus Christ is revealed and is coming. 1 John chapter 3, we know that when Christ appears, there's all this wonderful expectation. And if you're a Christian this morning, or even if you're not, then you need to be aware of the fact Jesus is coming again.

This world as we know it is not going to remain the same. It's the day when all the believers' hopes, all the believers' expectations, all the believers' joys will be fulfilled.

[15 : 47] Paul writing to the Philippians. No, not the Philippians. The Philippians. That's it. The Philippians. In chapter 3, verse 20, says this. Our, this is talking about the believer, that our citizenship is in heaven. In other words, we belong to heaven. We're, we're heavenly people.

And we eagerly await a savior from there. The Lord Jesus Christ. Why are we eagerly awaiting a savior from there? Because when he comes, all the, all the, the hopes, all the joys, all the things that we're looking forward to will be fulfilled. It is going to be the climactic event in the universe. And for the believer, a day of immense joy. This world in which we know it is not carrying on ad infinitum. It's not going to just keep rolling on through the centuries, through the millennia ahead. History is moving towards one event. One final event when Christ comes again. And there will be a complete end to the world as you know it. Peter, in his second letter, writes to describe as best he can what will happen in that day. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire.

The elements, in other words, everything physical, will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells. A place where there is no sin, no suffering, no sadness, no grief, no death. We're looking forward to that.

There's a lot of scare stories about, aren't there, about the end of the world. It seems almost every month there's a new one. Of course, at the moment, it's the climate, the environment. If we don't do something, the whole world will burn up. And before that, when I was growing up, of course, there was a great threat of a nuclear holocaust and a world, third world war. The world would destroy

itself. There's talk of a huge meteorite hitting the earth at some time or the sun eventually exploding or burning out of gas.

[17 : 54] None of those things are going to happen to bring that into the world. The end of this world, as we know it, will come when Jesus Christ comes again, comes to judge all humanity and to establish everlasting peace. The hope for this world is in the return of Christ. Its destiny is to endure until that day when he comes. And this passage in Luke 12, 35 is essential. And it's what Jesus wants us and his disciples to know about his coming. The essential requirements, the essential truths about that day, that we might be ready for his coming. And each one of these points is going to take your mind back to when you were a Boy Scout. Be prepared. That's the theme. That's the whole message in one sense. Be prepared. Be prepared. First of all, we must be prepared for Jesus' return.

He tells them a parable here, doesn't he? A parable about servants of a household who are looking out for the coming of their master. Be dressed, ready for service. Keep your lamps burning like the 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. Now, some people last night sneaked off to watch Downton Abbey at the spa. I don't know if you've seen the film. I'm sure you've seen the series.

If you haven't and you're of a slightly older generation, remember Upstairs, Downstairs, way before my time. But if you remember it, then you really are pushing the time. But anyway, Upstairs, Downstairs, Downton Abbey, there's the master of the household, isn't it? And his family, and there's the servants who work below. And all the staff, if they ever come before the master or his family, they must be dressed, mustn't they, in their penguin suits or whatever it is, their special uniform. And they have to be ready for the shout of the master to ring his bell or to call them to come up and look after him and wait on his needs. And I don't know whether there's a wedding. I imagine there probably is in the film Downton Abbey because everybody likes a wedding. But here's a wedding that Jesus is thinking about. The master has gone to the wedding. And of course, it's going to be a late one. But his servants have to be ready for him, ready for him to come so they can give him something to eat or drink or help him prepare in getting ready for beds. The simple truth is this, they must be prepared for the master's return. And so we, each one of us, whoever we are, must be prepared for the return of Christ. We must be ready to welcome him. Notice that the master comes, doesn't he, and knocks on the door and they can immediately open the door to him. So there's a sense of welcoming. And so that begins with the question, are you looking forward to the return of Jesus?

Is the return of Jesus to you like the return of somebody who you love, who you're waiting and anxious for them? I'm sure you've had that experience. You've received a letter or an email or a phone call to say, so-and-so is coming, your son, your grandson, whoever it is, they're coming to visit. But they're not sure exactly when that's going to be. But you're looking out for them. You know it's, he's, they're coming. And so there you are in the kitchen baking a cake. Do you get it? Get it? If I knew you were coming, I'd have baked a cake. I'm really old, aren't I? Now, baked a cake, prepared, ready. Are you looking forward to welcoming Jesus when he comes again? Or is it something that you dread, something you long to put off? That's a real sign. And are you prepared, most importantly, for Jesus' return? Are you prepared to meet him? The next thing we see here as well is this, that we must be prepared all the time, constantly prepared. Because Jesus tells us this, he uses a different parable, doesn't he? A different sort of story, different thought.

[22 : 12] Understand this, if the owner of the house had known what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also be ready because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. So now Jesus is slotting into this parable a different one.

The burglar is out on the prowl and he is going to come and burgle somebody's house, perhaps your house. I hope that's never happened to you. It's a very distressing thing. And I'm not trying to make light of that. But if you knew the time the burglar was coming, you'd make sure all the doors and windows were locked. You'd make sure you're on guard with the phone ready to call the police or whatever it may be. But of course the thief doesn't put a card through your door and say, next Thursday night at 1.30pm I'm going to burgle your house. Please be out. Or something like that. Of course he's not going to do that. And Jesus is going to come at a time when we will not be prepared. He's not giving us a warning.

All those, I'll be careful what I say, but those foolish people I think, who say, well we can predict when Jesus is coming. We can say that it's going to be, and if you remember a few years ago, it was going to be 2012, I think it was, or something like that. That's foolishness. The Bible and Jesus tells us clearly again and again, we will not have any warning. Again, when I was growing up as a child, there's all this thing about the three minute warning before the nuclear bombs start falling. Got three minutes to get to somewhere safe, like under your kitchen table from a nuclear bomb. It's going to protect you because it's from Ikea. It's going to be great. Anyway, a three minute warning. You're not going to get a three minute warning for the return of Jesus. You're not going to get a minute's warning or a second's warning. We must be ready day or night. We must be prepared for his coming all the time. And it says even here, doesn't it, in verse 38, be good for those servants whose master finds them ready even if he comes in the middle of the night or towards daybreak. Jesus is going to come a time when people least expect him, not when they think they can predict his coming. And some of us, of course, have this attitude, don't we, if we're honest, and say, well, we can put off getting prepared for Jesus' return until a bit later on in life when we've had the fun of being young or when we've got a career established or when we've built up a nice nest dig for ourselves or whatever it may be. We can put it off. Dear friends, we can't afford to put it off.

[24 : 41] We must be, you must be prepared now and all the time for the return of Christ. So the big question is how? How are we to be prepared?

And I think that's behind a little bit of the question that Peter asks in verse 41. Lord, are you telling this parable to us or to everyone? In other words, he's saying, are you telling us that as disciples we're already prepared or that we need to prepare more or are you saying this to everybody else who's not a disciple?

Those who haven't followed you and trusted in you. Just be prepared, dear friends. I think what Jesus' next parable is about is telling us to be prepared. We be prepared by being faithful. We be prepared by being faithful. 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?

It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. So it's a different situation. The master has gone away. He's gone away on business. Jesus uses other parables similar to this.

[25 : 52] He's left the home in the charge, in one sense, of the manager or the managers. These were the servants who had positions of authority in the house. Mr. Carson, Mrs. Hughes in Downton Abbey.

People who had some responsibility, in one sense. Things that they had to do, duties they had to befall. And if we're a disciple of Jesus, then you and I have several responsibilities.

To be a Christian, to be a follower of Jesus, means we take on board responsibilities, duties, that are given to us by our master that we might serve him in the church, which we might liken to, and he likens to, as a house.

And those responsibilities and those duties that the master gives to us, Christ gives to us are found throughout the scriptures, but especially, of course, the greatest of the commandments of Christ is that we love.

That we love. We saw that a few weeks ago when we looked at Jesus' words in John chapter 15. The greatest duty is to love, and it is not simply a feeling or an emotion.

[27 : 05] It is a practical outworking of a reality within us. When Jesus was talking about his coming in another part of the Bible, in Matthew 25, it separates those who are his disciples.

He talks about his coming in a day when men and women will be separated, be divided between those who are his disciples who will receive eternal life and joy and the kingdom, and those who are not his disciples who will be cast out of his kingdom for eternal punishment.

And this is what Jesus has to say about those who are his disciples. This is what differentiates the disciple, the one who is prepared for his coming, from the one who is not.

The king will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 4. I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat.

I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, you invited me in. I needed clothes, and you clothed me. I was ill, and you looked after me. I was in prison, and you came to visit me.

[28 : 15] Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you, a stranger, invite you in, needing clothes and clothe you?

When did we visit you when you were ill or in prison? The king will reply, Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

It's very clear from what Jesus is saying is that love, the actions of love towards those who are dear to Christ, it's the evidence that that person is prepared for Jesus' return, and prepared to receive him and welcome him.

Now, does that mean that you become a Christian by doing good things? Is that what Jesus is saying? Is that what I'm saying? Is that what we're to understand here when he talks about the servant giving the other servants what they need, providing for them and caring for them?

No, it's not. It's not. We are not Christians or become Christians by love. Love. But, if we are Christ's disciples, if our hearts have been changed by the power of his love so that we are new people, different people, then that must be seen and witnessed and experienced.

[29 : 35] That's the whole letter of James. But really it's the whole of the Bible as well. Love produces love. If you have known the love of God which forgives your sins, if you've known the love of God which has changed your heart so that you love him and delight in him, then that will be seen practically in the way that you love those who are his.

The person who claims to be a servant of Jesus, the person who says that they're a Christian, but has no evidence of that, no proof of that, but shows no sign of that, is not a Christian at all and not prepared for his coming.

And so that's why he goes on to talk about this second type of servant. Verse 45. Suppose the servant says to himself, my master's taking a long time in coming.

In other words, he's never coming back again. I can do what I like. And he begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk. That clearly is somebody who is not a Christian, who is not truly a servant of Jesus, because a servant of Jesus is faithfully carrying out their master's will.

In other words, day by day, the Christian is somebody who is living their life, that shows that Christ is real to them, that he is their master, that he is the one they love, and that they live for him and to love others.

[31 : 01] The person who says, I'm a Christian or part of a church or whatever title they want to give themselves, but is somebody who lives for themselves, is somebody whose life is full of selfish desires, and follows and seeks after those things, as this servant did here, is somebody who cannot be a Christian, because there is a supernatural transformation that takes place in the heart of a person.

So every servant who is prepared for Jesus' coming is someone who is looking for the day, and is about their master's business.

There's one more thing here that we need to recognize. We need to be prepared for Christ's return. We need to be prepared all the time.

We need to be prepared by being faithful, but here we need to be prepared, dear friends, for a surprise. Be prepared for a surprise. Every person, whether they're a disciple or not, will be surprised when Jesus comes again.

They will be in for a huge surprise. For the Christian, it will be a most wonderful and pleasant surprise. Look at how many times Jesus speaks about, and perhaps you picked it up when I was reading, it will be good for that servant.

[32 : 22] There it is in verse 37. It will be good for those servants. Later on, verse 38. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready. Later on, verse 43.

It will be good for that servant when the master finds him doing so when he returns. It's going to be a wonderful surprise. Even though we're prepared for Jesus' return, even though we've got a glimpse of what will happen when Jesus returns for us, dear friends and Christians, it's going to be a wonderful surprise.

It's going to blow your mind. It's going to shock and awe and make you wonder and delight. It will be good. How will it be good? Well, notice two things. First of all, in the first parable, it will be good, verse 37, for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes.

Truly, this is one of Jesus' truly, truly sayings. This is absolutely guaranteed, in other words. He, that's the master, will dress himself to serve. He will make them, that's the servants, recline at the table and will come and wait on them.

The servants, there's going to be a reversal of roles. So when Jesus comes again, though we are his servants, the wonderful thing is he's coming to serve us. He's coming to bring us a wonderful party, a banquet, a feast of good things.

[33 : 42] This is something that comes out really near the very end of Revelation, that wonderful book that talks about how history is moving towards the return of Jesus.

And there's a glorious statement in Revelation 19. Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb. It's going to be a great wedding feast when Christ and his people are united together for all eternity.

Marriage is a symbol of that. Marriage between a man and a woman is a picture of the wonderful love of Christ, the husband, for his wife, the bride, the church.

And you and I, dear friends, will be brought into the eternal embrace of Christ when he comes again. And we shall party for all eternity in the best sense of the word.

And we shall enjoy his company for all eternity. It's going to be so good. But you've just got to be there and make sure you're going to be there. And more than that, included in that, we find again there in verse 43.

[34 : 50] It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. All this faithfully living out the Christian life, faithfully showing the love of God in his life and trusting him.

Truly I tell you, he will put him, the master will put that servant in charge of all his possessions. If you ever thought that God is stingy, you are so far from the truth.

If you ever thought that God has withheld from you good things that you wish you had, you have no idea. When Christ comes again, all the kingdom of God, all that God has, all that God is, he's going to share with us.

God has not withheld anything from you, dear friends. He didn't even withhold his own son, his most precious and joyful possession, when he gave him to suffer and die in your place.

He's coming to give us everything, all the things that we dream of and long for and much more besides. It's going to be good and it's going to surprise you how good it is.

[35 : 55] However, it will not just be the believer who will be surprised. It will not just be the Christian, not just those who prepare, those who have put their faith in Christ and are living daily for him and with him.

It will not just be them who will be surprised. For those who are not his disciples, those who are not his true servants, those who have not followed and loved and believed in him, there will be a surprise indeed, but it will be a shocking and terrible surprise for those who are unprepared when Jesus returns.

Those who claimed to be Christians and should have been doing their master's will, but were not, will be punished as if they were unbelievers.

In other words, being part of the church, coming to church, singing hymns, reading your Bible, praying, saying, I believe in Jesus.

All of those things will not save you on the day when Jesus returns unless you are prepared as he has determined you must be prepared.

[37 : 13] Notice what he says there. Suppose the servant says to himself, my master's taking a long time in coming. He begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, to eat and drink and get drunk.

The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he's not aware of, cut him to pieces and assign him a place of the unbelievers. It's a horrible, horrible picture, but it is only a shadow of the reality of what it will be for those who are unprepared, those who've lived their lives, and even those who've lived, as I say, within the church, those who have perhaps positions of power, and let's be honest, dear friends, let's not just pretend, but in the church visible that we see around the world, we have men and women who have done atrocious and terrible things through the history of time and even included in our own generation who have clearly showed themselves not to be servants of the master and though they think they've been Christian and though they call themselves Christian, they have nothing to do with Christ.

And the warning to us, dear friends, is this, let us not presume, let us not presume that we are prepared for Christ's coming because we think that we are Christians.

Another part of Jesus' teaching is very powerful where he speaks about those on the day of judgment will come before Jesus and say, Lord, Lord, did we not speak of you? Did we not heal people in your name?

Did we not drive out demons in your name? Didn't we do all sorts of things? And Jesus said, I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers. We must, dear friends, pursue and press on and make sure that we have a living faith in Christ, that there has been genuine repentance.

[39 : 07] We've turned from our sins and we've genuinely taken Christ as our Savior and put our faith in him. We must seek to assure ourselves that we have been born again of the Spirit of God because nothing less than that will prepare us for Christ's return.

And whatever the outward appearance that you may give, if the heart is not changed, then you're lost. Jesus says it here.

There's a very difficult part to close with here. That's not difficult enough. There's going to be another separation, we might say.

Here Jesus says, verse 47, the servant who knows the master's will does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. There is punishment. A great punishment, a grave punishment for those who know the gospel, who know the truth, but have not acted upon it.

That's, I think, what Jesus is saying here. In other words, if you're somebody, again, who thinks that you're safe, thinks that you're all right by the things that you have done, but you haven't truly trusted Christ and you haven't bowed the knee to him, as we put it, you haven't said, Lord Jesus, you are the Lord, the King of my life, but we know what we should have done, then there is punishment.

[40 : 26] And then it speaks about those who are ignorant of Christ. And we often have that question, don't we, and we don't fully understand and know the answer, but here there's a clue.

The one who does not know, in other words, does not know the gospel, does not know God's will, does not know the truth of Christ as he is, and still acts wickedly, in other words, lives a life without him, they will be beaten with few blows.

The only way I can understand that is this, that God is just, and that God is fair. And that though there is eternal punishment for all who are outside of Christ, somehow in God's mercy and grace and justice there are degrees.

I only take it from Jesus' word. Please don't ask me to explain it more than that. But the reality is this, that without Christ there is punishment. and it is eternal. But I have to say to you, dear friends here this morning, if you are not a Christian this morning, you've heard the gospel probably more than once, you know what is demanded of you by God, you know that you need to trust Christ, if you walk away and choose to reject him and deny him, then when he comes, he promises and warns that there will be punishment for you.

however, wouldn't you rather welcome him? Wouldn't you rather be waiting at the door? Wouldn't you rather be looking forward to him coming and the good things he has for you?

[42 : 05] And dear friends, let me close finally then with these words of Jesus. From everyone who's been given much, and if you're a Christian, you've been given a lot, and I've been given a lot.

From everyone who's been given much, much will be demanded. Is there fruit in your life? Is there real proof and evidence in your life that you are living for Jesus, your master?

For from the one who's been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. Is there evidence, real evidence, that Jesus is the Lord and Master?

Then be joyful. He is coming. And as the psalmist, as Revelation put it, he is coming and his reward is with him.

Let's pray together. Amen. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you never hide the truth from us.

[43 : 11] We thank you that you don't paint a distorted picture of reality. But we thank you that you are always honest. And Lord, let's be honest, honesty can be painful as well as joyful.

And so, Lord, we come to you. We thank you for the promise of your return. We thank you for that wonderful hope that is ours, that you're coming again. And this world and all of its suffering and sorrow and grief is not going to continue.

But you will fix this world. But Lord, we know that your coming will be a time when we're not prepared, we're not ready, we don't know when it is.

But Lord, you've given us warning enough to say it is coming, be prepared, be ready. And you've given us, O Lord, by your grace, everything that we need to be prepared.

That wonderful gospel, you've provided for us forgiveness for our sins, you've provided for us your Holy Spirit that we might walk with you and know you and live for you.

[44 : 16] And again, we do pray, O Lord, that you would prepare each and every single person here for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. That you would stop us, Lord, from thinking you're a long time coming, let's put it off and forget about it.

But that you would, Lord, even this morning, as it were, open our hearts to say, Lord Jesus, come in now and be my savior. Come in now and cleanse me of my sin.

Come in now and make me your servant. I want you to be the king. I want you to be the master of my life and I turn away from that life which has been lived for self.

And even though I've done good things, I know that none of them can repay the sin of my life. Lord Jesus, you've done it at the cross. We pray, Lord, for those of us who've received so much.

Lord, help us to be those who give much in our lives and show, Lord, by our lives the love of Christ in our dealings with one another that we also may warn and share and encourage that many more may be prepared for that day.

[45 : 29] Lord Jesus, we look for that day, we long for that day, but how we long that you would save many before that day comes. Amen. Let's sing our final hymn.

It's a great old hymn. It's a hymn I remember singing when I was first a Christian. It's a little bit peculiar but wonderful too. When the trumpet of the Lord shall come, that's one of the things that the Bible tells us.

When Jesus comes, there's great noise in heaven like a sound of many trumpets. And 865, the roll. In other words, in heaven there's a wonderful list of all those who are Christ's and the names will be called as we come to stand before him and enjoy him.

So that's the sense of the hymn when the roll is called up yonder. In other words, when the list of names is called out in heaven, I'm going to be there in that number and I long and pray that by God's grace you will be there too.

Let's stand and sing. 865. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[46 : 46] He died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with him. therefore encourage one another and build each other up just as in fact you are doing.

And may God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. Amen.