

EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN GIVEN MUCH, MUCH WILL BE DEMANDED

Sunday, April 25, 2010

Luke 12:40-48, “Peter asked, ‘Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?’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?’⁴³ It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns.⁴⁴ I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.⁴⁵ But suppose the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk.⁴⁶ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.⁴⁷ That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows.⁴⁸ 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.”

- If you were here last week you may have already noticed that this passage is very similar to the one we looked at last week—at points, almost identical.
- **Luke 12:35-40**, “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning,³⁶ like men 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.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.³⁸ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”
- **Arnold T. Olson**, “Ever since the first days of the Christian church, evangelicals have been ‘looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.’ They may have disagreed as to its timing and to the events on the eschatological calendar. They may have differed as to a pre-tribulation or post-tribulation rapture—the pre- or post- or non-millennial coming. They may have been divided as to a literal rebirth of Israel. However, *all* are agreed that the final solution to the problems of this world is in the hands of the King of kings who will someday make the kingdoms of this world his very own.”¹
- Christ’s return is mentioned 318 times in the New Testament.
- Statistically that means that when reading the New Testament, about every 25 verses you’ll encounter a passage that addresses Christ’s return in some way or another.²
- Both passages paint a picture of a first century slave-owner that has left home to attend a wedding banquet, with his return time uncertain.
- In both instances the servants are the focus of the parable.
- The slaves are (unknowingly) undergoing a test—a test which some will fail—others pass.

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998), 2:58.

² R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998), 2:58.

- The timeframe is the end of this age.
 - And Jesus brings up a significant point that, as far as I can tell, is largely overlooked.
 - The overlooked element that I am alluding to is essentially Jesus' answer to Peter's question in verse 41: "Peter asked, 'Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?'"
 - On first appearance, it doesn't seem as though Jesus even answered Peter's question.
 - *Prima facie*, it appears that Jesus simply overlooked Peter's question and just pressed forward with the particular parable he wanted to share.
 - Wedding feasts could last for as long as a week, so the time of someone's return was not always predictable. Servants had to be ready to serve whenever the master broke loose from the party to return home. Disciples should live in the same expectation.
- ⁴²The 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? ⁴³It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. ⁴⁴I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. ⁴⁶The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.**
- Up to this point, our parable is virtually identical to the one just before it (last week's text). **He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.**
 - Now things are different. Jesus threatens eternal judgment to those who misuse his grace.
 - For such a steward there is no reward, only severe judgment.
 - The "servant" here has not simply been lazy or indolent but monstrously unfaithful—a drunken glutton who beats not only men but women—an abuser of both divine trust and human life. His life is a grotesque perversion. When the master (Jesus) returns, the cruel servant suffers a grisly end, and Christ pronounces him to be an "unbeliever."³
 - The key to the passage is the dismemberment (*dichotomeō*) imagery and the idea of having a portion with the unfaithful.
 1. The steward is not given a mere beating, but a mortal blow and a total separation.
 2. It represents a total rejection—a painful death as opposed to a mere *punishment*.
 3. This type of punishment is the most severe possible.
 4. The imagery of dismemberment is rendered too softly in many English translations (for example, "punish him" in RSV; see Betz 1964).
 5. This servant is rejected—as Matthew 24:51 says, placed among the hypocrites where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 - Such servants may also include those who destroy God's temple in 1 Corinthians 3:16–17, who in turn are destroyed by God.
 1. These are the false teachers Acts 20:26–35 warns about and leaders like those condemned in 1 Timothy 3:3.
 2. In sum, they do not end up in heaven but are exposed for their unbelief and end up in hell with the rest of the totally unfaithful.
 - In the first parable, we have essentially **two categories**:
 1. Servants that obey (and are thus rewarded), and

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998), 60–67.

2. **Servant that disobey** (and are thus punished). However,

- In the following section, we're given a third category. The first two categories are still present, but now **a third group is described:**

3. **Servants that unknowingly disobey.**

⁴⁷**That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows.**

- This is the second group: **Servant that disobey** (and are thus punished). But next is the third:

⁴⁸**But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows.**

- Here, is the answer to Peter's question.
- Peter had asked if Jesus had given the previous parable to just the Twelve or to everyone.
- Now we see that **Jesus will require an accounting from everyone**—even from those that are unaware that they will be required to provide an accounting for their actions.
- The difference here is that **Jesus recognizes that there are people (servants) that do things deserving of punishment, but don't necessarily recognize it.**
- This, I think, is at least partly an answer to the ever-present question: **What about those that have never heard the name of Jesus?** Those, for example, who live in dark jungles? Will they be judged by God?
- In short, Jesus says, **"Yes, they will be called to give an account. HOWEVER, they will not be punished nearly as vigorously as the people in group two.**
- But notice something interesting here: Like the passage in Romans 2, there seems to be an assumption that, although they will be judged by whatever knowledge they actually possess; **it is assumed that they will not use the knowledge in the way they should.**
- In other words, **Jesus does not offer a fourth category:**
 4. Those that **unknowingly** obey.
- Like Romans 2, it seems to be assumed that **people will consistently misuse whatever knowledge they have access to.**
- The Lord then concludes by stating,

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."

- **Marvin Vincent, "The more you have, the greater your chance of honor—and the greater your peril."**⁴
- **John 9:39-41, "Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.' ⁴⁰Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, 'What? Are we blind too?' ⁴¹Jesus said, 'If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.'"**
- **Those of us who are most familiar with the Word of God will be held most accountable before him.**⁵
- This section has conceptual parallels to 1 Corinthians 3:15—these are saved, but as through fire. The more one knows, the greater one's responsibility.⁶

⁴ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Bellingham: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2002).

⁵ Gavin Childress, *Opening Up Luke's Gospel* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 118–119.

⁶ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (The IVP New Testament commentary series Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

- It is important that we remember the larger context of this passage. Jesus began this section by teaching on the kingdom of God, and the marks that demonstrate citizenship in that kingdom.
- **Luke 12:31-34**, “But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. ³²Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
- The stress here is on how unattached disciples should be to the world, since they serve the kingdom of God. The virtue is not in giving up one’s possessions but in being generous with resources.
- So the setting is dealing with money and the way we view it and possessions.
- **Ephesians 4:28**, “He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.”
- **John Piper**, “There are three levels of how to live with things: (1) you can steal to get; (2) or you can work to get; (3) or you can work to get in order to give. Too many professing Christians live on level two. Almost all the forces of our culture urge them to live on level two. But the Bible pushes us relentlessly to level three... Why does God bless us with abundance? So we can have enough to live on, and then use the rest for all manner of good works that alleviate spiritual and physical misery. Enough for us; abundance for others. The issue is not how much a person makes. Big industry and big salaries are a fact of our times, and they are not necessarily evil. The evil is in being deceived into thinking a six-digit salary must be accompanied by a six-digit lifestyle. God has made us to be conduits of His grace. The danger is in thinking the conduit should be lined with gold. It shouldn’t. Copper will do.”⁷
- **2 Corinthians 9:8**, “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”
- **John Piper**, “Jesus is talking about our basic approach to life. Are we anxious and lacking trust in God, constantly trying to gain control of things that often are beyond our control? Or do we trust God to provide and concentrate on honoring relationships by pursuing righteousness and serving others with our resources? Two things tell us the answers to these questions: our heart and our pocketbook. Our heart can tell us if we are anxious, and our pocketbook can tell us if we are generous. Both tell us if we are trusting God.”⁸
- Wedding feasts could last for as long as a week, so the time of someone’s return was not always predictable.⁹
- There is spiritual exposure in lack of preparedness. The thief image suggests that the risks of unpreparedness are great.
- A steward’s job was to serve, not to exercise power.¹⁰

⁷ John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of A Christian Hedonist* (Portland: Multnomah Publishers, Inc, 1986), 202-203.

⁸ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Luke 12:22.

⁹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (The IVP New Testament commentary series Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

¹⁰ Gavin Childress, *Opening Up Luke's Gospel* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 118-119.

- The key to the passage is the dismemberment (*dichotomeō*) imagery and the idea of having a portion with the unfaithful. The Greek speaks of the “unfaithful,” but contextually, given the judgment imagery, the NIV is correct to render this term *unbelievers*. The steward is not given a mere beating, but a mortal blow and a total separation. It represents a total rejection—a painful death as opposed to a punishment. This type of punishment is the most severe possible. The imagery of dismemberment is rendered too softly in many English translations (for example, “punish him” in RSV; see Betz 1964).
- Here the servant is still culpable for his failure, but his punishment is a *few blows*, a discipline less severe than the previous two. Both the possibilities in verses 47–48 have conceptual parallels in Paul’s remarks in 1 Corinthians 3:15—these are saved, but as through fire. The more one knows, the greater one’s responsibility.
- Those in Christian leadership may profess what they will, but if that man or woman consistently behaves in an unchristian way, he or she is not a true believer.
- **Ephesians 5:5-6**, “For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.”
- **1 John 3:10**, “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.”
- **Corinthians 9:23-27**, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. ²⁷No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”