

Message Summary

Jesus puts his teaching about the temporary nature of money (12:13-34) into eternal perspective through instructions concerning His second coming (12:35-48). Attitudes towards Christ's second coming today tend towards extremes: speculating (unsuccessfully!) exactly when and how Christ will return, or ignoring the imminence of his return altogether. Jesus command is entirely different way: be ready for my return through hard work and responsible stewardship. Christ's first coming was *"not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Mk. 10:45). His disciples are to wait with eager anticipation for his second coming, when he will come to judge the world and establish the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21-22).

His disciples' waiting, however, must not be passive. Christ commands his disciples to *"stay dressed for action"* (v. 35) - literally, to gird up our loincloths and be ready for diligent service. Responsible stewardship and hard work are the means by which Jesus instructs his disciples to be ready for his second coming. This work involves our jobs, by which we serve our neighbors, create value, and typically earn our daily sustenance for our families and those in need. But it most especially means our spiritual service: to share the gospel, to make disciples, to be missional, and to serve Jesus' purposes in our lives, which are possible regardless of our specific circumstances. Christ's disciples stay ready for his return by getting busy about kingdom work.

Two parables clarify. First, Jesus compares our waiting to servants waiting for their Master to return from a wedding feast (vv. 35-40). Not knowing when their Master would return, some servants slept. But the faithful servants stayed awake, late into the night. Amazingly, the Master promises to serve the faithful servants while they recline at the table! Jesus promises to those who have received his service of salvation through his death during his first coming, with the result that they live a life of ambitious service as they await his return, that he will continue serving them through eternity. Second, Jesus compares our waiting to a *"faithful and wise manager"* (v. 42) entrusted with his master's household (vv. 41-48). Some servants were not ready, as evidenced by their anger and gluttony. Only the faithful and wise servants over their Master's property, ready at his return, are entrusted with more. Anticipating their Master's return made these faithful servants not lazy, but loving.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

How have you typically heard Christ's second coming talked about, if at all? Is Christ's practical command surprising in light of the common speculations and predictions that surround us?

In 12:37, Christ promises to forever serve faithful servants as they recline. Should this be surprising for servants to hear? How does Christ's service to us, especially in his first coming, undergird and enable our faithfulness to Him?

The Thessalonians were tempted towards sloth by thinking of Christ's second coming as an excuse to wait idly by. Is this still a temptation for us? How does Paul combat it (see esp. 1 Thes. 5:12-22; 2 Thes. 3:6-13)?

Who are some examples of Christ followers in the Bible who were ambitious for kingdom service? (For starters, consider Job 1:5; Mk. 1:35-39; Rm. 15:18-21; 2 Cor. 11:23-30) Who are some modern day examples?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. In what areas are you/your family using Christ's sovereignty and promise to return as an excuse for laziness? In what areas are you neglecting the promise of his return and turning your hard work towards worldly ends rather than kingdom purposes (cf. 2 Pt. 3:3-12)?
2. Is it a temptation to work at your job just to make a paycheck? How do Christ's commands correct that mindset?
3. What most often keeps us from ambitiously pursuing kingdom purposes? Are there any specific barriers that make you prone to waste time (such as addictions, time-wasters, technological distractions)? Share some with the group. What can you do this week to cast them aside (cf. Heb. 12:1-2)?
4. How can you work harder at your job to love people practically? In what ways can you use your influence, skills, relationships, and time at your job for kingdom purposes?
5. What are your spiritual gifts? (If you are not sure, review the lists in Rm. 12:6-8; 1 Pt. 4:7-11. Take some time as a family/small group to help one another discern.) How can you better steward these spiritual gifts to serve Christ Fellowship Church?
6. How can you better steward your relationships and conversations this week for intentional kingdom purposes?
7. Is there any area of spiritual service you feel called to as a result of hearing this sermon, whether it is new altogether or something you have been neglecting? What steps can you take this week to begin pursuing it?
8. For families: How can you more intentionally pursue prayer, Bible study, and spiritual conversation as a family together this week to spiritually nurture and care for one another (see 1 Thes. 2:7-12)?
9. For singles: How can you steward your gift of singleness as an opportunity for undistracted kingdom service (see esp. 1 Cor. 7:32-35)?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for sending Christ the first time to serve his church, and give his life as a ransom for us. Thank him also for entrusting so many resources to Christ Fellowship Church (sound leadership, finances, relationships, spiritual gifts, etc.)
 - Pray that God would grant our church hard work and diligent service.
 - Pray that God would use our church's spiritual gifts for one another's mutual edification.
 - Pray that the Lord would raise up both better and more disciples at Christ Fellowship Church.
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray that the Lord would use this passage and sermon to begin many new ministries and small groups from our church in the Gadsden community.
 - Pray that the Lord would enable Christ Fellowship Church to be salt and light at our respective jobs.
 - Pray for the international students at Gadsden State, that the Lord would bless the relationships already formed and raise up many workers for this ripe harvest field.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for Christ Fellowship Church to not sleep, but be awake, to the many unreached people groups around the world. Spend some time with the Joshua Project (<https://joshuaproject.net>) and Operation World (<http://www.operationworld.org>) learning about and praying for some of these groups now.