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Sermon Notes

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## **Constantly Ready, Consistently Faithful**

### **Matthew 24:42-51**

#### I. Timing Uncertain, But Christ's Expectations Are Not

##### A. Simple Fact: Exact Timing of Christ's Return is Unknown

1. He says this again and again in these chapters

***Matthew 24:36-39 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>37</sup> As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; <sup>39</sup> and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.***

***Matthew 24:42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.***

***Matthew 24:44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.***

2. His parables usually imply a long delay between the first and second comings
  - a. The wise and wicked stewards implies a long delay, since the servants have time to begin thinking the master is staying away a long time
  - b. The parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins also openly states this:

***Matthew 25:5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.***

- c. And the parable of the talents:

***Matthew 25:19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.***

3. So the overall impact is BE CONSTANTLY VIGILANT and CONSISTENTLY FAITHFUL

B. Key Issue: How Shall We Live Until Then

II. The Necessity of Constant Readiness... that Nothing Be Lost

***Matthew 24:43-44 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup> So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.***

A. Simple Parable

1. Two characters: the owner of a house, and a thief in the night
2. One simple question: will the thief be able to plunder the house by stealth?
  - a. Jesus uses a preposterous concept... that the thief would send a notice to a homeowner saying "I am going to be in your neighborhood tonight; I plan on making your home the third one I hit in the evening, after the Smith and the Jones places; I should be by somewhere between 2-3 a.m. I will come in the back door with a flashlight and I'll try not to make too much noise."
  - b. Obviously, if the thief were completely truthful, the owner could just set his alarm for 1:55 a.m., get up and keep watch for just five minutes and keep his house from been plundered
  - c. But since NO THIEF would ever do that, constant vigilance is required for a threatened homeowner who wants to keep his things safe
3. The Issue: the loss of something valuable
  - a. The owner has valuable possessions... gold and silver coins, family heirlooms, carpets, dishes, tableware, other precious possessions
  - b. So also the Christian is threatened with the loss of something valuable: either his eternal soul if he's not a Christian or the loss of rewards if he is a Christian who doesn't live his life constantly ready for the Coming of the Lord
    - i) The loss of the soul

***Matthew 16:26-27 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.***

- ii) The loss of rewards

***1 Corinthians 3:12-15*** *If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup> his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup> If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. <sup>15</sup> If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.*

B. "Like a Thief in the Night"

1. Very famous expression: Peter, Paul, and John all pick up on it later

Paul: ***1 Thessalonians 5:1-2*** *Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, <sup>2</sup> for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.*

Peter: ***2 Peter 3:10*** *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.*

John : ***Revelation 3:3*** *Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.*

2. Jesus is not comparing Himself MORALLY to a thief in the night, any more than He is comparing God morally to the unjust judge that the persistent widow wears out
3. Rather the simple idea is YOU DON'T KNOW THE DAY OR THE HOUR as we have already said
4. "Thief in the night" also a famous expression for those who hold to the "Secret Rapture" theory

***A Thief in the Night*** is a 1972 [Christian end times film](#) produced by [Russell S. Doughten](#). It is the first and best known film in Doughten's four-part series on the [Rapture](#) and [Second Coming of Christ](#). The films together are often referred to collectively as the "Thief" or "Rapture" series.

5. The concept is that only by the sudden and secret rapture of the church can this "thief in the night" analogy be fulfilled...
6. But this is false, because the idea just has to do with how EXPECTED the Second Coming of Christ is, not whether the whole thing will come and go without anyone knowing about it
7. Listen again to 2 Peter 3:

***2 Peter 3:10*** *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.*

See... it's not the RAPTURE that comes as a thief in the night... it's the "day of the Lord" or the Second Coming and Judgment Day that comes as a thief in the night

So also Paul's use of the expression refers not to the Secret Rapture when Christ's true bride is carried away in the night, but to the open and devastating judgment of sinners:

***1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, <sup>2</sup> for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.***

What is so amazing is how Paul continues on this theme of the "thief in the night":

***1 Thessalonians 5:4-10 But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup> You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. <sup>7</sup> For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. <sup>9</sup> For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>10</sup> He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.***

Paul's whole assertion is that the true believers in Christ will not be surprised at the Second Coming, but will be ready, not shocked as though we had no idea it was coming.

We may not know the day or the hour, but we can be constantly vigilant and ready at all times

### C. Not Getting Ready... Keeping Ready

Ray Steadman: In a small country store a faithful churchgoing lady came to do her shopping. Two or three young men from the town were standing around passing the time of day, and knowing that she was a Christian, they began to taunt her. "We hear you're expecting Jesus to come back," they said. "I sure am," she replied brightly. "Do you really believe he's coming?" they asked. "Sure as you're born," she answered. They said, "Well you'd better hurry home and get ready, he might be on the way!" She turned and fixed her tormentors with a look. "I don't have to get ready," she said, "I keep ready!"

1. So how do we "keep ready"
2. Not by gazing constantly into the sky, wearing white robes and sitting on the roofs of our houses like the followers of William Miller did in 1843.
3. Rather by continuing to labor at the tasks the Lord Jesus has assigned to us until He returns

4. That's the point of the next parable: the Faithful and Unfaithful Stewards

### III. The Blessedness of Consistent Faithfulness... an Eternal Reward

***Matthew 24:45-51*** ***"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?"*** <sup>46</sup> ***It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.*** <sup>47</sup> ***I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.*** <sup>48</sup> ***But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,'*** <sup>49</sup> ***and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards.*** <sup>50</sup> ***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.*** <sup>51</sup> ***He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***

A. Rhetorical Question: What Does a Faithful Servant Do While Waiting for His Master?

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is defining faithfulness for us
2. He begins by asking a rhetorical question which He will then answer with the parable, both positively and negatively

B. The Faithful and Wise Servant, Put in a Position of Responsibility

1. First and foremost, he is a SERVANT
  - a. The master is in charge, not the servant
  - b. Unlike the last parable, this man is NOT a homeowner, but a servant who owns nothing in the house
  - c. This servant is accountable to the master for everything he does
2. Secondly, he is a steward put in a position of vast responsibility

***whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?***

- a. Like Joseph who ran Potiphar's house, this servant has been chosen for a very important job
- b. The servant is put in charge of the servants, so he is a man under authority, with others under him
- c. The KJV calls him a ruler in the household... he has authority

- d. He also has the job to FEED the household with their daily food... a vital job
- e. Without that being done properly, the whole estate will be shut down
- f. The APOSTLES: Jesus is sitting on the Mount of Olives talking to those chosen men, the apostles, to whom Christ is going to entrust this same responsibility
- g. Their job is not to stand gazing at the clouds after Christ has ascended to the heavens, but specifically to govern and FEED the flock of Christ
  - i) They would have authority to rule, but it was the authority of a steward who would someday give an account
  - ii) They would have responsibility to FEED the church of Christ SOUND DOCTRINE... a steady diet of the word of God
  - iii) It was specifically to this that Jesus reinstated Peter after Christ's resurrection

***John 21:15-17 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." <sup>16</sup> Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." <sup>17</sup> The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.***

- h. The food for the sheep is the word of God

***Acts 2:41-42 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. <sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.***

- 3. Christ wanted to be sure these apostles were FAITHFUL AND WISE
  - a. These are the two adjectives Christ uses to describe the way we should be carrying out our lives in light of the Second Coming
  - b. Faithful = trustworthy to do what the master has entrusted to you
    - i) What is your ministry?
    - ii) What spiritual gifts has the Lord given to you

iii) Are you being faithful?

c. Wise= sensible, sober-minded, not carried away by laziness or love of pleasure, not distracted by the things of this life

4. However, the concepts extend beyond the ministry of the apostles to include ALL the servants of Christ... everyone is entrusted with some responsibility in God's house... we are to continue faithfully working that ministry until the Second Coming of Christ or until our own deaths

#### C. Words of Blessing on the Faithful and Wise Steward

*ESV Matthew 24:46 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.*

1. Blessed = eternally happy because of the pleasure of the Master
2. The master suddenly arrives and finds the servant doing what he has always been doing... faithfully discharging his duties
3. The steward looks up in surprise and JOY at the master's return... he is not ashamed, he is delighted to see the master
4. The other servants in the house are well-led and well-fed... the house is orderly and fruitful; everything is just as the master commanded it to be

#### D. Rewards for the Faithful and Wise Steward

*Matthew 24:47 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.*

1. Faithfulness now means GREATER RESPONSIBILITY in heaven
2. This is the consistent teaching of the Bible
  - a. The Parable of the Talents

*Matthew 25:20-21 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' <sup>21</sup> 'His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'*

*Matthew 25:22-23 "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' <sup>23</sup> 'His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'*

**Matthew 25:28-29** *"Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. <sup>29</sup> For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.*

b. The Parable of the Minas

**Luke 19:16-19** *"The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' <sup>17</sup> 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' <sup>18</sup> "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' <sup>19</sup> "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'*

3. Heaven will be a place of great busyness and productivity, with positions of responsibility for which we are auditioning NOW by how faithfully we are doing what the Lord told us to do

#### IV. The Curse of Treacherous Laziness... an Eternal Punishment

**Matthew 24:48-51** *But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' <sup>49</sup> and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. <sup>50</sup> 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. <sup>51</sup> He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

##### A. The Character and Behavior of the Wicked Servant

1. Wicked = rebellious, treacherous, defiant
2. Presumptuous: he says to himself, "My master is staying away a long time..."
3. Tyrannical: he uses his position of power to BEAT his fellow servants... though they are essentially equal to him (they are all servants) and he is just in a temporary position of authority over them, yet he forgets all this and behaves as a tyrant
4. Self-serving, lazy, indulgent
  - a. Eating, drinking
  - b. Drunkards... a life of fleshly indulgence

**James 5:5** *You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.*

5. This is a servant who has forgotten that he is merely a servant and that the true Master is coming back unexpectedly and will settle accounts

## B. The Shock of the Wicked Servant

***Matthew 24:50*** *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.*

## C. The Judgment of the Wicked Servant

***Matthew 24:51*** *He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

1. Exceptionally harsh language... always reserved for those sent to hell
2. Jesus is saying people who do not live faithfully and expectantly in light of the Second Coming of Christ are not truly Christians... their self-indulgent, lazy, faithless, unbelieving lifestyles reveals who they really are
3. That is why the word “hypocrite” is used here... these folks are exposed by the way they refused to serve Christ

## V. Application

### A. Come to Christ!!

### B. Understand Human Sin Patterns in Reference to the Second Coming

#### 1. Careless unpreparedness

- a. These parables teach a constant vigilance for the Second Coming needed
- b. We tend to be thoughtless... to not think through the idea, “What will it be like when Christ comes back? What is He leading me to do to get ready?”
- c. The Five Foolish Virgins in Matthew 25 were simply **THOUGHTLESS** about what that day would require, what would be needed when the bridegroom came
- d. **CARELESS UNPREPAREDNESS** is a rank form of unbelief which says at core, “I don’t really believe the Second Coming will happen, or that it will be that big a deal... there’s nothing I need to do now to get ready for it!”

#### 2. Biding time... pacing ourselves

- a. The wicked steward in the second parable doesn’t want to exert himself for any length of time
- b. He just wants to be found doing the right thing when the Master returns...
- c. He is “pacing himself”, treading water, because he never learned how find strength in Christ

- d. The tasks of faithfulness in this sin-cursed world seem so overwhelming... so difficult to grow faithfully in Christ; so difficult to be a witness for Christ; so difficult to be about the Master's business 24-7... so we pace ourselves

### 3. Laziness

- a. Another root sin pattern is laziness... to aversion to hard work and discipline
- b. We all have sluggard tendencies inside us... like the wicked servant who refused to do his job

### 4. Procrastination: why do today what I can put off till tomorrow? After all, there will be plenty of time, won't there be? Christ has delayed for two thousand years, it'll probably be a long time before Christ returns

- a. Christ addresses that with both of these parables, as well as the Parable of the Ten Virgins
- b. The owner of the home who procrastinates watching for the thief to break in, who assumes it'll be some other night and doesn't get himself ready, will find himself robbed of all his valuables
- c. The steward whom the master put in charge of the servants, says to himself, "My master is staying away a long time..." and then leads a luxurious lifestyle, assuming there will be time to make everything right later
- d. The Five Foolish Virgins
- e. Procrastination is a PRIDEFUL sin, an arrogant assumption that we will be alive tomorrow and that we can get everything ready then
- f. Presumption: I assume there will be time to get everything ready at the end or that Christ will understand why I wasn't found ready

### 5. Self-indulgence

- a. The reason we don't live in light of the Second Coming day after day is that we like to feed our flesh
- b. The wicked servant in the second parable used what he thought was plenty of time until the master returned to eat and drink with drunkards... in short, to indulge the flesh

### 6. Prideful abuse of power: angry tyranny

- a. The servant put in charge of the master's house was put there to care for the other servants
- b. Instead he abused his position of power and abused them
- c. He displayed pride, anger and tyranny
- d. None of these could possibly happen in a man who expects the master to return at any moment, whose power and authority are unquestionable
- e. This man was a prideful bully, forgetting that he would someday have to give an account for his actions

7. Unbelief: out of sight, out of mind

- a. A uniting feature in these parables is the phenomenon "Out of sight out of mind"
- b. In the first parable, the thief who MAY come at some point in the future is dealt with only by faith... he is an invisible threat, not a visible one
- c. And the absentee master is likewise dealt with only by faith... the servant has to consider in his mind the responses of an absentee master to whom he will give an account when he returns
- d. Also, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen"
- e. Faith is not a natural thing with us, but a supernatural... unless our faith is strong, the Second Coming of Christ will fade from our minds, and more urgent and pressing issues that connect with our own fleshly tendencies will press themselves to the surface

8. Misunderstanding of Judgment Day

- a. It is natural for us to misunderstand Judgment Day and think the master can be duped by a patched-up effort at the end
- b. The good servant knows his master will be able to tell the difference between a job well done and one that's done poorly
- c. Suppose the master of that wicked servant came when he did expect him to and he hurriedly got ready and cleaned the house and put in two or three good weeks of service before he returned... would that make him a faithful steward?
- d. Isn't it highly likely that the servants he mistreated would give a full and accurate report to their master of how it went all along?

- e. So also Judgment Day will be an accounting for how every day has gone, not just the ones at the end

9. Weariness and Discouragement over the long delay

- a. It is natural to get weary over how long the need for constant vigilance is taking while waiting for the thief to come and rob the house
- b. It is natural to feel discouragement over the need for constant faithfulness when it seems the master will never return

10. Hypocrisy:

- a. acting like we believe in the Second Coming, when we really don't
- b. acting like Jesus is our Master and King, when He really isn't
- c. hypocrites do not live in light of the Second Coming... they are play acting... and the glorious light of the Second Coming will reveal everything as it really is

11.

C. Be Constantly Vigilant

1. The eyes of the heart must be consistently upward, looking upward and ahead to things above and things to come
2. Satan is constantly seeking to pull the eyes of the DOWNWARD and INWARD to our own comforts and pleasures, and away from the work of the Kingdom
3. Be holy in your daily life... resolve, like Jonathan Edwards, never to be found doing anything you would be ashamed to be found doing when the Lord returns

D. Be Consistently Faithful

1. The kind of expectancy Christ envisages here is extremely active
  - a. The faithful and wise steward is spending all his time ruling the household wisely and feeding them at the proper time... he is busy, busy, busy
  - b. But always in his mind, he is anticipating the reunion with the master
  - c. So also the stewards in the parable of the talents are very busy, out trading with their master's money to be able to give him a full return on His investment when He returns

d. Two infinite journeys:

- i) In light of the Second Coming, purify yourself from all evil
- ii) In light of the Second Coming, advance the Kingdom of Christ by sacrificial service in evangelism and missions

2. Spiritual gift ministry

a. We are not called to be apostles, though some have leadership and teaching responsibilities

- i) This is a special warning to ELDERS to govern God's household well and to FEED the sheep with sound doctrine
- ii) We are to be laying out a doctrinal FEAST week by week for the people of God

b. However, as I have mentioned, there is a general exhortation to ALL of Christ's servants to be faithful in whatever calling God has entrusted to you

- i) If your gift is serving, serve until Christ returns... serve fully, serve humbly, serve constantly
- ii) If your gift is administration, organize and manage the things of the church wisely... BUSY BUSY BUSY until Christ returns and takes the task out of your tired hands
- iii) If your gift is giving, give faithfully, generously, with a cheerful heart, expecting to be rewarded fully when the Lord returns
- iv) If your gift is prayer, pray without ceasing, interceding for the people of God and the mission of God until you are exhausted... then let the Lord renew you and do it all over again

E. Repent of Any Worldly Self-Serving Tendencies

1. Perhaps you see a little of the wicked servant in your own heart...
2. Perhaps you have been living more for the things of this world than for the tasks the master gave you to do
3. Perhaps you see some gluttonous tendencies in your life... no, not drunkenness, but drunk with the things of this life: food, fun, hobbies, possessions, worldly entertainments, clothes, etc.
4. Perhaps this sermon is an opportunity for you to repent and get ready for the Second Coming of Christ