

07.12.26

Luke

Chapter 12 - An Unforeseen Disclosure

The Thief Few Ever See (vs. 35-40)

Luke 12:35-40: “Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”

I believe "be ready" is repeated several times. So, what does He want us to be? Ready. He interjects "wedding" in the passage. Have you ever noticed how many times "wedding" is used in the New Testament? "Wedding" is used really to parallel, in many respects, the kingdom of God. One text we'll read in Matthew, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who was given a wedding feast for his son. And it goes into explanation. In Matthew 25, we have a picture of 10 virgins waiting for the groom to come down. And it is a picture of a wedding that gives us the picture of the coming of the Savior. He will oftentimes do this. It is the picture of the wedding in the 1st century, as a wedding was done in that particular time, that describes this. Once again, I oftentimes make mention that Scripture was not written in a vacuum. It was written in a time and a date. So, the time and the date is just as inspired as the event itself. So, when God is talking about sheep, it was more at that particular time, but we're understanding from that perspective what a shepherd did and how he worked. And God gives us in that context what a shepherd was really about. "Wedding" is then therefore used continually as that kind

of example and will be so in this particular passage as it will be an impetus to literally be ready for whatever, because of the way that the weddings were done at this particular time, these servants had to be ready for the groom.

The picture is used as well in the Old Testament, and we have made mention of that as well in Psalm 19. In Psalm 19, it actually gives a picture of the sun rising, and as the sun rises, it's the picture of the groom coming. It actually states that in Psalm 19. You can read that. But the question is, why would that be a picture of the groom coming? Once again, in the context of that tradition of that particular time, what would happen is, and why you have those virgins with their lamps, is they'd be lined up along the street, and as they would see the groom coming, they would light the lamp as they would see him. So, it'd be like the sun rising. And so, once again, God gives us that picture every morning of the groom coming. As Scripture will tell us, He's going to come from the east. So, no surprises there. All of this is just a great analogy

and a great parallel that God gives us to help us understand this passage better.

This chapter is written at the beginning in the context of a mob surrounding Jesus. And I just want to read the beginning of it, once again, in verse 1.

(Luke 12:1) "Under these circumstances..."

So, here again, Luke wants us to know the circumstances that were surrounding what then follows in the things that he states.

"Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

Jesus is actually telling us that we live in a world of mass hysteria. It pushes us in many ways and tramples upon us by sometimes intimidation, other times by irrational beliefs, frenzied emotions; all kinds of things begin to come into our lives and begin to shift us around. I guess the way that it's best put in Ephesians 4 is that we

oftentimes are like the surf of the sea, that we're driven and tossed by every wind and wave of doctrine. And we hear what some people are saying, and we're moved this way. Sometimes it's the fads that pushes us. Sometimes it's the peer pressure that pushes us. But we're being moved in so many ways. And the problem is that we're being not only moved by virtue of their songs, but we're being moved away from truth. And this is one of the things that Jesus is telling the disciples. The one thing I want you to be aware of is the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Now, once again, hypocrisy is the opposite of truth. So, it's living a life that's a lie. It's putting on a mask. It's being somebody that you're not. And the fundamentals of this is that people are looking for some kind of hope, they're looking for some kind of answers, and unfortunately, the leadership will oftentimes veer off into a realm that is not productive and even harmful. In this particular setting, the Pharisees, the religious leaders, were the very ones that were pushing them away. I mean, you might hear the right thing, but then you begin to look at the way that people live, and you go, "Well, that's the way they live; that must be the

way that we do it." So, then you deny the truth and you separate yourself from the truth.

It's interesting, actually Luke is the only one that would make reference to this. But if you look with me in Luke 16, in this particular context, He talks about money. Money is usually one of the things that we focus on.

And His statement is in verse 14,

(Luke 16:14) "Now the Pharisees (religious leaders), who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things..."

That was no secret. I mean, everybody knew that they were. In fact, that was one of the reasons why Jesus would say, "It's hard for a rich men to get into the kingdom of heaven." And the disciples go, "Well, then who can be saved?" Because they knew the Pharisees were rich. These religious leaders were the guys that were rich. So, the perspective was that it would almost be impossible because their perception was that wealth was that sign that you were blessed by God. Jesus is going to turn this stuff around, but this particular chapter is going to reveal that when you begin to suppress the truth, you then feel like you have to have something to fill the void.

And we've gone through the chapter before, but I just want to once again emphasize the process. The process is that once we suppress the truth, we have an emptiness, we try to fill it with what? Money, things, possessions. And that's why He sticks in the passage that there was a young man that cries out, "Lord, tell my brother to give me my part of the inheritance." And He goes, "Beware of all kinds of greed, avarice." And probably the best description of greed is, in its simplicity, is more. And the perception is that "If I could just have more of the world, more, whatever it is." And there's all kinds of greed, right? But it's that whatever is in the world is never enough. So, you're always clamoring for more. You just need more. And what begins to happen is that as you begin to get more, it gives an interesting example of one who tears down his barns and he builds bigger barns. The perception is that's your security, that's your safety, but that very night he would die and his soul would be required of him. Then Jesus goes in and He turns to His disciples and He goes, "And let me tell you something, this is a source of your anxiety. Because you're worried about what you're going to put on, you're worried about

what you're going to eat, you're worried about all these kind of things. He says, this is what makes you anxious. You're thinking, 'I need more.' And by pursuit of more, it just breeds more anxiety. And it causes you to be in a place in which you're indecisive because you're making all your decisions based on 'Will it give me more?' You can't make a decision based on what is right and wrong. You're acquiescing to all kinds of horrible things. And so, you find yourself in this quagmire of indecisiveness." And He says, "That's called worry." He turns and He says, "You don't need to do that. I mean, I take care of the birds, I take care of the flowers. Don't worry, I've got you. Focus on Me, love Me, I'll take care of you. Seek My kingdom, I'll take care of you." You go, "Well, but don't I need to go after more?" And He says, "No," and He answers that in this passage.

If you pick up with me, in verse 35, He'll start off with, (Luke 12:35) "Be dressed in readiness..."

Now, once again, it's interesting. It's in the context of the wedding, and we're going to talk about this a little bit more. But in this particular setting, He's dealing with the

servants of the wedding. It's also making reference to, of course, the fact that the bride has to make herself ready. But nevertheless, it's the emphasis of the servants of this passage.

It says,

"Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit."

Keep your light alive. I oftentimes think of a lighthouse. Scripture tells us that the church is like a city set on a hill, like a light. Let your light so shine before men, they would see your good work. You don't want to hide it under a bushel. You want to keep it shining. And they say that even with all the technology that we have, in many places, the lighthouse is still that one thing that they can depend on. The unfortunate thing is that on occasions, there have been lighthouses that haven't been shining when they should have. And because of that, many shipwrecks have happened because the light wasn't consistent. This particular passage is making reference to that in particular, in which He says, "And keep your lamps lit." Keep them lighting all the time. It's that consistency that really brings about the greater testimony, isn't it?

And saves. Because you never know when things are going to happen. And that's going to be one of the themes of the passage. You never know. I mean, when is Christ coming? You don't know, right? So, when should I keep my light lit? All the time. Keep ready and be dressed in that way.

It then goes on and says in verse 36,

(Luke 12:36) "Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast..."

Now, the reason I believe why it puts it in the context of the wedding feast is that it's a joyous time. So, the waiting shouldn't be, "Oh, we've got to wait again." It should be, "I can hardly wait!" And that's the way that we should be waiting.

Paul will make mention of this if you look with me in 2 Timothy 4. He'll make mention of this specifically to Timothy. And as he makes mention of it, he begins to reveal that not only has he finished his course, but there is a crown that is given to those who do something. Now, I think sometimes we think, "The crown is given because I did great work." I actually got... I still have it... I had a

perfect attendance in the nursery between ages 0 and 2. I still have it. But I don't think it's going to matter. Anyway, 2 Timothy 4. I clearly digressed in that one.

2 Timothy 4, if you go on, Paul says,

(2 Timothy 4:7) "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

There's a clear consistency. And once again, I think sometimes our perception is, "You have no idea. I did a lot of good stuff back then." And God goes, "Okay, that's good. It doesn't matter." Read Ezekiel. It doesn't matter what you did. It matters how you finish. Finish. So, it's that continuance that goes on.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

(2 Timothy 4:8) in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

What he's talking about, of course, is the heart that is longing for Him, and it's like a wedding. See, that's why

he's putting it in that context. You should be seeking Him like a wedding.

James 1 will give you another example of this if you look in the passage, because, of course, James is dealing with the fact that you're dealing with trials and you're dealing with tribulation. And in those trials and tribulations, sometimes waiting is a part of that. And what James is saying within the passage is that you want to be careful about the way that you wait.

(James 1:2) "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

(James 1:3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance."

He's making you stronger. He's using difficulty in your life to build something called endurance, which we don't naturally have.

He then goes on to say that this faith not only grows stronger, but it keeps you from being unstable, because the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed; he's unstable in all his ways.

So, it goes on and says this in verse 12,

(James 1:12) "Blessed is a man who perseveres..."

Now, that would be, you know, you hang in there. That's a picture of hanging in there.

"Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

What's the context? The context is, love is shown by persevering. One of the greatest ways that you demonstrate your love for God is by persevering, by hanging in there, by being ready, by looking for Him, by longing for Him, because you love Him. See? Every man who has this hope in Him purifies himself as He is pure. So, it's that heart that really desires and longs for.

And it is within this passage in Luke 12 that that's the heart He's wanted to draw out. That's why He uses the analogy of the wedding in particular, that blessed are those who are waiting for their master like they would be waiting for a wedding feast.

"... so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks.

(Luke 12:37) Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them."

That's an amazing thought if in fact Jesus has given the analogy in any way, that when He sees us in that day and we're waiting anxiously for Him, that He's just going to sit us down at the table, and probably not unlike John 13, washing His disciples' feet. That's almost unimaginable, isn't it? But it gives that wonderful picture in which there's that sense of reward because of the way that they were longing for Him. We, once again, put things in context of perhaps great deeds that we've done or something like that, and we're going to be rewarded great because of it. I think you better look at the heart. Man looks at the outward appearance, God, the heart, and God's looking at your motives and why you do what you do. And you're longing for Him. This is what He rewards.

We've oftentimes made mention of that one young lady, Tangia, who was part of our church, who's literally a paraplegic. She couldn't do hardly anything. I mean, the only way she could steer her chair was by her mouth. And I've never seen a happier person, and I've never seen a more encouraging person. And she would oftentimes tell me, "Pastor Gary, there's so much I want to do for the Lord." And I said, "Tangia, it's as good as done because you wanted to do it." And it's that heart that wants to do it that God's looking for. I mean, there are a lot of people that do a lot of work, but they didn't want to do it. And they're going to get into heaven; I think it's going to be quite a surprise to them.

But anyway, dressed in these ways and blessed are the slaves that are actually expecting and anticipating the master coming.

(Luke 12:38) "Whether he comes in the second watch..."

Which would be basically from 9 p.m. to midnight.

"... or even in the third..."

I.e. midnight to 3 a.m.

"... and finds them so, blessed are those slaves."

The point is clear that even if it's in the middle of the night, if they're ready, they'll be blessed. See, it's a heart that's ready that He's looking for.

Luk 12:39) "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

(Luke 12:40) You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

A strange word that is used within the text is "thief". And we go, "Well, where does thief come into play?" Well, thief is an interesting thing because in the context of where we've gone is that man tries to fill a void with the things of the world, and then he begins to stockpile those things. He begins to hoard those things, and his confidence and his security is in those things. And then, one day, he wakes up and he finds out he was robbed. Now, what you're robbed of is not the things, but you find out that the things weren't the things that could supply security, hope, peace. And you wake up one day and it's gone. This is why the coming of the Lord, when He comes,

all these things will be wiped away. And you go, "I've been robbed." And God goes, "I told you not to invest in things that were temporal."

In fact, if you look with me in 2 Peter 3, I think we actually see the word once again pop up.

(2 Peter 3:9) "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

(2 Peter 3:10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."

(2 Peter 3:11) Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be..."

We'll put it another way. What should you be investing in? That's the question, right? Where's all your money going to? Where your treasure is, there your heart will follow.

(2 Peter 3:11) "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness."

You're investing in things that are valuable.

(2 Peter 3:12) "Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!"

It's all going. It's called "fire sale". And it's good to have one early, because if you don't, then you're going to find yourself extremely disappointed. You're going to say to yourself, "I've been robbed."

An example is given in Luke 17. I'll just give you a couple of passages that make reference to this. But in Luke 17, He actually goes back to the days of Noah.

(Luke 17:26) "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:

(Luke 17:27) they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until

the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."

"Well, we were investing in pleasures." He goes, "Well, you just got robbed because the flood came and destroyed all your pleasures. It destroyed all your pursuits."

It goes on and says in verse 28,

(Luke 17:28) "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

(Luke 17:29) but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

(Luke 17:30) It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

(Luke 17:31) On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back."

In other words, "I've got to save this stuff." And God goes, "I wouldn't worry about that."

(Luke 17:32) "Remember Lot's wife."

It's one of the smallest verses in all the Bible, but probably one of the most poignant in which it causes us to remember those things.

If you turn with me to 1 Thessalonians, we have another example of this as well. 1 Thessalonians 5.

The statement at the very beginning of this is,

(1 Thessalonians 5:1) "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.

(1 Thessalonians 5:2) For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

(1 Thessalonians 5:3) While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

(1 Thessalonians 5:4) But you, brethren..."

It actually puts a difference between they and you.

"But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;

(1 Thessalonians 5:5) for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;

(1 Thessalonians 5:6) so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.

(1 Thessalonians 5:7) For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.

(1 Thessalonians 5:8) But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

(1 Thessalonians 5:9) For God has not destined us for wrath..."

And one of the reasons why we are thoroughly convinced that we're not going to be at least at the end of the tribulation is the bowls of wrath of God. The Scripture says very clearly, why would God pour out bowls of wrath on His children?

"For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The passage is once again reminding us that you don't know the day or the hour. Let's just even set aside the fact of the Lord's coming. You don't know how long you're going to live. We just had a senator die. Nobody was expecting him to die. In fact, he had an interview today. So, you have no guarantees of anything. But the point is being dressed in readiness, and that's the emphasis. It puts it in the context of the wedding. And I just wanted to in some ways, give you an idea of what the whole wedding scene was about so that you might perhaps better understand when God interjects wedding, that He's doing that so that we might have a picture of His coming. So, you want a picture of His coming, right? Maybe understand it better. There are a lot of things that we'll never understand until it happens. But there's some things that He reveals to us. And one of the things that He reveals to us is that there's this pattern that describes a series of events that actually takes place that is paralleling the coming of Christ. So, it is the wedding.

The Jewish wedding of the 1st century, the time of Christ at that particular time, was broken down into basically 4 stages. The first stage was the betrothal. It is called the Kiddushin. It's initiated with Mahr, the bride price. That is to say that the groom pays for the bride. There's a price that's given in this. And there's a signing of the ketubah, which is the marriage contract. How the couple do this is that they drink wine to seal the agreement. There's an interesting picture in Luke 22 where Jesus turns His disciples and He says, "I've been looking forward to having this meal with you." And then He takes up the cup. Because what He's doing is He's initiating the betrothal. Now, the betrothal, you're married, but you're not living together. Very interesting. And you probably won't live together for another year, but you're married. And if you leave that person, that was the divorce. So, that's how powerful this betrothal is. But it's sealed with a price and a drink of wine. Very interesting.

The second stage that is given is what is called the interval. And it's where the groom returns to his father's house to prepare a living space for his bride. So, he goes

back to his father's house. So, was that John 14? "In My Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you." Well, that's a picture of the wedding. The picture of the wedding is Christ will go back and He'll prepare a place. And what's interesting about this is that during this time, the bride will make herself ready. So, this is a time in which he's preparing a place for her, but the bride is preparing herself for meeting him. That's a preparation in both cases. And the exact timing literally depends, very interesting too, on the father. Because the father has to approve of the new dwelling place. So, the father will say, "Done. The dwelling place is the way it should be. Now, you can go get her." But it's not up to the point. And that's why Jesus states, "On that day, no one knows but the Father alone." It's one of the reasons why He states that in Matthew.

Then you have what is called the procession, in which the groom returns, oftentimes at night. And one of the reasons why we see this: You don't know, it could be in the middle of the night. That's why you have the virgins

and they have their lamps. They don't know when it's going to happen. And so, the groom returns at night, and the torch is lit in the parade, and he actually goes in, and some read, collects his wife, but actually the word is, "snatches" his wife away. The father, her father at this point, has nothing to say, and he just goes and gets her. And a lot of people go, "Wow, I like that idea." So, the groom returns and interesting picture once again of not only Matthew 25, but Psalm 19 and God snatching His bride to Himself.

And then the last phase is the feast in which the couple consummate the union. They go into their chambers, and it's celebrated oftentimes for a period of seven days.

There's an interesting passage in Isaiah 26, if you look there with me, in which God kind of alludes to this. And we won't go in much depth with this. But it says in Chapter 26, as God deals with the world, and He said, "We're going to destroy the world and there's going to be death all around you." But He turns to His people. We can actually put it in the context of His bride.

And it says in verse 20,

(Isaiah 26:20) “Come, my people, enter into your rooms
And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while
Until indignation runs its course.

(Isaiah 26:21) For behold, the LORD is about to come out
from His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for
their iniquity; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed And
will no longer cover her slain.”

The passage is actually making reference to, of course, that God is going to put His bride in the chambers, and say, "I'll take care of the rest." And so, it's an interesting picture.

We come to Luke 12; the emphasis of the passage is that you want to be ready. And you don't know when He's going to come. You don't know how He's going to come. You don't know what's going to turn. And I just want to emphasize this about eschatology, there is a purposeful ambiguity in eschatology. There are purposeful things that God does not let you know details about. And the reason is very clear in the text. He wants you being ready. And the reason why this is so important is this: that if in fact you're ready on one day, but you're not ready on the

next, or if in fact you're consistent on one day, but you're not consistent on the next, could you actually call that love? I was talking to somebody before the service and I said, "You know, I kind of picture it like this. A guy goes off into war. He turns to his wife and he says, 'Wait for me.' She's waiting, she's waiting, she's waiting. She hears that bad things are happening. How long do you wait?" I don't know if that's the question. I think the question is, "How much do you love?"

Closing Prayer:

Well, Father, we come before You today, and we ask that You would work in our hearts, that we would be zealous for Your return; that You would stir within our hearts that desire to see You. Someday we're going to see you face to face and how wonderful it is and we'll be like You. We'll see You as You are. Even so, Lord Jesus, we should be crying out every day, "Come quickly!" We long to see Your face. Father, we know that we're not going to understand everything about these end times. We do understand this, that You want us to be looking for You. And so, we do. How could we not long for somebody that laid down His

life for us, that purchased us, that One that we sat down
and we drank the wine with to remember the sacrifice
and the cost. How could we not wait?