

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

Dr. George O. Wood

Luke 12:35–59 is rather lengthy. Rather than reading it all at the beginning, I'd like to read a paragraph at a time as we walk through this passage of God's Word today. The passage asks us a question which I've entitled this message with: "Are you ready?" The whole passage deals with the theme of the Lord's return and about looking ahead to it. Looking ahead is a part of life.

Asking yourself, as you face the next few days or the next year, what's out there?

This week, I did some reflective thinking on planning for the future. It seemed to me that the future is divided into four areas of possibility.

One possibility about the future is there are future events that will take place and we know when they will take place, barring some catastrophe or our own going to be with the Lord. The future events that we know will happen and we know when they will happen. We've been at work the last several weeks, planning the church calendar. That's got to be a new experience for us the last several years. When the church was smaller, we never had to worry about it because we didn't have that much to coordinate. But now, with department ministries and more people, the more we have to get organized. So we've been doing that. Soon you'll be getting a copy of the calendar. We're reasonably certain that these things will take place. Of course, Christmas is a regular time on the calendar. Maybe you've got some special things on your calendar as you plan it. Maybe a wedding. Maybe a graduation. Always a birthday. Sometimes an anniversary.

Special things we know will take place. We plan on them.

There's a second category, though, about the future. That is that there are future events on our schedule presently that will not take place. They are on our datebook, but they're going to be

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

canceled. They may be canceled because we're simply not ready for them, things don't work out or they may get canceled by things that are beyond our control.

Then a third division of the future is that there are some things in the future that are not on our calendar, but they are going to occur anyway. I have found that things of that nature fall into two basic categories. They're either real good or real bad. If I didn't plan on them happening, they're either real good and I didn't have the foresight to see them, or they're real bad.

In 1970, I would have had no idea of what would happen in 1971. My 1970 planning for 1971 involved my being campus pastor at Evangel College in Springfield, Missouri. But the Lord had another plan. It turned out that His plan was the best thing that happened to me in my life. That was becoming pastor of this church. I didn't plan that. But the Lord planned it. It was a date He had selected on His calendar.

All of us can think of things like that—life's serendipities. But if it's true that great things happen to us that aren't planned, it's also true that very difficult things happen to us that aren't planned—illnesses and death and reverses and setbacks of all kinds. Those also show up on the calendar and there's no way we can really schedule them in. They just happen.

But then there's a fourth category about planning for the future. There are some things in the future we know will happen, but we don't know when. Someone has said that the two things that are certain are death and taxes. Taxes are more certain than death, because we know when they're going to happen—on April 15th or December 10th for property. But death is a certain event that has an uncertain date. We don't know about that. And we don't know, either, when the Lord will return. Which will happen first: our Lord's return or our going to meet Him by means of death?

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

When everything in the category of future events that have unknown dates is looked at, you come to a conclusion that most all of these unknowns are negative—I think especially about death, which I perceive as a negative. We don't know when death is going to happen, but it's out there in the future, unless Jesus comes. We've lived in the same house now about eight years. Our children have grown to maturity in that house. I know that someday, the day will come when we're going to want to get a smaller place to live. I think Jewel has about the same mind. So someday, we're going to lock that door for the last time and we're going to walk away from that house and hopefully we'll be glad about the new one we're going to. But part of us will be, in a sense, memorialized in our experience in that house. It'll be a bittersweet moment.

There are things out there that may not be all that positive. But the greatest thing that is a future certain event with an uncertain date—the greatest thing out there—is the return of the Lord. Too often we as believers have been terrorized and traumatized by the prospect of Christ's return. I know when I first gave my life to the Lord, as a boy of ten, it was not out of a sense of conviction that Jesus loved me that I gave Him my life. It was that I had dreamed that the Lord had returned and I wasn't ready. Therefore, out of fear of missing the coming of the Lord, I gave my life to Christ. I sometimes think that when people like myself get saved, we may be stillborn for a number of years before we really come to life in our Christian faith and begin to know about the love of God and begin to look at the Lord's return, not as a threat but as a hope.

When the Lord's return is presented to us in Scripture, it is inevitably in positive tones. It may put us on warning. It may put us on alert. But it is on positive tones. The Lord is coming for us. How can we be ready for the Lord's return? That's the focus in Jesus' teaching in the Scripture that's before us today. He answers that question in five different ways.

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

I. The first way that we can be ready for His return is to have an attitude of constant expectancy.

That is the theme of the parable of the watchful servant. “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 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. 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” (Luke 12:35–37, NIV).

What a reversal of roles. Here we’re serving Him now. Jesus says, “When I come back, it’s not just a question of you falling at My feet, which we’re going to do. But I’m going to turn around and serve you.” “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. 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” (Luke 12:38–40, NIV).

This parable of the watchful servant speaks of the master whose coming may be in the second or third watch of the night. Probably here what is being referred to is the Jewish way of reckoning time—they had three watches in the night. The Romans had four. The second and third watch would carry a person through the midnight hour till the dawning of the new day. Jesus is dropping a hint to His disciples about His coming. Although they are to be ready for it at any moment, it may not be immediate. It may involve watching through the long night hours. It’s interesting that this present age should be spoken of by Jesus as night and we’re described as

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

children of light and we're shining all the more brightly because the era in which we live, from God's point of view, is the night and the day is coming when Christ will appear.

While waiting for the Lord to come on that long watch the servants are to—in King James language—“keep their loins girded about them.” Actually, the King James more accurately expresses the Greek text because, in the Near East, the men wear robes. And if you work in a long flowing robe, it will get in your way of service. So the men would tuck their robe underneath their “sash” or “belt” or “girdle” as it was called, in order to free their legs to do the work. Jesus tells His disciples to be like that. “You be ready. You be working. Keep your lamp lit.” The lamp was a little wick floating in a sauce-like boat of oil. As long as you kept oil in the lamp and the wick trimmed, you could have the light burning infinitely. The Lord is saying to us, “Don't leave your post of duty. Stay at it. Keep expectant. I'm coming in a time you don't expect.”

Whenever I think of being ready and not leaving your post of duty, my mind goes back to a funny experience that happened to me when I was a freshman in college. The first Christmas at Evangel College, I needed some money to pay my school bills. Rather than go home for Christmas, I stayed at school and worked. I got a job on the night shift and my task was to patrol the grounds—sixty-five acres—from about nine at night to five or six the next morning. The pay was sixty cents an hour—minimum wage in those days. I don't know why it is, but Christian organizations always pay minimum wage. It goes with the turf! I don't particularly like to stay up all night. I certainly do not like the threat of the unknown. And I don't particularly like the dark. But I needed the money. It was a cold winter and a very snowy winter. I remember the snow was a foot or two deep. I had to plow through that, making sure there were no break-ins.

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

The only other guy I knew that was awake at that hour on campus was my friend and fellow classmate from Denmark, Ben, who was working in the boiler room. Those boilers at Evangel College are huge. They must be two stories. Whoever works the boiler room is given specific instructions—stay there all the time. The boiler room is never to be left unmanned, because if something were to go wrong with the pressure, the needle would suddenly go up and the boiler could blow. You're supposed to stay there and never leave your post. But that Christmas time, while I was out patrolling the grounds, Ben would leave his post in the warm boiler room and come out and stand behind some tree in the middle of the night, waiting for me to pass. When I would pass, he would jump out and scare me. It really got nerve-wracking. After several nights of this happening, I walked into the boiler room one night. I didn't particularly like the boiler room because I'm frightened of noises and things I don't understand—especially machines which I have no comprehension of. I just knew that those boilers were timed to blow up the minute I laid foot in the boiler room. But I went in one evening and looked for Ben. He wasn't at the desk. He wasn't anywhere. He was out of the boiler room. I thought, "He's out hiding behind some tree waiting for me to come along. I'll fix him!" I took a little piece of paper and wrote a note, "Ben, you're fired!" And I signed it with the name of the superintendent of buildings and grounds. I left it on the desk and went my way.

I never ran into Ben until the next day. I found a very angry Ben the next day. He had actually been back in his dorm taking a shower and resting up and been gone from his watch for half hour. At four o'clock, when he returned, he saw the note and called the superintendent. He said, "Do you want me to finish out my shift or should I leave now?" The superintendent was wise enough to not act like he didn't know anything. He said, "You finish out the shift and when I get there in the morning I'll take care of it." Sure enough, when Davis got there in the morning, he

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

heard Ben's story, that he'd been fired and sure enough, he promptly fired him because that was the penalty for leaving your post. Of course, Ben wasn't too happy with me. But we became friends after that somehow.

That little incident taught me a moral: Don't ever leave your post of duty. All of us, I think, have had an experience in our life in which we expected something to happen and we weren't exactly sure when, and we kept waiting and waiting. Waiting for the phone to ring—we'd waited hours and hours and it never rang, so we decided just to be gone fifteen minutes to go to the store and sure enough, the call came through in the fifteen minutes we were gone. That's the kind of thing that Jesus is talking about here. Don't, in your Christian life, ever let a time go when your guard has dropped and you're not ready. Be constantly expectant.

II. The second thing that Jesus tells us in being ready is that we are to have a wise and faithful management of our life.

In verse 41, "Peter asked, 'Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?'" Have you ever wondered, by the way, why Peter sat at the head of the list of the disciples? It's obvious. He asked the most questions. He's the person who most wanted to learn. "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. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 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. 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. That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

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” (Luke 12:42–48, NIV).

Peter’s question permits the Lord to elaborate on the way He wants us to be ready. Essentially, what Jesus is saying is that knowledge of His return is designed to prompt right living in us. That the way to get ready for His return is not simply to attend a prophetic conference on what watch of the night Jesus is coming in, although all that may be very interesting. But the real way to be watchful is to be prepared in your moral and your spiritual life. The person who is not ready in this story—the manager who is not ready—is the person who, assuming that the master is not soon returning, adopts a lifestyle that is two faceted. On the one hand, he adopts a lifestyle that mistreats other people. And then that brings with it a second dimension in that he begins to be self indulgent—to eat and drink and get drunk. Those two, by the way, go together. A selfish person, an ego-centered person is not really concerned about proper treatment and proper relationships with others because they want to be served and want life to rotate around them rather than caring for another.

So Jesus says, “Watch in your own life that you keep the attitude of a wise manager.” It’s interesting that Jesus would compare us to a manager, because in these days a manager was a slave (that was his status), but he was given broad-ranging responsibilities. You may have a very educated and sophisticated and wise slave who was, in effect, your business administrator or your chief executive officer. That person had the full run of the business or the full run of the estate. Jesus says, “That’s how you are. I’m going to leave you a responsibility to manage your life.”

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

Some people think, “I need to get direction every minute of my life. The Lord’s going to be on the phone giving me a signal for what to do next—whether to turn left or turn right or go to this store or that store.” Maybe that’s the way God would guide some. But with most of us, He lets us use good judgment in living life and tells us to live life with a set of principles and the grace that He’s laid down to live it, manage life well, to live in a right relationship with others and not OD on number one.

In fact, Jesus is really suggesting to us a life that is of course vertically balanced with God and horizontally balanced in our relationships with others. The slave has responsibility. Jesus is telling us to manage our life in His absence as though He were coming at any minute. The person who disobeys, Me their punishment will be in accordance with their level of knowledge of My will. Some more severely punished than others. Even punishment waits professing believers who absolutely do not prepare themselves for His return. Jesus says they’ll be thrown in with the unbelievers. If you’re a Calvinist, you may not know what to make of that Scripture. If you’re like me, somewhat hybrid of Calvinism and Arminianism, you know what to do with it. Jesus says to us, “Don’t ever adopt a relationship with Me that’s just surface and peripheral, that’s reduced to a mechanical act, as walking down the aisle and then assuming that because at one point in your life you said some words, you maintain a vital relationship with Me that brings you into salvation.”

He is putting us on notice that He expects our faith to have an impact on the way that we live. And if our faith in Christ is not impacting the way that we live, then our faith itself is being called into question by the Lord.

III. Loyalty to Jesus above all else is the third way the Lord has of telling us to be ready for His return.

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

Verses 49–53. “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!

But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!” That may be difficult language to understand. The fire that Jesus is speaking of here is the fire of judgment.

The fire that He’s bringing is the judgment that He will experience for us on the cross.

Otherwise, we face the fire. Therefore, the Lord is saying, “I wish it were already kindled.” Jesus is not having an attitude of “I wish the world were already destroyed,” but “I wish the time was here to deal forever with the sin question.” He uses the metaphor of fire and the next metaphor He uses is baptism. One of fire and one of water. The baptism also refers to His cross. He says, “I’m going to be immersed shortly. I have a baptism to undergo. How I’m distressed until it’s completed.” Jesus says, “I’m on my way to Jerusalem. I wish it were completed. I’m going there for you. I’m paying a price for you.”

Here is what is going to be asked of you. “Do you think I’ve come to bring peace on earth?” And everyone, of course, would have nodded their heads and recited the angels’ chorus at Christmas of peace on earth. But Jesus says to that, “Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law” (Luke 12:51-53, NIV). By the way, an interesting insight into the family structure in those times. You’ve got a mother and father and two children, a boy and a girl and a fifth person who is the daughter-in-law, who is the son’s wife, who would have come to live in the house, because the woman went to the man’s house. It had nothing to do with spiritual truths—just an interesting thing I thought was there.

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

Jesus is saying that, within families, there's going to be division over Me. Jesus is not telling His disciples to be cultic in their thinking and divorce themselves from their families and hate them. He is saying, "Your loyalty to Me is going to be read by your family as hatred." You're not to hate them in the literal sense. He uses it kind of symbolically, but Jesus is always teaching us to be reconciled, to pray for others. Many of you in this audience today came out of homes in which there is a divided family. You've been misunderstood by your family because of your faith in Christ. Your family cannot understand why it is that you have the priorities in life that you have. One of the young women in our congregation is now preparing herself for further ministry. She's extremely successful in her vocation, at the very top of her field, producing very, very large income. She made a commitment of her life to the Lord two years ago, which produced such a revolutionary change in her life. Money no longer was everything. Being top of the heap in her profession was no longer what was really important. Serving Jesus was important. Her family had such a difficult time dealing with this, they literally wanted to isolate her, get her to a psychiatrist or get her some help, thinking she had flipped out. She'd never been in a better mind frame than she has been in since she received Christ. But she was misread by her family. She's kept on loving and praying for her family and God's working some healing processes there, but Jesus says, "Loyalty to Me must come ahead of loyalty of family." That's how to be ready. Be loyal to Me.

IV. Then the fourth thing that Jesus says about being ready is we must be alert to the times.

"He said to the crowd: 'When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, "It's going to rain," and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, "It's going to be hot," and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

that you don't know how to interpret this present time?" (Luke 12:54–56, NIV). Weather, that is what it is now in Israel. When you see the clouds forming over the Mediterranean, you know that rain is going to be blowing in and, if the wind is coming out of the Judean wilderness desert and below that—the Sinai—you know you're in for a hot spell. Jesus says, "You listen to Dr. George and you know the weather. You discern what it is but you ought to know the times."

The Greeks had two words for "time." One is the word *chronos* from which we get the word "chronology" or "chronometer," which is simply a fancy word for "watch." The other word the Greeks had was the word *kairos*. *Chronos* time is sequential time. It's when you ask somebody what time it is and they look at their watch and they tell you, because time is ticking. That *chronos* is gone by sequentially, a second at a time. The other kind of time was *kairos*, and it was time in terms of quality, in terms of character. You may say to one person, "What time is it?" And they tell you by their watch. If you ask a philosopher or a theologian what time it is, they may give you an entirely different view. For example, "It's the last time... It is a time to be ready... It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." So you've got your quality of time. Jesus uses that second word here—know the times. Not just the time, but the times.

The Russian Orthodox church of 1917, in October, was having a convention at the same time that there was a revolution by the Bolsheviks in the streets. While the Bolsheviks were coming to power in those October days of 1917, the church leaders were debating the issue—for two or three days—of whether or not to wear red or yellow robes in certain church ceremonies.

I think of that often when I go to church conventions and we find ourselves debating things that really don't matter, not only a hundred years from now, but three months from now. We need to read the times.

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

What kind of time do we live in? We live in a time in which Christ died in the fullness of time.

We live in the kind of time that is talked about by Paul in 2 Timothy 3. “Mark this. There will be terrible times [*kairos*] in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves [All you have to do is look at the bestseller books of the last five or ten years, and find out the great majority of them are looking out for number one] lovers of money, boastful, proud, disobedient to parents, ungrateful. Unholy, without love. [The idea of that the word in the original is “without natural family affection.” I think abortion is a part of that whole package.] Unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying it’s power. [Going to church but not being changed by the gospel—having a form of godliness. Putting time into Christian fellowship but living an adulterous life—having a form of godliness.]” The character of the times.

Paul, in Romans 13, says “Do this understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over [Notice again the term—we’re in “the night” now], the day is almost here. Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently as in the daytime. [Although we’re in the night, we’re to live like we’re in the day.] Not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery. Not in dissention and jealousy.” Some may be saying, “This doesn’t refer to me, but to others it does.” But some gets us all—maybe dissention and jealousy characterize where you’re at in the family situation right now. Rather, Paul says, “Clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful flesh.” Be aware of the times, there’s a difference between being a Christian in the age in which we live and behaving like a non-Christian.

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

V. Then, the fifth thing that Jesus tells us to do is to be reconciled with God.

“Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right? As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny” (Luke 12:57–59, NIV).

Jesus here is referring to the practice of debtors’ prison. Those were the days before chapter 11 and chapter 7, which are far more humane ways. I could never figure out how anybody is supposed to deal with bills they can’t pay by paying them out of prison. They don’t have any income while they’re in prison, so it sounds kind of stupid to throw them in jail. But that’s what people used to do. In fact, I read this week that Handel’s Messiah, one of its first performances ever, was a benefit concert for people who were in prison because of debt. Isn’t that a nice way to premier Handel’s Messiah?

Jesus is using the analogy of a person who knows. They contracted a bill and then didn’t have money to pay it and they’re going to face the judge and the judge is going to throw them into the slammer. It’s an open and shut case. The person on their way knows they’re guilty and the judge is going to throw the book at them. So Jesus says, as they are going on the way to the judge, “If the accuser is there, make a deal with the accuser to settle out of court. Be reconciled. Settle before you get to the judge.”

Then Jesus uses that, by transfer, as an analogy of the coming day, when we will meet God as judge. We all, in meeting God and facing the prospect of meeting God, admit that we’re not prepared to meet God because we have violated God’s commandments and broken God’s laws and become unlike Him in our own nature. God has the right and will throw the book at us, but Jesus has come alongside of us in life and given us the opportunity to settle with God out of

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

court, to settle now, in the present age. And therefore, the apostle says, “I beseech ye therefore, be reconciled to God.” Have the judgment God has against you repaired. Be reconciled.

Are you ready? Be ready.

I was going through some old files this week. My eyes fell on this file. It had on it just this name—Phil Nichols. I felt immediate warmth of sentiment as I picked Phil’s file from my files and started going through it. I found this sermon that Phil had written. I want to share a word or two of it with you in closing. Phil and I were classmates in college together. Phil was the son of the Assemblies of God home missionary to Alaska. He had gone to Evangel College to prepare for the ministry. He had the lifelong goal of being a chaplain. I came out of missionary and pioneer pastor parents myself and I was going into pastoral ministry. Phil and I lived in the same dorm for three years. Then, before his senior year, Phil married his college sweetheart, Joanna, and then he graduated the same year I did. He went to one seminary and I went to another. Then, because it was required that he pastor two years before he qualified for the chaplaincy, he pastored. After that, Phil was admitted to the chaplaincy. In the meantime, I had gone back to Evangel College, our alma mater, where I was serving on the faculty as campus pastor.

I remember the year Phil came back for homecoming. By that time, he had three children. He was looking forward to his new assignment of going to Vietnam in ministry. I remember Phil staying at our house that weekend and riding our children around on his shoulders. Phil is one person I can say, in my life, that had some of the greatest integrity and Christlike quality of personality I had ever met in any single person. Phil went to Vietnam. While he was there, one evening, he was out bivouacking with a company of ten men. He didn’t have to, but as the chaplain, he wanted to be with them. Somebody tripped a wire in the night and all but one of the company was instantly killed, Phil among them. Phil was the first and only Assemblies of God

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

chaplain to have ever lost his life in any war, all the way back through World War I to the present.

I represented the college at Phil's funeral in Montana. I saw Joanna again and met their children, whom I had not met previously. Joanna gave me some of the things that Phil had written, which I made copies of and sent the originals back to her. These were sermons that Phil had preached while he was a chaplain in Vietnam, and since Joanna couldn't hear him preach them, he would write them out in long hand and send them to her. In Phil's own handwriting, there is this sermon which I have treasured. It was great to pull it out again. It was so related to what I'm saying today. It's a sermon that has been such a blessing in my own life. It's called "Short." For those of you who've served in the military, you know that that term "short" means that time of leave is coming quick and you're glad that you're no longer facing three digits of time—you don't have 100 days or more and you may be down to two digits, maybe 11 or 23 days left; or maybe down to one digit—9, 8, 7, 6, 5. Phil takes that theme in talking to his troops, and he has this message called "Short." Just a phrase or two from it.

He starts the sermon with, "Happiness is being short. I don't consider myself 'short' yet, but I'm looking forward to the day I can smile like a two-digit midget. When I reach one-digit status, I'll be singing in my sleep." Then he goes on to talk about how the guys are living in Vietnam in a very unreal world. He says, "If you tell the people in the jungles about your Camaro or all your conveniences, your girlfriend, your situation back home and all the suburbs and the complex metro area you live in and the communications, they're not going to believe you because they don't have that in their world. The thing you would like to do the most is get out of their world and go back to your world, because for you, where you live in America, that's the real world. Whether or not people believe that things are really like that in America, whether they believe

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

that or not; it really doesn't change the reality, because you know it's real. You've been there and you know what the real place is like." Then he went on to compare this to our life here on earth. He said, "We're all on duty. We don't know how many days are left. We don't know how short we are. But we have someone who came down out of heaven and told us where our real home is. Whether we believe that or not, it doesn't change the reality. That really exists. What Christ talked about is real. The fact of the matter is we've got to put in our time here because we're on assignment. But let's never make the mistake of thinking that this is our real home. Because it's not. Our real home is in another place." He closes his message by saying, "The early Christians had a word for 'short'. It was the word *maranatha*. Which means 'the Lord comes' or 'The Lord is coming.' Whenever they would greet one another, instead of saying, 'Hi' or 'How are you?' their greeting word and their parting word was always '*Maranatha*.' I think we've lost something by not doing that, because we get so bogged down in our own world that we forget that there's a real world out there—our eternity with Christ. They would say to one another, as they greeted or departed. 'Short—*Maranatha*.'"

He closes his message by saying, "Three things I'm sure of. One, there's going to be a better life than we've found on earth so far. Two, there is a better life because Jesus Christ is making it possible for every one of us. Three, that life, that world, is waiting for us just around the corner. Happiness is being short." He asks, "Are you happy?" And he answers, "You can be."

Short. We're all short, we just don't know how short.

Closing Prayer

Father, You've asked us, through Your Son today, the question, "Are you ready?" So we say that introspectively to ourselves. Am I ready? Has there been any dimension of my Christian experience in which I've taken absence without leave? Where I've departed from my post of

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 12:35–59

watchfulness of morality, of responsibility, of believing? Lord, You sent this message to awaken us if we've fallen asleep. Help us to be alert. I pray, Lord, for those whose greatest need right now is reconciliation with another person. Part of being a manager of life is to live at peace with all. It's so difficult to do, Lord. There's so much stress, so much anger in this world in relationships. But, Lord, You want us to keep short accounts on our anger, so short of an account that the sun never sets at night and finds us angry with anyone. Help us, Lord, to not be that manager who, through our anger, abuses our fellow servants, Your family. Wash us clean, Lord. Help our spirits and our souls, through the grace of God, to be inwardly ready for Your return. Let us be reconciled with You while it is yet day. We are nearer now, Lord, than when we first believed. Help us to stand, to stay alert, to be people who know the times, who live as children of the day in the midst of the night. We ask, in Christ's name. Amen.