


Faithfully Await His Return

2025-02-22 – Luke 12:35-53

	<p>As Jesus faced growing opposition from the religious leaders, his command for those who joined the kingdom was clear: He will leave someday, and his followers are called to faithfully await his return. Join us this week as we look into the call our king has for us and what it looks like to walk faithfully to the end in a world that rejects the kingdom.</p>
---	---

Well, good morning, everyone. You've got your Bibles. I want to invite you to open to Luke chapter 12. We're going to be in verses 35 through 53 today. And as you open up there, we are in this series, "The Certainty of the Good News", where we are looking at the gospel and the hope that we have because of what Jesus has done with his death and resurrection.

Now, it's very ironic that when Jesus came the first time, the people who knew the Word of God best, who were supposed to be waiting faithfully on the coming Messiah—allegedly—were the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. But we know that they were not waiting faithfully, right? They had their own sense of self-righteousness. They thought they were righteous already. They thought when the Messiah came, the Messiah would look at them and would say, "You are already good enough." And of course, that was not true. Of course, when Jesus came in that day, what did they do? They rejected him. They sought to find a way to entrap him, to kill him. When they saw him perform miracle after miracle after miracle—the blind could see, the deaf could hear, the lame could walk. He fed thousands. He stilled a storm with his voice. Despite everything that Jesus did, despite his teaching with authority, despite all of it, they rejected him. They said he had a demon or he was healing in Satan's name, and Jesus, of course, knocked this down.

But in the days of Jesus, those who claimed to stand alert and to be ready and to be righteous waiting on the coming king, it turns out were those who were furthest from the king in his kingdom. And that is true today. If you look at the standard of our world and what it means to be righteous, when you leave the Bible behind, you don't see an organized attempt of righteousness in our world. Instead, you see a reality where everyone says, "Well, you're righteous enough in your own life." Right? We see people say, "Your truth is true enough." The irony of this is we are a society that is plagued with depression and anxiety. Working as a youth pastor for a number of years, the thing that made me most sad in the world is that teenagers were told, "You, in your own strength, are enough." And they knew and saw the hopelessness of it, and they were crushed with the anxiety of thinking, "I'm the pinnacle of creation," because we in our own strength are not.

Today we are going to talk about what it means to stand alert, what it means to stand faithful as we wait for the Lord. And it is not a picture of self-righteousness, but instead it is a picture of understanding and putting our focus and hope in His.

Faithfully Await His Return

THE CERTAINTY OF THE GOOD NEWS

Pastor Matt Johnson

My prayer for you today is that you would be empowered and encouraged through this sermon to faithfully await His return. If you're here and you're a believer, I hope this message is nothing new for you, but I hope it bolsters your confidence. Every time we take communion, we are remembering his first coming, we are remembering his death and resurrection, and we are awaiting his return. If you are here and you are not a believer, I pray by the end of this sermon, as you consider what Jesus has done and what he has called us to do, I pray that you will cry out to him, that he would make you righteous before him.

To that end, let's pray and then we will dig in.

Father in heaven, we thank you for this day. We thank you, Lord, that you are righteous and perfect. We thank you, Lord, that you are unchanging, that you are all-knowing, all-powerful, that you are everywhere, that you are merciful and gracious, and that you are just. We pray, Lord, as we come together, that you would guide us this morning, that your spirit would move in our midst, that you would give us eyes to see and ears to hear what your word has to say. And Father, I pray you would speak to me and speak through me that these would be your words and not mine. We pray all of this in the name of Jesus Christ, the one who has come and the one who is returning someday. In his name we pray, amen.

I keep forgetting cough drops, everyone, I'm real sorry. But I didn't chomp on it this time, so we're making improvements.

Faithfully Await His Return

The reward will be great for those who are alert

So we're going to be in Luke chapter 12, verse 35, talking about **Faithfully Awaiting His Return**. And the first thing we're going to see as we dig into this passage is that **The reward will be great for those who are alert**, for those who stand ready for the return of our King. They will rejoice at his coming.

The reward will be great for those who are alert

Be ready for service and have your lamps lit. You are to be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him at once. Blessed will be those servants the master finds alert when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will **get ready**, have them recline at the table, then come and serve them. If he comes in the middle of the night, or even near dawn, and finds them alert, blessed are those servants.

Luke 12:35-38 CSB

“Be ready for service and have your lamps lit. You are to be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him at once.” (Luke 12:35–36)

Now I'm going to pause there and I'm going to give us some context in Luke chapter 12. We're focused today on verses 35 through 53, but at the start of Luke chapter 12, this whole passage is about you need to be more faithful than the Pharisees. You need to not be corrupted by their stance.

The reward will be great for those who are alert

Luke 12:1-34 teaches the difference between earthly and heavenly rewards:

1-3: Beware the yeast of the Pharisees... *Do not be contaminated by their self-righteousness!*

4-7: Fear God only... *It is his definition of righteousness that matters!*

8-12: Acknowledge Christ and his righteousness... *You will be saved through faith in him!*

13-21: If you store up treasure in this life (like the Pharisees) you will be disappointed

22-34: If you store up treasure in heaven you will be satisfied in the end

In fact, Luke chapter 12 begins, “Beware the yeast of the Pharisees.” Do not be contaminated by their self-righteousness. If you've been following along in this series, you know when we were in Luke 6, Jesus talked about “Blessed are the poor, the hungry, and those who weep. Blessed are the poor, those who know they aren't righteous. Blessed are those who hunger for righteousness. And blessed are those who weep because they know in their own strength they cannot be righteous.” Because if you see those things, it's because the Spirit has opened your eyes, you are no longer blind, and you will be saved through the work of Christ. But “woe to the rich, woe to the satisfied, and woe to those who laugh in this life because they've received their reward.”

At the first coming of Jesus, the Pharisees should have been there ready to say, “Jesus, you are king.” They should have bowed and worshiped him because if they knew the Old Testament well, they should have seen that this man could only be the Son of God. And yet they rejected him and they sought to kill him. And so Jesus says, “Beware the yeast of the Pharisees.” They are focused on their own self-righteousness. Do not be like them. Instead, fear God only. Do not believe religious leaders who tell you can earn your salvation, but trust in God, who is our source of salvation, and acknowledge Jesus Christ and his righteousness. It is the only way by which you will be saved.

After Jesus brings these three points up, he gives 2 illustrations, talking about if you have treasure in this life, you will be disappointed in the life to come. He talks about a rich man who gains wealth in this life through building and farming and all these things, and suddenly he's going to die in the night, and he realizes none of it mattered. But instead, you are to store up treasure in heaven, and you will be satisfied in the end. This, to the people of that day, would have been incredibly radical, because they saw wealth as linked to righteousness. If you had money in this life, it was a sign that God was blessing you. And Jesus is saying, that is not the standard. Do not believe the lies of this world. Church, do not believe them today. When people are good looking and have money and have things, and when people in this life, everything seems to go their way, the lie we tell ourselves is, well, God has really blessed them. And yes, God blesses us with things in this life, but the lie is that it is a proof of their righteousness. It is a proof of their standard before God. But you look at the lives of the apostles, you look at the work of our Savior, and you do not see those who were blessed financially. You do not see televangelist preachers. You do not see any of that. You see people that gave it all, including their lives for the work of the gospel.

The reward will be great for those who are alert

Be ready for service and have your lamps lit. You are to be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him at once. Blessed will be those servants the master finds alert when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will **get ready**, have them recline at the table, then come and serve them. If he comes in the middle of the night, or even near dawn, and finds them alert, blessed are those servants.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE GOOD NEWS

Pastor Matt Johnson

Luke 12:35-38 CSB

So when Jesus says, ***“Be ready for service,”*** he's saying, do not be contaminated by what the world says is righteous. Do not be contaminated by the Pharisees. Do not be contaminated by others.

“Be ready for service and have your lamps lit.” Now, the phrase “be ready” in Greek is actually a combination of about six words. What’s behind it is the expression “gird your loins.” You might think that’s an odd statement. I understand why they changed it to “be ready.” In their day, people wore robes, and girding their loins meant wrapping their robes in a specific way so they were ready at a moment’s notice—to run, to take action, or to do whatever was needed. “Gird your loins” was a way of saying, “be ready for whatever comes.” Be ready. Jesus is not just saying, “keep the lamp on.” He’s saying, stand at attention and be ready to go, no matter what might arise. ***Be ready for service and have your lamps lit.***

You are to be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him at once. In that day, the servants in a household, there would be a head servant and then all the other servants. If the master left, the expectation was when he returned, the people would be ready. They would care for him, he would recline at a table, they would wash his feet, they would feed him in that moment, they would care for his every need. This image would have been very common for the people of this day.

But then Jesus says, ***“Blessed will be those servants whom the master finds alert when he comes. Truly, I tell you, he will gird his loins, have them recline at the table, and then come and serve them.”*** He will flip it upside down. ***“If he comes in the middle of the night or even near dawn and finds them alert, blessed are those servants.”*** (Luke 12:37–38) This is such a beautiful picture. You know, I don't know if you ever come home and you're tired and you're hungry, and you get home and maybe there's someone else in your home—like, I'm not going to say, like your wife, and she's got the kids and she's had a rough day, and you've had a rough day, and you're like, it would have been nice if food was, you know... Some of those things happen sometimes. And then the problem is, I like cooking and I'm a picky eater, so it's my fault. But I could go down that path, but the idea of the master coming home and saying, “You sit down, let me wash your feet, let me feed you, let me care for you”—this is a picture of heaven. Because it would be wonderful to be like the Uber driver who got to deliver food to the pearly gates, and instead, through the work of Jesus Christ, you are a child who has a room and a place at the table. That is the promise of the gospel when the master returns—to all who are alert, to all who believe and find their salvation in his name, who trust in his righteousness and not their own. When he returns, he will serve us.

Now, this doesn't mean he will not be King, but in his upside-down kingdom, the greatest are least and the least are greatest.

The reward will be great for those who are alert

THE CERTAINTY OF THE GOOD NEWS

Pastor Matt Johnson

But know this: If the homeowner had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Luke 12:39-40 CSB

Jesus goes on, “**But know this:**” And now he shifts the metaphor. “***If the homeowner had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.***” (Luke 12:39–40) Jesus here is talking about his second coming, and he will come like a thief in the night. No one knows the hour that he will come. In fact, when Jesus died and rose in Acts chapter 1, his disciples asked him, “At this time, will you restore the kingdom of Israel?” And he says, “No. I’m sending you the Spirit. It will come on you in power, and you will be my witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” And then the disciples watch as he ascends into heaven, and then two angels show up and say, “Why are you looking for him? He’s going to come down suddenly, just like he left. You go do what he’s commanded you to do.” That’s what it means to be alert.

Faithfully Await His Return

The reward will be great for those who are alert

Will the Son of Man find you alert when he returns?

So my question for you is, “**Will the Son of Man find you alert when he returns?**” This question is of the utmost importance.

In his first coming, those who knew the Bible best, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, they interacted with him and they plotted to kill him. When he returns, I pray that you are standing ready. I pray that you are walking faithfully. Now let me say something important here. Walking faithfully is about trusting in his righteousness, not your own. The burden I hope I don’t place on you today, and the burden I’ve been praying all week does not fall on you from this, is you do not think I need to do X and Y and Z. If I follow all of these rules, God will finally love me. If I follow all of these rules, when He returns, He will look at me and say, “You did enough.” No. If you are trusting in his righteousness, if you are praying each and every day, “Lord, I confess my sins,” if you are praying each and every day to him, more importantly, “Lord, lead me not into temptation,” if you are praying to him and trusting in his righteousness, trusting in the work of his son on the cross, then you are standing alert. That is what we are called to do here. Jesus is saying, do not fall to the ways of the world. Do not think that your righteousness and your strength is enough, but trust in his. Be alert.

Will the Son of Man find you alert when he returns?

Faithfully Await His Return

The reward will be great for those who are alert

Will the Son of Man find you alert when he returns?

The reward will be great for those who are faithful with all they are given

THE CERTAINTY OF THE GOOD NEWS

Pastor Matt Johnson

This brings us to our second point. The reward will be great for those who are faithful with all they are given. So as Jesus is talking about standing alert, he said, “Beware, the yeast of the Pharisees.”

The reward will be great for those who are faithful with all they are given

“Lord,” Peter asked, “are you telling this parable to us or to everyone?” The Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible manager his master will put in charge of his household servants to give them their allotted food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom the master finds doing his job when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

Luke 12:41-44 CSB

Peter, listening, goes, “**Lord, are you telling this parable to us or to everyone?**”

That's a good question. In fact, part of this parable, as we read, is mainly for one group of people, those who have been entrusted with leadership. As we keep reading, I want to tell you that the starting point of this next portion is for pastors and elders and leaders within the church. And I want to tell you, as we read it, that I hope that something you take from this passage is you need to pray for your pastors, you need to pray for your elders, you need to pray for those who teach and shepherd the people of this church and of God's church broadly.

I met a pastor a couple weeks ago who he's at a church on Milwaukee and Waukegan. And that's like literally two blocks from my house. And we talked for a while. And since I met him, we prayed together. And after that, every time I drive by that church, I'm praying for him and for his elders and for his church that the Lord would lead them. Because we need faithful Bible-believing churches. We need many of them. If this whole community decided to come in here on a Sunday, we wouldn't have room for everyone. It's just a reality. And so we need to pray that the Lord is working through each of his churches. And we need to pray, it's weird, Pastor Ashton's leaving and I don't want to draw attention to it, but we should pray for Pastor Ashton. We should pray for me, pray for Pastor Dan. We need to pray for our elders, pray for our leaders. At our prayer gathering each Wednesday at 7 p.m., we pray, you can hear the chaos of Awana. And every week we pray and we don't just pray. I always, we end our time in prayer praying for the Awana leaders and for the kids that the word of God is being written on their hearts and that the leaders are refreshed and encouraged as they do kingdom work. Because as we do what God has called us to, as we walk faithfully, we are carrying a responsibility, and we need to be alert and stand strong in what we are called to.

Now let me keep reading. So Peter says, who's this for? Is it to us or everyone? The Lord says yes. He basically says it's all, it's any. “**Who then is the faithful and sensible manager his master will put in charge of his household servants to give them their allotted food at the proper time?**”

He's saying, the servants are all called to be alert, but there are some servants in higher positions. They're all called.

Blessed is that servant whom the master finds doing his job when he comes. Truly, I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.” (Luke 12:42–44) Jesus is saying, to those who are faithful with what the Lord has entrusted to them, they will be blessed. The reward will be great.

The reward will be great for those who are faithful with all they are given

But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and starts to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, that servant's master will come on a day he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unfaithful.

Luke 12:45-46 CSB

And then he gives a warning. ***“But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming’ and starts to beat the male and female servants and to eat and drink and get drunk, that servant's master will come on a day he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unfaithful.”*** (Luke 12:45–46) Now this is harsh language.

And let's first and foremost put this in context. I've referenced the last couple of weeks the way the Pharisee and tax collector prayed. The Pharisee prayed, “Lord, look at how great I am, and I'm glad I'm not like that guy.” The Pharisees were constantly lifting themselves up. We're going to hear in a couple of weeks in Luke 15, the Pharisees are ticked off that Jesus sits and eats with sinners and tax collectors. And they're ticked because they're like, “We're righteous, they're not. Why are you with them?” Listen to how they push down and how they beat down those whom they see as less righteous. That's the language of “beat down.” The language of “eat and drink and get drunk”—remember, woe to those who think they are rich in righteousness. Woe to those who think they're satisfied in their own righteousness. And woe to those who laugh in this life; they've already received their reward.

The warning here is that for those who trust in their own righteousness, and especially for those who trust in their own righteousness and lead others astray, the language, “he will cut them to pieces,” it's probably an idiom. And what I mean by an idiom is, I might say we run to the store to get something, and of course we're not running to the store, we're driving to the store. But the idea is these people think they're part of the kingdom of God, and when the Lord returns, he will say, “You never were.” And he will assign them a place with the unfaithful. They will spend eternity in hell. To those who lead others astray in patterns of work and self-righteousness, they have no place in the kingdom of God. If you think you can earn your salvation, repent. If you teach others to earn their salvation, repent.

When you look and see some of the nonsense ways that the gospel is preached with man at the center, when you look and see how different movements—the Mormon church. Everything about the Mormon church is about a man-centered gospel. If you become enlightened enough as a man, you'll be a god and have your own planet. It's what the Mormons believe about the afterlife. There's a whole lot more to it, but it's nonsense. And it's self-righteousness and self-realization. Look at any man-made religion. Look at those who present the prosperity gospel and say, if you give God enough, God will give back. Look at those who turned the gospel into a thing of works. The reason the Reformation happened is because the Catholic Church was telling people you can buy your salvation and it was saying so many things that were not a part of the gospel. They were not centered on the word. God promises he will cut away those who are unfaithful. The warning here is clear and it is severe. If you think your righteousness is found in your own works, you have no place in the kingdom. And if you teach others that, you will be far from the kingdom of heaven.

The reward will be great for those who are faithful with all they are given

And that servant who knew his master's will and didn't prepare himself or do it will be severely beaten. But the one who did not know and did what deserved punishment will receive a light beating. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be expected.

Luke 12:47-48 CSB

"And that servant who knew his master's will and didn't prepare himself or do it will be severely beaten. But the one who did not know and did what deserved punishment will receive a light beating. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be expected." (Luke 12:47–48)

What God has given us as we seek to faithfully follow. Let us follow in truth. Let us trust in his righteousness. Let us ask your kingdom come. Let us say, Lord, lead me each and every day, and let us trust in his righteousness as we follow after him.

Faithfully Await His Return

The reward will be great for those who are alert

Will the Son of Man find you alert when he returns?

The reward will be great for those who are faithful with all they are given

Are you faithful with what the Son of Man has given you?

The reward will be great if we faithfully follow. [Are you faithful with what the Son of Man has given you?](#)

Some of you right now are thinking, "I'm glad I'm not a pastor or an elder. I'm never going to teach anything. That way, I'll never be cut up." But here's the problem: when you read faithfully this passage, and when you read faithfully the Gospel of Luke, or even just Scripture in general, if you have not been given much, sometimes people look at that and say, "Well, why did that other person get more than me? Why did I get passed over for this? Why am I not the one who gets to do more?" The question is not, "what should you be given?" The question is, "are you faithful with what you've been given?" If you are a husband and a father, if you are the head of a household, your children are in your care.

I have a silly illustration here. My son just got potty trained. Before he was potty trained, if he needed to go to the bathroom and we were at Costco, I'd never say, "Let's go use the Costco changing room," because it's awkward and not a very good one. Then my daughter would be running around in the men's bathroom while I had him up, so we just kind of would go, "We'll just wait." Well, now that he is potty trained, I can't just say, "Well, it's his fault if he doesn't tell me he needs to go to the bathroom," right? Because if he has an accident in the car, I'm the one who's got to clean it all up. My responsibility over my son does not change just because a little bit has changed. I still am responsible for him. As he grows, a part of that is shepherding him and leading him so that—and I'm talking potty training, but let's talk real things—he's a man of God, that he follows the Lord. I can't make him do that, but I can set the structures and patterns

THE CERTAINTY OF THE GOOD NEWS

Pastor Matt Johnson

in place. I can model for him what I hope to see. For my daughter, I need to show her what it means to be a man of God so that someday, when she's looking at getting married—Lord willing, because we want to have grandkids, and she keeps promising me we'll have them—but I don't ask, she just tells me, by the way. But as we have those conversations, I want her to know what it is, who a man of God is, and how to look for them.

In my household, if my spouse is not leading the kids well, if my wife is not leading the kids well, if I think there's something we need to do different, if I, as the husband, as the head of the household, say, well, she's doing it wrong. That's her fault. She's going to stand before the Lord someday. Look at me just shirking my responsibility. Look at me, Lord, it's the woman you gave me, like from the Garden of Eden. Whatever you have been given, whatever has been entrusted to you, you are going to be held accountable for it. And I pray that you stand alert.

And if you say, "Pastor Matt, I've got nothing. I've got no one. I am not accountable for anything because nothing's been given to me." If you are a believer, you have been given the Holy Spirit, and you are a witness of the work of Jesus Christ in this world, and you have a testimony. You are to be a witness in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. And you may say, "I've never been to Judea, Samaria, or Jerusalem," but you are in the ends of the earth, which means you are to proclaim the gospel. That is part of being alert. The reality of faithfully awaiting his return is that we need to stand ready, we need to look first to him, and then we need to be faithful with what he has given. The question is not, has he given me enough? It's, **have I been faithful with what I've been given? Are you faithful with what the Lord has given you?**

Faithfully Await His Return

The reward will be great for those who are alert

Will the Son of Man find you alert when he returns?

The reward will be great for those who are faithful with all they are given

Are you faithful with what the Son of Man has given you?

The reward is worth the battles you endure

And I want to end, I want to encourage you with a passage that will sound far from encouraging. The reward is worth the battles you endure. The reward is worth the battles you endure.

The reward is worth the battles you endure

"I came to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already set ablaze! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how it consumes me until it is finished!

Luke 12:49-50 CSB

"I came to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already set ablaze, but I have a baptism to undergo and how it consumes me until it is finished." (Luke 12:49–50) Now, when Jesus says, ***"I came to bring fire on the***

THE CERTAINTY OF THE GOOD NEWS

Pastor Matt Johnson

earth,” there are two interpretations of this, and I am fascinated by this because throughout the week I was studying this, and throughout the week I kept going, it's this one, no, it's this one, no, it's this one, no, it's this one, and I went back and forth, and today I'm just going to tell you both of them. Because I'm not sure.

In the Gospel of Luke and in the book of Acts, the two books written by Luke, there's a focus on the fire of judgment. And God, who hates sin—someday, God in his justice—will judge all who do not have the righteousness that comes through the blood of Jesus. They will spend eternity in hell, judged for their sin. That's one picture of fire.

The other picture of fire throughout Luke and Acts is the fire of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus dies on the cross and rises again, at the day of Pentecost, 50 days later, the Holy Spirit descends like fire on the believers, and the church is born. Through the Spirit, we have this picture of the gospel spreading like fire across the earth.

In this passage, I think it could be either; I think it could be both. What I'm sure of is that Jesus, after saying that, is either speaking of the very end times or the times after his death and resurrection. He then says, "But I have a baptism. I have a mission to complete." When he says baptism here—he speaks of this in the Gospel of Mark as well—he's speaking of his death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus is saying, "If I could, I'd skip that and get..." but I know what my job is. I know what it means to walk faithfully, and I'm going to do so. When we baptize, what are we doing? We're burying someone and raising them up in water to signify what Christ did for us. Jesus here is saying, "I'm going to do what I am called to do." I look forward to the kingdom that is coming, when it comes in its fullness, but there's a mission now, and he is faithful, just as we are called to be faithful.

The reward is worth the battles you endure

Do you think that I came here to bring peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on, five in one household will be divided: three against two, and two against three.

They will be divided, father against son,
son against father,
mother against daughter,
daughter against mother,
mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law,
and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

Luke 12:51-53 CSB

After this, he says, “***Do you think that I came here to bring peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.***” (Luke 12:51) And I want to pause here for a moment because when Jesus says “no” to bringing peace on the earth, if you were here during our Advent series, you heard angels say “peace on earth.” And you might be like, “Hey Jesus, you need to go back and check what it says earlier in the gospel.” But there’s a reality here that Jesus is talking about: peace in this world will not happen because if you are a follower of Jesus, you are no longer of this world. If you are a part of the kingdom of God, you have lasting and eternal peace that surpasses all knowledge because of the work of Jesus. You know that even though you can die in this life, even though the world can kill you, even though the world can take

THE CERTAINTY OF THE GOOD NEWS

Pastor Matt Johnson

anything and everything from you in this life, it cannot destroy your soul. If you are a follower of Jesus, the peace you have comes from knowing that Jesus defeated death on the cross and he died for your sins, and you have peace everlasting. But do not be surprised.

“Blessed are you when they revile you, when they exclude you, when they slander your name when they hate you on account of me. Your reward in heaven will be great.” (Luke 6:22–23) The reality of the coming of the kingdom is that as it breaks into this world, the world hates the kingdom of God. If I can say with boldness, there's a senator or a politician going around. He was on the Stephen Colbert show, and he's been on a bunch of things lately. And he keeps talking about, and I'm not even going to say his name because I can't remember how to pronounce it, but also because I don't want to give him the time of day. But what I want to say is he keeps talking about, as Christians, we need to get back to the roots of the gospel. And he talks about how the Bible never says anything about abortion or the sanctity of life. He says, Jesus never said anything about marriage. Which is comical. Good, someone went ... in the front row. Good. The idea that Jesus never said anything about marriage is comical. Every time you go to a wedding and someone says, “Let no one tear apart,” or “let what God has put together, no one tear asunder.” Every time you hear that at a wedding, that's Jesus speaking. And so this guy is trying to deform the gospel to fit it into a modern worldview so that the righteousness of his view, people can say, oh, I'll follow that guy. But no, the gospel is clear. It has not changed. The Bible is clear. It is unchanging. Our God is unchanging.

The reality is, is that in this world, if we can faithfully follow the word of God and be at peace with everyone in this world who is a non-believer, we are not following this well. Jesus says in John 17, “I am not of this world. My followers who follow after me are no longer of this world because they are children of God. They are no longer children of wrath in this world.” Do not miss this, because if we want peace and comfort in this life, the cost will be to stand on alert. In this life, we are going to face trials and persecutions. We are going to suffer for the sake of the gospel. And they're not going to be simple sufferings. They're going to be deep things. We are going to have disappointment for the sake of the kingdom of God. And yet it's worth it.

Jesus says, ***“I did not come to bring peace on earth. No, I tell you, but rather division.*** The kingdom of Israel at that time, the people were waiting on a Messiah to come to overthrow Rome. And Jesus says, my kingdom is greater than this. I'm not going to worry about Rome. I'm going to defeat death itself and sin. And he came and the division it caused, he says, ***From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three.***” (Luke 12:51–52) He's quoting Micah 7 here. The prophet Micah in the Old Testament spoke about how the religious leaders, kings, and people of his day were wicked, and those who tried to walk faithfully often found themselves opposed by their own family—***father against son, son against father, mother against daughter, daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.*** The imagery here was the imagery of the people of that day. If someone tried to be faithful, all of those—even within their household—rejected them. And Jesus is saying, this is what you will face for the kingdom, and it's worth it. This is what you might face. I know I've talked to people at our church who have family members that have rejected the gospel and have rejected them for their acceptance of the gospel. I've talked to people who say, “I love my family member, but I can no longer talk to them about certain things because when I do, they reject me, and they still push and push and push. And, praise the Lord, if you have family members who are not believers, keep pointing them to the kingdom of God, keep praying for them, keep trying to help them see the truth—but don't expect peace.”

The reward is worth the battles you endure

Faithfully Await His Return

The reward will be great for those who are alert

Will the Son of Man find you alert when he returns?

The reward will be great for those who are faithful with all they are given

Are you faithful with what the Son of Man has given you?

The reward is worth the battles you endure

Do you live like the reward is worth it?

The reward is worth the battles you endure. Jesus knows the end, and he willingly undergoes his baptism—his death and resurrection—for the sake of the kingdom. For our sake, Jesus died and rose. The Master has called us to follow him faithfully.

So my question for you, **Do you live like the reward is worth it?** Will the Son of Man find you alert when he returns?

Now, I want to give a really simple way to apply this passage. Last week, we talked about prayer in Luke 11. If you missed the sermon last week, part of your application for this week is go listen to that sermon again. Because it takes more than seven days to build a habit. And if you've been praying more over the last seven days, your application for this week is do it again. But this week as you pray, I want you to add to it when you say, "lead me not into temptation." I want you to just add to that prayer, "help me to stay alert." When you're praying to the Lord a couple times a day, a couple at minimum, as you are praying to the Lord, as you are crying out to Him, every day say, "Lord, help me to stand ready," because we don't stand ready in our own strength. It's through the work of the Holy Spirit.

I want to encourage you, standing ready, it's a daily battle. Three weeks ago we talked about take up your cross and bear it daily. Last week we talked about prayer. This week as we seek to stand alert, the application is the same. We need to faithfully cry out to him morning and evening. Remember Jesus did it. He stayed up all night praying sometimes. If you want to stand alert, if you want to trust in his righteousness and not your own, if you want to be faithful with what he has given you, then it starts by crying out to him. And if you're here today and you're not a believer, it starts by crying out to him.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you, Lord, for all the ways you have blessed us. We thank you, Lord, that the cost of following you is absolutely worth it. And, Lord, we thank you that if we are honest and if we are clear, we know that you have already paid that cost. We thank you, Lord, that you were faithful to the end, that you died for our sins, that you rose, and that you reign. And we thank you, Lord, that as we cry out to you, we know that you hear us and we know your Spirit works in us. Lord, we pray. I pray for our elders; I pray for our pastors; I pray for our teachers, our Sunday school

THE CERTAINTY OF THE GOOD NEWS

Pastor Matt Johnson

teachers, who teach our kids and teach our adults. I pray for our small group leaders. I pray for those that you have given these positions of authority. Lord, I pray you would help us to stand alert, not trusting in our own righteousness, but trusting in what you have given us and trusting in what your Son has done. I pray your Spirit would lead and guide us. I pray for the heads of households—the men that are seeking to lead their wives and children. Lord, that you would help them and strengthen them to lead faithfully. I pray, Lord, that we would be a church where, from the least to the greatest in our eyes, each and every person would be seeking to follow your Son. I pray that when you return, you would find this a church where we stand ready. And I pray that for those in our lives who do not know you, when they meet us, as there is division that comes from us being part of the kingdom, I pray, Lord, you would give us wisdom in how to share the witness of our testimony in such a way that others come to know you. We praise you, Lord, that you have given us such great gifts. We praise you for your Son's death and resurrection. We pray all this in the holy name of Jesus. Amen.



Digging Deeper – **Faithfully Await His Return** – Luke 12:35-53

1. What stood out to you from the sermon?
2. Do you ever think about the Lord's return and the rewards we will receive? If so, what do you think about? What do you hope to receive?

Read Luke 12:35-53

3. What stands out to you as you read through the passage?
4. What does verse 35-40 teach us about faithfully waiting? What are the characteristics of one who faithfully awaits the Lord?
5. What percentage of your life shows you to be faithfully waiting on the Lord? Why would you say that percentage?
6. What do verses 41-48 teach us about the opposite of faithfully waiting? What are the characteristics of one who is lacking the faith to wait?
7. Where do you struggle to wait on the Lord's return? What causes you to fall short in this area?
8. Verses 49-53 point to the division that will be caused by those who join the kingdom of God and those who reject it. How do you respond to Jesus saying he has come to bring division?
9. What comes to your mind as you read about families split because of the kingdom?
10. What are the ways you have experienced loss and division for the sake of the Gospel?
11. What are areas where you have struggled to focus on the kingdom in light of the things of this world?
12. Take some time as you close in pray for the salvation of those in your life, that you would have true unity in the kingdom. Pray also for boldness as a group to stand strong in a world that rejects the kingdom.