

We Are Held Accountable
Luke 12:41-48

In our scripture passage for today here in Luke chapter 12, the Lord Jesus had just finished telling the disciples a parable about a Master who had returned from a wedding feast to find His servants had been waiting for Him. And the Master was so pleased with those who were found to be faithful that He “girded Himself about and joyfully served His faithful servants a feast”.

The parable was one that featured the Lord Jesus as the Master who returned from the wedding feast. And the servants spoken about are all the people of this earth. And it seems that His disciples present that day did not fully understand some of the things that Jesus intended with His parable. So they asked Him to explain it to them. Listen!

⁴¹ Peter said, “Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?” ⁴² And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. (Luke 12:41-48)

As we know from these scriptures, we are each born into this world with a nature that is controlled by sin. And for that reason, I believe that it would be a fairly accurate statement to say that it is the basic nature of most everyone of us within this secularized culture of our day, to have a self-centered nature, to first and primarily consider our own personal needs first.

And unfortunately sometimes, perhaps too often, our self-centered nature extends even to a total disregard for the needs of most everyone else around

us, those we would even call friends, those we work alongside, and far too often, even and especially, to the hurt and to the disregard of our own families.

And yes, these words are an especially strong indictment to pronounce, and most people will not want to hear it said about them, but the evidence within our families and within our culture today bears it out to be true.

And here within these scriptures, God warns us that we will be held more responsible and more accountable for our self-consumed attitudes and behaviors than we might think. And we are warned to take great care as we go about the many behaviors and activities of our day. Because both in this life and especially in the eternity which is to come, all of us will be called into account for everything that we will ever do. Those words given in 2 Corinthians 5, tell us clearly that,

¹⁰ . . . we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

In today's passage, Jesus had just finished giving instructions and warnings about how His servants should conduct their daily behaviors as they wait for the return of their master. And here Peter, brings an appropriate question to the surface by asking, "Lord, to whom are you addressing your words? Is it to us, your disciples? Or is it perhaps even to all people in all of time?"

Though Peter's question is a very simple one, it really has great significance for everyone who reads and listens and hears these words of God, because it really asks the question, "Are these words intended for me, personally?"

I do truly love the manner in which God presents His truths to us in His Word. Here it simply appears that a conversation is taking place between Peter and Jesus. And while that is true, that is not all that is taking place. These questions and these instructions are being laid out clearly before us now in our day so that you and I can have answers to our own personal questions.

And God brings this question before us because He knows that we have a propensity to want to randomly select, to pick and to choose, deciding for ourselves which of these truths we want to accept and believe and apply to ourselves.

I do fear that many Christians today, even strong and true believers do exactly that, and far too often, not really intending to violate God's word in any way, but still, picking and choosing based on their "feelings", those scriptures that their hearts most agree with.

The warning is, our "feelings", our "hearts" are not a good source of credibility when considering such matters. Those who would give the advice, "just search your heart for the answers", or "just follow your heart" have forgotten the words of Jeremiah 17, where we are told that our hearts are desperately wicked and deceitful. So no, our "feelings", our "hearts" are not a credible source.

The only truly credible source is the Holy Spirit and these Holy Scriptures. The Holy Spirit is the one we must listen carefully to, and especially so as we read these words of scripture. It is Him, the Holy Spirit, who wrote these words and it is Him who can truthfully speak them into our hearts and minds.

So then, great care must be taken as we read and hear and listen to God's word. And until the Holy Spirit in us leads us to believe otherwise, we really ought to take every word that we receive in these scriptures in their most literal and most simple of terms.

Here, to Peter's question,

⁴¹ . . . "Lord, do You speak this parable *only* to us, or to all people?"
(Luke 12:41)

Jesus answered by saying,

⁴² . . . "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* master will make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of food in due season? (Luke 12:42)

And then He went on to say,

⁴³Blessed *is* that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.
(Luke 12:43-44)

While these words might not seem to be a direct answer to Peter's question, they are actually the perfect answer.

First, the answer to Peter's question is yes. This wisdom and these instructions were intended for Peter and the other disciples, those specially chosen "stewards" over the soon-coming church, men specially called and specially equipped with the Spirit of God to carry on forward those things that Jesus had begun.

On another occasion, Jesus said to His disciples,

¹²"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do. (John 14:12)

So again yes, Jesus' words were for Peter and the other disciples. Because they were especially called of God to carry on forward those things that Jesus had begun until the day of His return.

But we must also understand that Jesus' words were not intended for them alone, those few disciples. They were also intended for all of the other disciples, believers who would follow along after them for all of time, even you and me.

In His High Priestly Prayer, the Lord Jesus prayed,

²⁰"I do not ask for these (disciples) only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. (John 17:20)

And as the Apostle Paul would later voice so appropriately in Colossians 1 saying,

²⁴I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church. (Colossians 1:24)

Folks, this same calling and ministry is for you and me, the disciples of our day. "Who is it that is to fill up in their flesh that which is still lacking in the special ministry that Jesus came to fulfill?" It is us, you and me, the servants, the stewards that are spoken about here in these words. And the question that is being asked is, "Will we be faithful to fulfill our responsibilities to carry forward the ministry that the Lord Jesus began?"

Again, we must guard ourselves carefully against picking and choosing only those biblical truths we most agree with. We must assuredly pick and choose them all, every one of them, and then we must let God's Spirit in us sort out what our response should be to them.

We are ever and always to lift up that banner that was laid down by Christ at His leaving, and we are to press on forward in the mission that He, our Master laid out for us to complete.

We are to . . . fill up in our flesh what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. We are to continue His work no matter the cost to us.

So then, yes the instructions that Jesus had been giving regarding humility and servanthood were for Peter and for the other disciples there that day, but His instructions were, and are, for each one of us in our day.

And note very carefully and clearly that Jesus tells us that yes, He, the Master, will surely return. And yes, He will surely hold each and every person accountable for each and every instruction and for each and every responsibility He assigns to them. And please, do not miss this implication, the “them” that will be held accountable is really “you and me”.

And Jesus, does so much want you and me to succeed in our role as a servant, whether our role as servant is very menial in nature or if we are servant “stewards”, servants who have been given responsibility over other servants. Our responsibility before Christ is the same. To whom much is given, much is required.

And again, He does so much want you and me to succeed, to be found wise and faithful stewards over His house. Here, in verse 42, Jesus’ words express His desire for us. He says,

⁴² . . . “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* master will make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of food in due season? ⁴³Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.(Luke 12:42-44)

These are sweet and promising words from our Master, the Lord Jesus. But again, note that implicit within this passage is both a warning and a blessing.

First, the warning! Here Jesus is giving some specific instructions to those people who might aspire to leadership and especially to church leadership. And remember from other words within these scriptures, we know that not everyone

is called into that role of leadership. Yes, they might aspire to it, but they might not be “called of God” into it.

With some of us, it is within our natural personalities to be leaders. From birth, leadership runs through our veins. But folks, natural personality traits and attributes are not necessarily Godly traits and attributes. In reality, they are often very different.

But too often, church congregations seek out those very men within their groups to be their leaders, men with natural abilities to lead. And it really seems most logical to do that.

And these words of Jesus seem to speak about just such men, stewards who have risen to that position, but are truly not fitted to be good and Godly leaders over others. Listen!

⁴⁵But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, ⁴⁶the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. ⁴⁸But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few.
(Luke 12:45-48)

While we in this modern day might not be able to relate to some of these words, their meaning and instruction is still so very appropriate to us. And they give us a stern warning, both to those of us who would aspire to leadership and to those who would seek out leaders to lead us. The gift of “Godly leadership” is a “Spiritual Gift”, given straight from the heart of God and not from man.

Some might argue and say, “But God can take our natural abilities and sanctify them for His purposes.” But folks we must be warned! That is usually not the way God does it. And He cautions us against believing such things with warnings like that about never putting new wine into old wineskins. The new wine will ferment and expand and will eventually burst the old wineskin.

No, God does not put Himself into our “old self” and fix us. Our “old self” can’t really be renovated or repaired to do God’s purposes. Our old self must actually die within us. And that is it’s only option.

And it is only after the old self has died that a new life can be born within us. And it is only then that God’s Holy Spirit can begin to do His special work. It is only then that He will put His Spiritual Gifts and His Spiritual fruits within us. And it is only then that we will have the personality traits and attributes necessary to enable us to be the good stewards Jesus wants us to be.

And again, we must be warned. Jesus will come back and check on us to see if we are being the wise and faithful stewards we are called to be. And woe be unto us if we are found “wanting”. And woe be unto us if we have mistreated His other servants!

. . . Before we close, may we give one last observation concerning these words of the Lord Jesus.

It is this. Too often, we seem to think that if we do things in secret, that no one will ever know that we’ve done them. And while that may be true with people, it is not true with the Lord Jesus. If we truly desire to be “good stewards” of our Lord’s ministry, we really need to always keep in mind that Jesus is able to know every thought that passes through our minds and every deed that we do in secret.

And as we can see from the warning that Jesus gives within these words, He will not deal lightly with those stewards who fail in their responsibilities. Yes, yes there will ever and always be a just recompense for our behaviors. As with these servants here in our scripture passage, some, the unbelievers, will forfeit their eternal souls. Others, those believers who have gone astray in their behaviors will suffer their individual deserved punishment.

Folks, God is ever and always “Just”. Those words given in Exodus 34,
7 showing steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty. (Exodus 34:7)

With all that being as it is, I do want us to finish our study of God’s word today on a promising note. And that is that Jesus really and truly does want you and me

to succeed. He loves us and He wants you and me to be good and wise and faithful stewards in all that we do.

Our Lord has given us everything that we need to be successful in His calling. And because He has given us so much, it's only right that He should expect much from us. He tells us clearly that, "to whom much is given, of him much will be required."

And if we are found faithful, great will be the blessings and the rewards He showers upon us. He says to us in these words,

⁴² . . . "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* master will make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of food in due season? ⁴³Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.(Luke 12:42-44)

Let's Pray.