

End of Times Series

Faithful Servants Waiting for the Son of Man to Come

Matthew 24:36–51



³⁶“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ³⁷For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴²Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

⁴⁵“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed’, ⁴⁹and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Dear Friends in Christ,

Grace and peace from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We continue once more with our series on the End of Times. And last Sunday the message and Jesus’ instruction was this: “The one who endures to the end will be saved” (Mt 24:13). In the face of tribulation, the great tribulation, those proclaiming the Gospel and people who believe should endure in their faith to the end and be saved. Even when the love of many grows cold, or the tempting lure of those false prophets become so strong and convincing to lead many astray, endure in your faith! Christ encourages us to endure in our faith.

Endure in your faith as well when you see and hear that Christians are being put to death and hated by nations. But take heart and remember what Jesus says: “But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

After all the Great Day of the Lord is approaching, the day in which He will return as the King to take His people into His Eternal Kingdom. In the meantime Jesus teaches us how those who endure in the faith live, how you and I are strengthened, so we can endure.

And He says that those who endure are first faithful servants while they wait for the Son of Man to come.

Jesus said that “Concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only” (Mathew 24:36).

But in the meantime, Jesus said, “This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world . . . and then the end will come” (24:14).

As you see the time of waiting for the Christ’s return is important, that’s why Jesus issues a series of commands for believers. Those commands describe what you will be doing while you wait. As you follow those commands, you will be one of the faithful servants doing what your Master wants you to do. He doesn’t want us to be just idle, preoccupied with the things of earthly life, therefore He commands us first, to be awake, to be ready. Not like the people in Noah’s time who were “unaware until the flood came and swept them all away” (24:39). Those who were unaware just kept on eating, drinking, and marrying as if nothing significant was about to happen. By contrast, Noah was getting ready for his family to enter the ark. When the flood came, there was a division between Noah’s family who were all safe in the ark, and all the other people of his day who were left to die. Similarly, when the Son of Man comes, there will be a sudden separation of people. Some will be taken, and some will be left, to eternal condemnation. “Therefore,” Jesus commands, “stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming” (24:42). Your constant faith in Jesus is what it means to be awake and aware that the Son of Man will come at a time you do not know. But remember that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17) Through faith because of God’s word, then you will remain awake!

The second command Jesus gives us today, is to be ready, because we don’t know when the day will come. The thief breaking into a man’s house would come at a time not expected (Mathew 24:43–44), Jesus says. But if the man had known when in the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. “Therefore,” Jesus said, “you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Mat. 24:44). Your second command is “You must be ready!” Even though you don’t know when He’ll come, stay awake and be ready. Endure in your faith to the end, and you will be saved. But how are we to be ready? First is by living in the forgiveness of our sins, through confession and repentance, through recognition of our sinful condition, but also through the power of the forgiveness of those sins that breaks the chains of our sleepiness that prevent us from being ready. And second it is by being in God’s word so that Word remains in us to give us the strength and the power to stand against the attacks of the enemies.

Paul teaches us that: “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:8-9)

But Jesus doesn’t issue only commands. He also sends you invitations. In the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews, He says, “Not neglecting to meet together . . . and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (10:25). Meeting together is one way that God works on your faith. Here you will hear His Word, which declares to you Jesus’ death on the cross, that which has made you a faithful servant, that which has saved you.

Then Jesus gives a description of specific characteristics of His people who are enduring to the end. He begins by asking you a question, “Who then is the faithful and wise servant?” (Mt 24:45). He answers us by telling us the story of a business man who is gone for a while and entrusts his servants to look after his family during that time. But

during that time some servants are punctual in what they ought to be doing, like serving food. But another servant sees that his boss is delayed in coming back so he goes and parties all night, and more, he mistreats his coworkers too the text says: “begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards” (24:49). And do you know why that servant is careless? It is because there is no peace in him, and there is no peace because he is not ready and not awake.

But, and although the boss has been delayed, he does come back. Jesus says: “Blessed” is the first servant. By contrast, this is the fate of the other servant: the master “will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (24:51). That is the fate of servants not doing the tasks the master gives them to do.

So, who is the faithful and wise servant? “The one doing what the master wants him to do.” Of course. Easy. “Go and do likewise—while you wait,” Jesus is telling you. Easy? No! Quite impossible for us actually. We all fall short of this and every other command of God. But Jesus was a wise and faithful servant of his Father, doing everything God commanded, finally going to die on that cross. He was cut to pieces, just as if He had been the sinner. And now God says that everyone who believes in Jesus is the servant who followed orders. Yes, by faith in Jesus you are a faithful servant, His victory is yours, just hold on to that, you don’t have to do it on your own, but because we have Jesus’ strength we are obedient servants.

Then in the next chapter of Matthew, chapter 25, Jesus teaches us that servants who are enduring are also wise servants Mt 25:1–13. And to teach us His point He uses the parable of the ten virgins who are to attend a wedding banquet. You remember the story, don’t you?

And through this Parable Jesus teaches a characteristic of an enduring servant, actually He commands us to be wise. In the parable, five of the virgins were wise. They were especially farsighted; they had enough oil for their lamps, they even had some in reserve. But five were foolish. They did not think their task through to the end, they had with them little oil and when that was gone, they were in trouble. All ten were waiting for the bridegroom to come. He was delayed and arrived at midnight. The five wise, farsighted virgins were ready and went in to the marriage feast with the bridegroom. By contrast, the other five had to go and buy more oil. While they were gone, the bridegroom came and the wise virgins went in with him. “And the door was shut” (25:10). And when they begged to go in, “Lord, lord, open to us” (25:11), what they heard was “I do not know you” (25:12). This time Jesus draws the conclusion for you; His command is “Watch therefore.” The word for “Watch” is the same as before: “Stay awake.” And the reason is the same as before: “For you know neither the day nor the hour” (25:13). Endure in your faith to the end and you will be saved.

It’s far too easy to be foolish about your waiting. But Jesus gives you—again this morning—exactly what you need to be wise. The forgiveness of your sins, His Word, and the feast Jesus prepares at this altar is a foretaste of the marriage feast He talked about in the parable. At this altar He gives what you need to be awake, ready, watchful: “Take, eat.” “Drink of it . . . for this is My blood.” The life of Jesus Himself that is in the body and blood is life for you, making you a faithful and wise servant while you wait for His coming.

And lastly, Jesus says, faithful servants produce fruits. Jesus describes the results in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30). A story about a business man who goes away but before he leaves he entrusts his employers with investments according to their abilities, after all, all were able people. But when he, the business man returns, his trusted men report that they had doubled the investment, except one who hid the masters' money.

The third man did what he did, not because he wasn't able to but that he was afraid of the Master. He thought he was a terrible master. So to protect himself and not anger the master he hid the investment. But the master calls him a "wicked and slothful servant," instead, and gives the command to "cast [him] into the outer darkness, [where there] will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (25:30).

To the two who doubled their coins, the master says, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master" (25:21). Faithful. Faithful. Enter into the joy of your master. As you see, it wasn't the amount they produced but faithfulness is what counts to enter Heaven. "The one who endures to the end will be saved." Endure, be constant in your faith, and you will enter into the joy of your master. That's heaven. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."

Someone has said, "God's work here on earth doesn't pay very much, but the retirement benefits are heavenly." As you endure to the end, the Master will say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful. . . . Enter into the joy of your master."

After Jesus finished all His sayings, He told His disciples, "The Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified" (Mt 26:2). He endured to the end, the cross and the grave. He was wise for your sake, farsighted, seeing beyond the grave to the resurrection, to the ascension, and to His ruling in heaven. Therefore, God counts you as wise, as faithful, as one who will live beyond the grave, who will join Him in heaven. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful" (Heb 10:23); in other words. All is done by Christ Himself, all we need to do is hold on to what Jesus has done, and when we do so, Jesus will certainly accomplish everything He has promised He will do. Holding on to Him and His work, will allow Him to save us in the end. But being as terrified of Him as one of the businessman's servants was, means we reject Christ and His work in us. But we pray that of all of us, here today, that Jesus will say to each and every one of you: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful. . . . Enter into the joy of your master." This your King, Christ the King who will welcome you into His mansion, forever and ever.

"Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it" (1 Thess 5:23–24).