

Luke Chapter 12 – John Karmelich

1. We're now at the point where Jesus is a few month's away from the crucifixion. He uses this time to give his disciples essentially one big speech on what to do and not do as one of His followers. One of the classic questions Christians' ponder is what are we supposed to do as believers? As I like to say, being a Christian costs us nothing and everything at the same time. It costs us nothing as Jesus paid the complete price for our sins and we can't add anything to that or do anything in order to prove our worth to God. It also costs us everything in that God wants to teach us how to be completely dependant upon Him for every aspect of our lives. Therefore, it's logical to ponder how does that work practically? If God proves us our "daily bread" what do we do in response to that? The good news is this chapter is mostly a big speech given by Jesus on what He expects us to do and not do as His followers. Therefore if one wonders what it is we're supposed to actually do as Christians, this chapter has a few of those answers. Oh, and my lesson title for those of you who care is "How being a Christian costs us nothing and everything at the same time."
2. With that said, let me summarize this chapter and hopefully explain that a little better:
 - a) The first thing Jesus talks about is the hypocrisy of the Pharisee's. Since most of us as not Jewish and that group isn't around today, let me explain how that affects our lives. To be a hypocrite essentially means somebody expects you or me to live a certain way, but they themselves don't have to live up to that standard because they're more important than we are or they're just "better people". We avoid having experts tell us how to live by us using the bible as our standards to live by and not how others interpret it as an example here.
 - b) At that time, the average Jewish person feared the religious leaders as they had the power to excommunicate someone from Judaism. That not only meant being kicked out of one's synagogue, but it also meant banishment from one's family and society. In order to help people with those fears, Jesus tells them whom we should fear: God. Jesus point is that God not only knows all things but He has the power to decide where we go after we die.
 - c) That leads to the logical question, "OK then, how do we know we're saved?" The answer Jesus gives is that if we acknowledge Him before other people as being both in charge of our lives (i.e., "LORD") and the fact God raised Jesus from the dead, then we can know for sure we are saved. However, if we go our whole lives turning from Jesus, then the logical conclusion is we don't want to be with God, so then we're sent to a literal eternal hell.
 - d) While Jesus was discussing judgment, He brings up a few other related points. The first is that if we are on trial for believing in Jesus or going through a test to prove our loyalty to Him, He will give us the right words to say at that time. That doesn't mean we ignore the bible, but it just means when it counts, God will prepare us properly for that moment.
 - e) Next someone in the crowd asks Jesus about a problem he's having with his own brother over dividing the family inheritance. Jesus says in effect, it's not my job to resolve every dispute we're having. He came to pay the price for sins and prove He's the Messiah. As to problems we have in our lives, yes we are to help each other and pray our way through them, but that didn't have any effect upon the purpose of Jesus coming in the world.
 - f) Since Jesus was talking about wealth and the accumulation of wealth, He gives a parable here to tell of a man who made lots of money and now decides to retire in comfort with all the money he made. Jesus refers to this made-up man as a fool, only because he spent his life only on making money and not on making a difference for God in one's life. There is an old Christian expression that one can take their money and goods to heaven: It is by sending it up "ahead of time". By giving to Christian causes and doing works for God we are in effect rich towards God for all of eternity. Of course if we can, we should save for a rainy day. That's not the issue. The issue is if we only care about this life, in effect we've wasted the life that God has given us.

- g) From there, Jesus gets on a roll explaining that if we believe God cares for our lives, then we need to trust that He will provide for us. It's not a call to be lazy, but to trust that if we are willing to work, God will take care of us. Jesus then reminds us in effect that since we don't know when our lives will end, we need to use our time to make a difference for Him in this world. If we do that, God promises to take care of our daily needs so that we can use our lives to make a difference for Him.
 - h) He then warns about families being divided over Him. He also says that we can usually tell what the weather is going to be like once we go outside in the morning. The point is with a little bit of common sense, one can usually tell the weather. However, if we fail to apply the same common sense to understand who Jesus is, we miss the purpose for living.
 - i) In summary, we have a long chapter that says in effect, "Focus on God, and He'll take care of our needs if we trust in Him. We should expect division amongst people around us as most won't accept the idea that we don't have to prove our worth to God. Therefore each of us has to judge for ourselves what is the right thing to do, which is to accept Jesus' own payment for our sins so we can use our lives for His glory.
3. Yes I know that's a long summary. As I said a page back, this chapter is mainly a speech by Jesus to teach us how to live our lives and what we should and should not focus upon as His disciples. With that said, the rest is the details. Speaking of details, time for me to get started on them.
4. Chapter 12, Verse 1: Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ³ What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.
- a) To explain these verses, it is always best to explain where we last left off. The last part of Chapter 11 was Jesus criticizing a group of Pharisee's (devoutly religious Jews back then) who believed the way to please God was to follow in minute detail every law in the Old Testament and their interpretation of those laws. Jesus' response was effectively, since God isn't impressed with our efforts to please Him, the only way to be perfect is to trust in His perfect payment for our sins. Only then can we use our lives to make a difference for God. Apparently Jesus finished that discussion over a meal. Now there was a big crowd outside who want to either hear Jesus or see a miracle. That's where Chapter 12 begins.
 - b) Verse 1 says there was a large multitude that gathered. Remember that Jesus was the big news at this point as people were wondering whether or not He was the Messiah. Jesus uses this occasion to discuss the teaching of the religious leaders at this time.
 - c) Before I explain anything else, I need to quickly explain the word "yeast" (or leaven, same thing) as it is used in the bible. Yeast is added to bread to make it rise. For a religious Jew the word yeast (or leaven) is associated with sin, as sin grows if left unchecked. For most Jewish holidays only unleavened bread was allowed to remind them to avoid sin.
 - i) I give that little speech as Jesus says the "yeast" of the Pharisee's is their hypocrisy. Remember the difference between sin and hypocrisy: To sin is when we fail to live up to God's standards. Hypocrisy is when we say others have to live this way or that way, but those rules don't apply to me (the hypocrite) as I'm above all of that.
 - d) Jesus then gives a warning that one can't get away with hypocrisy. Sooner or later people will find out how we live in comparison to what we say. Especially today in our world of the internet where things spread quickly and instantly, one can't get away with anything without others finding out about it. I'm not saying we have to be perfect. I'm just saying we can't expect others to live by one standard and we think we're above that standard.
 - e) So if we can't get away with anything, what should we fear? If we're afraid to get caught of whatever sin we face in our lives, what do we do about that fear? Great question. That leads us right back to Jesus speech and Verse 4:

5. Verse 4: "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more.⁵ But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God.⁷ Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.
- a) A consistent theme throughout the bible is on the importance of fearing God. To fear God has nothing to do with say being struck dead by a lightening bolt for some sin we've done in our lifetime. The fear has to do with the fact that God does judge all of us including us saved Christians. As I like to say, God only has one question for us: Do we believe Jesus is God and died for our sins? No we can't lie on judgment day and say we've believed it. In effect we answer that question based on how we lived once we accepted that fact.
 - b) Then I hold the view that once we're in the door, God's follow up question is how did we live based on that information? How did we use our lives to make a difference for Him?
 - c) All of that leads me back to the issue of "fearing God". The greatest way to live our lives is to live in fear of His judgment. A good way to know we are saved is that we feel guilt when we know we've done something that displeases Him and we care about that issue.
 - d) That leads to another logical question: In a world of billions of people and billions of stars in the sky, how do you expect me to believe that God not only exists, but cares for me?
 - i) That's a reason why the bible is full of miracles and evidence to prove God exists and cares for our lives. The world is too finely tuned to have created itself. There is a theory that an unlimited number of universes exist and by random luck we are in the one that is so finely tuned that life exists. First, I don't believe that theory. Even if it is true, it still requires a God greater than us to create that world. Finally, it doesn't explain why all the miracles are listed in the bible, or how the bible can accurately predict all sorts of historical events centuries before they occurred.
 - ii) What if one asks, "Who created God?" Eventually one has to get to a point where one stops asking because there has to be a creator greater than the creation.
 - iii) The reason I'm giving all of this basic theology is to understand that if God exists and He is greater than the world we live in, then we need to accept that He created us with a purpose. That purpose is to make a difference for Him in this world.
 - iv) We also have to accept the idea that even though there are billions of people, God knows each one of us and cares for the lives of each one of us. As I heard a long time ago from Dr. David Hocking, "Every time I try to think about how big God is, all I do is get a headache." Therefore, if one believes God exists, the logical thing to do about it is serve Him since He is greater than what we can comprehend.
 - e) All of that theology leads us back to a key point in Verse 7: If God knows every detail of our lives, why do we worry? If we do believe Jesus is in charge of our lives ("LORD") and we believe God raised Him from the dead, then we can rest in the fact that no matter how much we mess up, we are saved. That's why Jesus emphasizes the fact we don't have to worry about pleasing God if we simply believe those facts. With that said, Verse 8:
6. Verse 8: "I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God.⁹ But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.¹⁰ And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.
- a) A logical question after the previous set of verses is simply, "How can I know for sure if I am saved?" Yes we believe that salvation comes through faith alone, but if we have that type of faith, wouldn't we just naturally want to do something about it? If we're willing to prove we believe in Jesus by acknowledging Him publicly then we can be sure that God is going to acknowledge us. That is why many churches do altar calls. That's where people are asked to step up to the front of the church and publicly acknowledge Jesus before the rest of the church as a sign that they are willing to commit their lives to Jesus.

- b) As I stated in the introduction, being a Christian cost us nothing and everything at the same time. I don't believe one is saved if say one answers an altar call once in one's life. The evidence of our faith is a changed lifestyle based on our willingness to want to turn from sin and trust God to guide our lives. At the same time, one bit of evidence that we are willing to live that way, is to publicly confess Jesus before others. That's the point in Verse 8. One has to remember that for many people throughout history, to be a Christian was a death sentence. That's why Jesus makes this point about publicly confessing Him before others.
 - c) Then in Verse 9 comes the reverse situation: If we are too embarrassed to state our belief in Jesus as God, in effect God will "disown" us: Let me explain that a different way: If we live in a society where Christianity is illegal, I don't think Jesus expects us to shout from a rooftop that Jesus is God. At the same time, if we do believe Jesus is God, we should be willing to take risks based on that belief. If we live in a place where Christianity is legal, but we never go to church or never open our bible, that is evidence that we're not willing to confess Jesus before others.
 - d) Next we get the famous "Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" concept. First, I don't believe at all that there's a magic set of words one can say, which condemns us to hell forever. The idea of this verse is about a lifetime denial of Jesus as God. Remember the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to draw us closer to God. To deny the Spirit is simply to deny His power to work in our lives in order to make a difference for God in the first place.
 - i) If you recall from the last chapter, some of the Jewish religious leaders were saying Jesus does miracle by Satan's power. To die believing that idea is a good example of what "Blasphemy" is all about. The idea is we can't take a neutral stance about Jesus. Either we believe He is God and died for our sins or we're condemned.
 - ii) On that happy note, let's move on to the next set of verses.
7. Verse 11: "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."
- a) Consider that a few verses ago, Jesus said: we need to confess that He is our Lord as an example that we are saved. The question the disciples must have pondered at that point is, "What exactly do we say and who do we say it too? Given that question, Verses 11-12 provide the answer: First, notice Jesus says that the disciples will (as in "done deal") be brought before civil courts and Jewish religious councils in order to defend their belief in Jesus as a death sentence.
 - i) History records that the disciples (except John) all died by being tortured for their belief in Jesus and refused to deny their faith at that point.
 - ii) There were also 10 Roman Emperor's who persecuted Christians. Jesus point for all of them is they didn't have to worry about what they would say at their trial, as the Holy Spirit would give us the right words to say.
 - iii) The best book to read of the testimonies of disciples at such trials is "Foxes Book of Martyrs", which chronicles many such testimonies throughout history since Jesus' own time. It's amazing to consider how many people were willing to die for Him considering they've never met Him "face to face".
 - b) Before I move on, let me share a minor debate within the Christian church on this issue. I have heard people argue that we don't have to study our bibles because when we face our own trials for believing in Jesus, He will give us the right words to say as He promised He would in these verses. My response is in effect, "Nonsense". Of course if we are ever put on trial for our faith, God will be faithful to guide us just as He has guided thousands or maybe millions of martyrs through the centuries. Still, to read and study one's bible is the way we get to know Jesus in the first place. In summary, these verses should never be an excuse to avoid studying one's bible.

8. Verse 13: Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴ Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" ¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."
- a) As I read these verses, the first question that crossed my mind is "Why are they here?" In other words, why did Luke want to include this little story in the middle of Jesus' speech?
 - i) I suspect the answer is the topic of Jesus' speech has to do with what it is we're and not supposed to do as His disciples. Therefore, Jesus is effectively asked, can You solve all of our family issues? Jesus says no. Let me talk about why that is.
 - ii) Stop and consider what is the role of Christians. It is to give comfort to each other by not only sharing the good news of Jesus, but also to lead others closer to Him. I don't believe the role of all Christians as disciples is to solve any or all family type disputes as described here in these verses.
 - b) A quick background on Jewish inheritance laws might be helpful here. If a Jewish man had more than one son, the oldest would divide the inheritance into piles, and then the oldest was last to pick which pile was his. Traditionally Jewish daughters were not given part of the inheritance, which is why a "dowry" was paid in case a girl lost her husband.
 - i) With that said, apparently someone in the crowd believed he was cheated out of part of his family estate. Jesus response was in effect, "That's your problem."
 - ii) The point Jesus was trying to make, and will make later in the next set of verses is for us to get our focus on God and not our family inheritance.
 - iii) As to such family issues, if all the parties involved agree to say, you or I to resolve the situation, and we can do it biblically (fairly) we should. As to Jesus, we look to Him in prayer for all situations. This text is not saying Jesus doesn't care about the problems we face in life. The issue was about those who didn't care about Jesus as the one who will pay the price for our sins and only focused on "earthly" matters.
 - iv) With that said, this little discussion goes well into the next set of verses:
9. Verse 16: And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' ¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." ' ²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' ²¹ "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."
- a) One has to admit, until one gets to the punch line of this made-up story, it sounds like a life that anyone would want. It is describing a farmer who has done so well, that his barn isn't big enough to hold everything. He decides, "OK, time for me to retire in ease. I have plenty of stuff, and I'm set for many years."
 - i) Then of course comes the punch line that he died that night. Jesus final line of this story is that those who store up only for themselves are not rich toward God.
 - b) So is this parable saying we should never try to get richer or save up for a rainy day? No it is not. The point is where our heart is. If we only care about how much stuff we get in this life, in effect we've wasted this life.
 - c) For those who have been reading my studies for awhile, you know how obsessed I am on the topic of time and using it for God's glory. Here's Jesus in effect saying the same thing. The point has nothing to do with our savings, but just how tightly we hold on to stuff.
 - d) I take the view that everything that I own belongs to God. That doesn't mean of course I give all I own to my local church. It just means I think of what I own as belonging to Him in the first place. As one who is self employed and has gone through good and bad years it helps to think of life in those terms and makes the tough times easier to deal with.

10. Verse 22: Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear.²³ Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.²⁴ Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!²⁵ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?²⁶ Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?
- a) I admit that if I had to list all possible sins, I don't think of worrying or even grumbling as being one. Yet God considers it a sin when we worry about what we'll eat or wear. Does that mean it's a sin if contemplate what to eat for dinner? No. The idea of worrying here is about stress over having the money to be able to eat or buy essentials of life.
 - b) One thing that has never ceased to amaze me is how God puts me in situations to help me relate to whatever passage I'm currently working on. I've discovered many bible teachers do have that same sense that God puts stuff in our life to help us relate to a passage. I say that as, at this time my business is real slow. The good news is I have more time to write as well as try to market the business. I've cleaned up my office and I'm trusting God that He will provide, but I admit, worrying is a great challenge. I'm also grateful for a handful of close friends who've been through similar situations and are helping me at this time.
 - c) Besides the physical damage done to our bodies from worrying, it is also a sin as to worry means we're not trusting God's word. When we pray "Give us this day our daily bread", to worry means we don't trust God to answer that prayer. These verses have nothing to do with say, planning or hard work. The issue is when we just sit there and worry about what we're going to do for our next meal.
 - d) These verses also do mean that God can bring us very low as if to ask if we still trust Him during tough times. To quote Chuck Missler, "I'm convinced God stays up at night trying to think of new ways to ask me, "Do I really trust God, now, even through this?" I admit, that is what I think during times like this. I've also found the best way to get out of one's "pity party" is to volunteer to go do something for someone else.
 - e) Meanwhile, back to the verses. Jesus point is God is aware of all things. He knows all of the birds and how long they will each live. We as His children are far more important to Him than any and all birds. Knowing that God cares for us, we have to realize we can't improve our lives by worrying about any particular situation.
 - f) OK, moving from a bird example to a plant life example, time for the next set of verses:
11. Verse 27: "Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.²⁸ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!²⁹ And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it.³⁰ For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them.³¹ But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.
- a) To begin, a little about lilies in Israel. This was a common flower that would grow wild in the open fields. One should also know a little about how grass was used for cooking. As I understand it, grass was used to regulate the temperature. Throwing dry grass on a fire was a way to make it hotter.
 - b) The point of that little Middle East botany lesson is Jesus used two very common plants to illustrate how much more valuable we are than plant life. Remember I asked earlier in the lesson about how can God be aware of billions of people all at the same time? Apparently He knows about all the grass used and all the lilies that grow. If He can keep track of that level of detail I believe He can handle being aware of billions of people at the same time.
 - c) The point of this illustration is in effect the same as the one about birds. The issue doesn't mean we can't save for our future. The issue doesn't mean we can't discuss what are we going to have for dinner? The issue is about worrying about those things as if we don't trust God to prove them, or focus on them so much we ignore God in our lives.

12. Verse 32: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- a) Well, if the last verses didn't scare you enough to give more of our time and our money to our favorite Christian cause, these verses should do the trick. First Jesus is telling us that God is giving (not demanding payment, but giving us freely) all that heaven has to offer. I don't know what it is, but since eternity is infinitely longer than this lifetime, I'm willing to bet on eternity versus this lifetime. I've now seen enough evidence based on prophecy, statistics, manuscripts and archeology to accept the bible as fact. Since all of it is true, we as Christians need to focus on eternity over this lifetime.
 - b) That leads us to Verse 32. It says for us to sell what we have to give to the poor. When I read that, I'm wondering do I give away the little I have in savings and sell my house? I don't think that's the point. The issue is our attitude about what we own. The best way to explain it is, "If there is something in-between you and God, get rid of the something as to not hinder that relationship." Do I believe there are wealthy Christians? Yes. The issue isn't to sell all we own, but whether or not we set our hearts on them as opposed to God.
 - i) It's always important to read bible verses in context. If one read Verses 32 by itself one would say Jesus wants us to sell all we have. One should always read a verse in context of the surrounding verses. The surrounding verses teach us not to trust in our wealth or to cling tightly to it. In context Verse 32 is saying, if money or any of our possessions are keeping us from drawing close to God, then we should sell them as to not let it be a hindrance.
 - c) Let me end this discussion of money on a positive note. Jesus is saying that if we trust in His sin payment and believe Jesus is God, then until the day we die, we can trust that God will provide for all our needs. Not necessarily all our desires, but whatever we need to be a good witness for Him in our lives. As my own work drought continues, I constantly do remind myself of that fact as God leads me through such a time.
13. Verse 35: "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning,³⁶ 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.³⁷ 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.³⁸ 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.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."
- a) Verse 35 is another verse where one has to read it in context of the surrounding verses. It does not mean we have to say, keep our lights on all night long and always be dressed as if we have to go serve someone that moment. The issue is our attitude. Like the man in the last chapter who knocked on the door in the middle of the night asking for help, God wants us to have the attitude of always being willing to help others and put the needs of others as priority over our own needs. That's the context of Verse 35.
 - b) Many years ago, when I taught on one of the other gospels, I remember using an example of this principal of a priest who was playing a game of racquetball. He was asked, what if Jesus returned in 1 hour, what would you do? His response was, "finish my game". The point is that to be a good servant of Jesus does not mean we are literally working our tails off 24 hours a day. It does mean we have the attitude of service all the time and if help is needed at that moment, we do help. It doesn't mean we have to give up what we enjoy doing as much as it is our attitude. Therefore, the idea is not to panic if we do believe in Jesus' literal return that could happen at any time. Speaking of which, back to the verses.

- c) Of all topics, it is probably important here to talk briefly about Jesus Second Coming. He promised that He would return (See John 14:3, Acts 1:11 and Acts 15:16 as examples.) The point here is that for 2,000 the Christian church has been waiting for the literal return of Jesus to rule over the world from Jerusalem as promised. In fact, the bible has more to say about the Second Coming of Jesus than the first. So how can I say it's going to happen if it has been about 2,000 years and counting? To quote Peter, "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (2nd Peter 3:8 NIV). Therefore, the long time frame doesn't concern me. Given the fact that Israelites control Jerusalem for the first time in 2,500 under self-rule since 1967 gives me hope that the event will occur soon. Remember for Jesus to return, it means He rules over the world from Jerusalem. If you've ever wondered why the non-Christian world is so "hell bent" over Jerusalem being in control by the Israelites, look no further than the bible to understand why it is true.
- d) The reason I give that speech here is it ties to the last verses well. Notice Verse 40, which is the end of that paragraph. It says we must be ready because Jesus is coming at an hour that we don't expect. Suppose we think Jesus won't come for another say 200 years? Why should we worry about this? Then think of it this way: Do we know for sure we will live to the end of the day today? Of course not. There are no guarantees of a long life in this world. To come back to my earlier illustration, to be ready does not mean we have to be of service to others 24 hours a day. We can finish our "racquetball game" as an example. However, to be a Christian means we have the attitude of caring about others more than we care about ourselves.
- i) Remember the big talk a page or so back on trusting God through tough times as well as giving being willing to give our stuff to others? In effect that ties well to these verses as well. The best way to deal with tough times is to be of service to someone else, as it gets our mind off of our own problems. The best thing to do in tough times is go help someone else. That in effect is what Jesus meant by the idea here of being dressed for serve and ready for action.
- e) Before I move on, there is another great point to make about these verses. Jesus says that if we do have the attitude of service to others, there is coming a day in heaven where God Himself will wait on us. I've always found it easy to consider the idea of humbling myself before God as well, He is God and I'm not. However, these verses and others do tell us of Jesus humbling Himself in order to serve others. Yes it is stated as an example of how it is that God wants us to live. However, I believe there is also a literalness to it that when we get to heaven, Revelation 21 describes a great banquet to begin the marriage of Jesus and His bride, I also see a literalness to Jesus serving His believers.
- i) I have to admit I wonder how that works practically. How can multitudes of us be the "bride of Christ"? First, it's not sexual, so being a man or woman isn't the issue. I hold the view that in heaven we'll exist in more than three dimensions. Consider that after Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared in the middle of a locked room. (See John 20:19,26). Therefore, if we are like Him in heaven, we too exist in a way that's suitable for whatever atmosphere heaven is like. That eternal body we get will make it possible for us to all exist together and separate at the same time.
- ii) Now stop and think of going to a wedding ceremony. There's usually a large meal after the ceremony to celebrate the event. I always considered the banquet as told in Revelation 19 as Jesus and the church kicking off their new eternal relationship together, which is why the banquet is described that way. The point as it ties here in Luke 12 is that Jesus will actually serve us at that banquet.
- iii) I should give a quick comment about a traditional Jewish wedding. The exact time of that wedding is not given, just a rough date. Part of the fun is the bride doesn't know the exact time her future husband will show up. Like the Second Coming, a wedding party shows up to get the bride and start the celebration.

- f) In the meantime, we still have to deal with life. The verses gives an illustration of a thief coming in the middle of the night. In effect, we must be ready not knowing if and when Jesus will return. It's good to consider every now and then that today could be the day of Jesus return and live our life with the hope that today could be our last day on earth.
- g) I have to admit, one of the most freeing things to realize, is that today could be our last day to live this present life. As I say every now and then: I don't fear death, only pain. If I'm positive Jesus can return at any time or I can die at any time, then shouldn't I use my time to make a difference for Him in this world? The answer is of course we should, and that's why I love to write so much about God's word. Does that mean we shouldn't plan for our future? Of course we should plan and take care of our loved ones. The point is to be willing to trust God more than we trust our stuff and be willing to let go of our stuff if it is standing between God and ourselves. That's the underlying point of this lesson. In the meantime, Jesus has more to say to us about how He wants us to live in this lifetime:
14. Verse 41: Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?"
- a) When I read this verse, my first question is, "Which parable?" The answer is Verses 35 to 40 as Jesus was describing a thief who could come at any time. Just as a wedding party can show up at any time for the bride, so Peter wanted to know if this parable applies to Jesus disciples or anyone in the crowd? Keep in mind Peter still had no idea about Jesus death and resurrection yet. Peter probably thought Jesus would go rule from Jerusalem forever and that was that. That's why Peter wondered whom this parable does apply to? That leads to Jesus' answer in the next set of verses.
15. Verse 42: 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? ⁴³ It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. ⁴⁴ I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵ 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. ⁴⁶ 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.
- a) The short answer to Peter's question is "anybody willing to follow Me" is the answer. The longer answer has to do with our willingness to put other's needs before our own. That is why Jesus says that the servant who works hard for his or her master will be put in charge of all the master's possessions. Let me explain that in context:
- i) One has to remember that when Jesus made that statement, two thirds of people who lived in the Roman Empire were slaves. People understood the idea of living as a slave under a single master and that slave had to do whatever the master said.
- ii) That's why Jesus says in Verse 45 that if the master shows up unexpectedly, then the master can cut the servant up in pieces. Personally, I don't know how literal to take the idea of Jesus cutting up unfaithful servants into pieces. Let's just say I'm too nervous to want to test Jesus on that issue.
- iii) Remember I said in the introduction that to be a servant of Jesus costs us nothing and everything at the same time? These verses make that point well. To state the basic idea again, it cost us nothing in that Jesus paid the full price for our sins. At the same time it costs us everything as we effectively we choose to become slaves to Jesus based on how we live our lives. It doesn't mean we have to panic whether or not Jesus can return at any time. It's about living a life to make a difference for Him in all that we do. If we do that, then we can finish our "racquetball game" in peace knowing that if Jesus returns, we have used our lives since we first accepted Jesus as being in charge of every aspect of our lives.
- iv) Now that I've successfully scared all of us into thinking we have to work harder in order to be accepted by Jesus, let us read His additional comments on this topic.

16. Verse 47: "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸ 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.
- a) My first question here is how literal is Jesus being in these verses? Is He saying that each of us will receive blows for our failure to do what He wants us to do? First let's remember that Romans 8:1 says, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus". Therefore, I don't think the blows as described here are literal for those of us who do trust in Jesus for our salvation. What we are reading is an illustration that people understand who lived in a world where slavery and beating of slaves was a common issue.
 - b) With that said, there have been times I felt like God has beaten me in that I did what was sinful and knew it. That guilt we feel is a type of the "blow". The way I view living the Christian life is God loves us too much to leave us alone. That's why He corrects us His way and on His timing and it can feel like physical blows when we don't live by the laws as taught in the bible. As a simple example, if we steal and feel guilty about it, those are the type of blows one can feel if one cares about pleasing God with their lives.
 - c) All of that leads perfectly to the last sentence of Verse 48. Most of us have heard the old expression, "to much is given, much is required". That is in effect a short version of the last sentence of Verse 48. The point is if we are called to serve God in some capacity, we have to realize that the cost of serving God that way is that He demands a lot from us. To say this another way, "Is it easy to live the Christian life? No it's impossible. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, we can't ever do whatever God calls us to do." Even with what we're called to do, God can and does demand more of us to make that difference.
 - d) So is it worth living life this way? The answer is, "what choice do we have? If we believe that Jesus is God, why would we want to live any other way! Yes it's hard at times but it also has its rewards in this lifetime of knowing that God Himself is guiding our lives for His glory through the good and the bad times.
 - e) Well, I hate to stop when I'm on a roll, but I still have 11 more verses to get through:
17. Verse 49: "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! ⁵¹ Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. ⁵² From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ 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."
- a) I'd like you to stop and consider what the Jewish expectation of the Messiah was. Was He to be a man of peace or war? I suspect the answer is both. They expected the Messiah to conquer all of the Jewish enemies so they could enjoy peace the same way King David conquered all the nations around Israel a 1,000 years before Jesus and then David's son Solomon ruled during a time of peace. I state all of that, as I don't think the Jews view of the Messiah was to bring division and war amongst the Israelites. They wanted a Messiah that would be the source of national peace because they don't have to worry about any outside force to attack them.
 - b) With that background stated, Jesus says in Verse 51 that instead of bring peace, He came to bring division. He says that families will be divided because of me. So we know that Jesus is being literal and not figurative here, Jesus even lists different family relationships and claims such relationships will be divided because of Him. If you think this isn't true stop and consider one's own greater family relationships when it comes to believing Jesus paid the complete price for our sins and we can't earn that by living a good life. If you're like me, you know first hand about that division even though you may not bring it up. In my larger family, religion is not discussed as we know it causes division.

- c) That little speech leads me back to Verse 50, which says Jesus has a baptism to undergo. He of course is referring to His own death and resurrection. That is the event that causes division, both back then and to this day. Let's be honest, to trust in Jesus alone, and not in any religious system, has generally been a death sentence throughout history, which gives us another reason Jesus told us earlier in the chapter to not worry in advance about what we will say when we're on trial for our faith.
 - d) Since I'm working my way backwards through the verses in this paragraph, let me talk about Verse 49 quickly: Jesus said He came to bring fire to the world. If you know much about the bible, you know that "fire" is associated with judgment. If one has ever worked with metal, one knows one has to heat it high in order to shape it as well as burn off any and all impurities. Jesus point is still about division. Belief in Him causes division, which is the fire of judgment that comes based on our trust in Him or lack thereof. It brings us back to the idea that we are either saved or not and there is no middle ground. Therefore we willingly agree to be a Jesus' slave, which is what living the Christian life is all about.
 - e) As my lesson title says, remember that to be a Christian costs us nothing and everything at the same time. That is also what Jesus is implying by that last paragraph. With that said, we can move on to the next group of verses:
18. Verse 54: 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. ⁵⁵ And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is. ⁵⁶ Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?
- a) If one lived in Israel, one can often tell what the weather is going to be for the day just by how the weather is going to be first thing in the morning. For example, if cloud cover is coming from the Mediterranean, it often rained as the clouds then covered the mountains in Israel. If a hot dry wind was coming from the south, it will be a hot day. Where I live in Southern California, it is similar. When the hot "Santa Ana winds" blow from the south I know it will be a hot day. If one can recognize rain clouds in the morning, rain comes.
 - b) Jesus point was not to give a lesson in predicting the weather. His point is if we can tell what the weather will be by going outside, we should know that Jesus is the Messiah by studying the evidence of the bible as a whole. We should know that He was sent by God the Father to guide our lives and pay the price for all our sins. The point is the evidence is there, if we're just willing to look at it.
 - c) The truly sad part of this whole lesson is the price one has to pay for willfully choosing to reject that message. I'm convinced that collectively the Jewish nation has been blinded to know the truth of Jesus. There are many individuals from Jewish backgrounds who've become Christians throughout history. At the same time, despite the evidence being there most chose to reject that message and that's been the tragedy of history.
 - i) Even for us from non-Jewish backgrounds, once one studies the bible based on the evidence of who Jesus is, we have no excuse. We live in an age where knowledge of Jesus is readily available via any electronic method let alone going to a church, so we have no excuse if we choose to reject the Gospel message.
 - ii) That's Jesus point to this crowd. If you're smart enough to know how to recognize weather patterns, you should be smart enough to recognize who Jesus is, and then go do something about it with our lives. That's His message to us.
 - d) Let me exhale for a moment and speak to those of us who already trust in Jesus and are doing things to make a difference for Him. What's the point for all of us here? Not only is it a reminder of how God wants us to live out the time we have to live, but a reminder to us to be willing to share that message with others. Being a Christian is about our attitude much more than our activity at the moment. It is the reminder that all we have belongs to God and the greatest purpose we can have for living is to make a difference for Him with out lives. If one gets that, one gets the main purpose of this lesson.

19. Verse 57: "Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?"⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹ I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. "
- a) To explain these last few verses, I need to give a quick background on court hearings and getting justice in those days. Let's say one has a dispute with someone over money. One of the two parties can literally drag the other in front of the Roman officials for a trial. The Romans had a lot of faults, but the one good thing was their sense of justice. Living under that empire meant that any non-slave could bring anyone else to court to demand justice.
 - b) OK, good for them. What does that have to do with us? The point is just as a citizen back in those days could demand justice, so we need to recognize our own faults.
 - c) I want to share something I learned years ago from a pastor named Jon Curson on these particular verses. He described the adversary as Satan. Let's assume Satan is bringing up to God all of the sins we have committed. The point is not to argue whether or not we are guilty. The idea is to admit we're wrong and then effectively ask God for mercy. That is what Jesus does for us, by paying the price for all the sins we have or will ever commit.
 - d) OK most of us know all of that. What's the point? As I heard at church last week, we are a bunch of sinners, married to other sinners producing sinning children. None of us are perfect people. Therefore, we do make mistakes and have to realize how imperfect we are and that's why Jesus gives us this illustration here.
 - i) The guilt of the Jewish people back then was not recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. The guilt of people today is not recognizing Jesus as God so that God Himself can pay the price for our sins. That's why salvation costs us nothing and everything at the same time.
 - ii) Therefore, when our loved ones accuse of something, agree and don't argue. We are sinners like they are. God did not call us to point out other people's sins. He called us to make a difference for Him as sinners. It is only by showing love for one another that we can overcome the hostilities that come from those sins.
 - iii) On that positive note, I'll end in prayer.
20. Heavenly Father, this chapter is full of reminders that in order to be one of Your disciples it cost us nothing and everything at the same time. Help us to not try to make a difference for You on our own willpower, but by using Your power to work through our lives. Help us to trust You'll provide for us through good and bad times and You are still guiding our lives for Your glory. Help us as we use our time to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.