

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 12- Luke 12:35-40** 238- Be Ready- Part 1

May 4, 2014

Luke 12:35-40

35 "Be dressed in readiness, and *keep* your lamps lit.

36 "Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open *the door* to him when he comes and knocks.

37 "Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself *to serve*, and have them recline *at the table*, and will come up and wait on them.

38 "Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds *them so*, blessed are those *slaves*.

39 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

40 "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

To the Glory of God

Now ever since September 11, 2001, and President George W. Bush said that Muslims and Christians were "on the same path to the afterlife" - I have seen more clearly than ever how absolutely *essential* it is to explicitly exalt the Excellence of Jesus Christ crucified for sinners and risen from the dead. I have seen first-hand how the pagans of this world will literally eat us alive if we are unclear in the least about what we believe and why we believe it. Christianity is being made to look foolish and silly and superstitious and weird and anti-intellectual in more and more quarters and therefore- the Christ that we love and that we proclaim and that we adore and follow and exalt must be explicit in

all our God-talk. It will no longer suffice- in this day of compromise and pluralism and just willy-nilly changing definition of words- to talk about the Glory of God in vague or general ways. In these powerful days of tremendous upheaval and change- we must come to grasp the basic message of the Epistle to the **Hebrews** that says:

God without Christ is no God at all

... so a "no-God" cannot satisfy the soul, a humanistic social god cannot forgive a single sin, and a counter-culture hippie Jesus cannot save us to the uttermost. Following a "no-God"- whatever his name or whatever his religion might be- will be a wasted life. God-in-Christ is the only true God and the only path to both eternal life and our own joy.

It was God's Will to choose us and to forgive us and to bring us to the highest and most durable of all pleasures by crushing His Own Son- Jesus Christ- and making Him a bloody Spectacle of blameless suffering and death. This is what it cost to rescue us from a "wasted life" of sin and deception. The Apostle Paul said this about that in **Philippians 2:6-8**:

Philippians 2:6-8

6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

So this Jesus was and is a real historical Man- Who is *the single* most exclusive and *the single* most controversial human being Who ever lived in Whom...

Colossians 2:9

... all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

And since He is "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made," as the old Nicene Creed says, and since His Death and Resurrection are the central Act of God in all of human history- it is not surprising to hear the Bible say,

Colossians 1:16

For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

And when the Bible says that all this was made “**For Him!**”- that means it was made for His Glory!

Ever since the Incarnate, Redeeming Work of Jesus- God is gladly glorified by sinners only through the glorification of the risen God-Man, Jesus Christ. His bloody Death is the blazing center of the Glory of God. There is simply no way to the Glory of the Father but through the Son. All the Promises of eternal Joy in God’s Presence, and the Pleasures that are at his Right Hand- come to us *only* through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And while Joel Osteen may be confused about whether or not Bhuddists and Hindus and Muslims are saved- God isn’t confused at all. And even though Kenneth Copeland and Joyce Meyers and Jerry Sevelle and Kenneth Hagin may teach that you and I could have just as well died on the Cross if we lived back then- Almighty God says that Jesus alone is the “litmus test” of reality for all persons and all religions. And He said this clearly Himself in **Luke 10:16b**:

... he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

Make no mistake about this- all human beings and all religions and philosophies that reject Jesus Christ also reject God. And make no mistake about this- to the extent that anyone changes or deletes or bypasses or leaves out any of the Qualities and Attributes of Jesus Christ in either His Person or His Word or His Work- to that degree they also change and delete and bypass and leave out the Qualities and Attributes of God.

"But Brother Blair, is it possible that other religions know the one true living God?" Well, here is the test:

Do they reject Jesus as the one and only Savior for sinners- Who was fully God and fully Man and Who lived a perfectly sinless Life and Who was crucified and raised by God from the dead?

... And if they do- then they do *not* know God in a saving way. And what we have to try to grasp is that God so values Jesus Christ that He will never negotiate with any person about this issue- it is all or nothing- you trust in the Jesus of the Bible or you die in your sins. You bow before the Lordship Demands of the Jesus Christ over every aspect of your life or you remain lost. And this is exactly what Jesus meant when He said,

John 14:6b

... I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

... and when He said,

John 5:23b

... He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

... and when He said:

John 8:42b

... If God were your Father, you would love Me,

If we would see and savor the Glory of God- then we must see and savor Jesus Christ because Christ is:

Colossians 1:15b

... the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

To put it another way- if we would hope to ever embrace the Glory of God- we must embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To reject the Gospel in any of its Biblical parts is to reject the Glory of God. And the reason this is true is not only because we are sinners and need a Savior to die for us- but also because this Savior is Himself the fullest and most beautiful manifestation of the Glory of God. He purchases our undeserved and everlasting Pleasure and He becomes for us our all-deserving, everlasting Treasure.

And this is how the Bible defines the Gospel. When we are converted through faith in Christ- what we see with the eyes of our hearts is:

2Corinthians 4:6

... the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

The Gospel is what Jonathan Edwards said, “the good news of all-conquering Beauty”. Or to say it the way the Apostle Paul does, The Gospel is the good news of **“the glory of Christ.”** So when we embrace Christ- we embrace God, and, therefore- when we reject Christ- we reject God.

When we see Jesus Christ exalted and lifted high and magnified, and when Jesus becomes better than all of this world’s goods and more important than eating and more valuable than breathing and more lasting than life itself, and when Jesus becomes stronger than any problem and more glorious than money and more treasured than politics and more satisfying than sex and more enduring than the ground we walk on- then we will see and savor God’s Glory.

Because there is no savoring of God’s Glory if we do not see it in Christ. This is the only window through which a sinner may see the Face of God and not be incinerated.

The Bible says that when God illuminates our hearts at conversion, He gives us...

2Corinthians 4:6

... the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

... so either we see the Glory of God **“in the Face of Jesus Christ,”** or we don’t see God’s Glory at all. And **“the face of Jesus Christ”** is the Beauty- yes, I said the exquisite Beauty- of Jesus Christ- screaming in agony on the Cross. The bloody Face of Christ crucified (and triumphant!) is the very Countenance of the Glory of God. So what was once utter foolishness to us- has now become our wisdom and our power and our boast (**Corinthians 1:18, 24**).

And I said all that to say that we are *not* ready and our life *is* wasted, dear friends- if we do not grasp the Glory of the Cross and cherish it for the Treasure that it is, and cleave to it as the highest Price

of every pleasure and the deepest comfort in every pain. And to that reality Jesus tells us in **Luke 12:40**:

You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.

Over and over in this Passage- Jesus warns us:

“Be ready; be prepared; watch; do not sleep!”

Listen to the Words of Jesus:

Luke 12:35-40

35 "Be dressed in readiness, and *keep* your lamps lit.

36 "Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open *the door* to him when he comes and knocks.

37 Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself *to serve*, and have them recline *at the table*, and will come up and wait on them.

38 Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds *them* so, blessed are those *slaves*.

39 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into."

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Now what I want to ask you is what really troubles me about this Passage:

How, after 2,000 years of preaching, could the Return of Jesus be at an hour that *anyone* would not expect?

After the Church of Jesus being on the earth for 2,000 years, after all the sermons, all the Bible Studies, all the prayer meetings, all the songs, all the testimonies, all the great exploits of Christianity in the earth over the last two millennia- how could *anyone* on earth be unprepared for the coming of the Son of Man and just what *is* this

unpreparedness? Truly this has to be a darkness and a blindness and an ignorance that is far greater than just being forgetful.

Now, in an earthquake that lasted only 22 seconds back in 2003-25,000 human beings died in Iran. That's a lot of people snuffed out in a single morning in less time than it takes me to back out of my driveway! And you feel the personal magnitude of it when you read about a father digging for his family and passing out when he uncovers the hand of his dead teenage daughter, or when you read of an infant found alive in the arms of his dead mother.

And what gives this calamity and others like it an added apocalyptic feel is not just its magnitude—almost ten times the human loss as our own 9-11 disaster—but the other catastrophes that happened in just the last 12 months:

- 13 people swept away in a mudslide in California,
- 6 buried in an avalanche in Utah,
- 111 killed in a plane crash in Benin
- 198 poisoned by a gas leak in China

... along with other deaths in a tornado just last week. And those are just the deaths that made the news. We would be literally stunned speechless if we actually saw every car wreck in which 60,000 people die every single year in America- mostly because the driver was either drunk or high or texting. Just this past Friday night- Andrew Boyd- a man I walked with for 16 years and a man who at one time taught Bible Study in this Church- a man who was enslaved to alcohol- was struck and killed on Highway 49. I begged this man to come home; I begged this man to pray and to repent- a man who could sing like a bird- who had immense talent and ability- wasted on drunken binges and self-absorbed pity. I have no sign that he ever repented- so I will leave him to God.

So just how do we not waste our lives and how do we get prepared for the single greatest event of all time- the return of Jesus Christ? Jesus says here to be ready- so how do we get ready and how do we stay ready? How do we “dress ourselves in readiness and keep our lamps lit” as Jesus says in verse 35? And what does Jesus want us to learn about our lives from all these calamities?

One answer is given in **Luke 13:1-5**- let's turn there- **Luke 13**. People ask me all the time to comment on tragedies and catastrophes because people want to understand them. And one time they came to Jesus about a calamity in which Pilate had killed people while they were worshipping and mingled their blood with their sacrifices. And Jesus answers them by saying something very strange- read with me:

Luke 13:1-5

1 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were *greater* sinners than all *other* Galileans because they suffered this *fate*?"

3 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

4 Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were *worse* culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?"

5 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Jesus could weep over people's heartbreaking losses and the Bible tells us plainly in **Romans 12:15** to,

"Weep with those who weep"

...but when the racking emotions are eased a bit and the questions begin to come- we see that Jesus does *not* settle these heartbreaking issues with sentimentality. Our Lord deals with ultimate reality. Even in tragedies- Jesus deals with things like God and Sin and Judgment and Salvation.

And He says in effect: "*Are you astonished at the death of the Galileans? Are you astonished at the deaths of those who were crushed when the tower of Siloam fell? I will tell you what to be astonished at: be astonished that the tower did not fall on you.*" So if Jesus were physically here this morning and we came to Him with the death toll from the tornado last week- asking Him to give an accounting for God- one of the things Jesus would say to us is:

"Be astonished that this Church building has not collapsed with you in it. For unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

... which means that by virtue of the fact that we are all sinners- all of us deserve to die right now and to perish forever.

Which leads to this conclusion and sets the stage for my Message this morning- Your life is in God's Hands, and, therefore, it is a precious gift- but that also means several other things:

- It also means that your life hangs by a thread of Sovereign Grace
- So we cannot afford to waste our lives
- And we cannot afford to live as though we control our own lives
- And we cannot afford to live unprepared for that which God has for us-

... so Jesus says, **“Be ready!”**.

God owns every soul- whether that souls wants that to be true or not, and whether that souls acknowledges that or not. God is Sovereign- not your will and not your plans and not your ambition and not your choices- God alone is Sovereign and God made us and we belong to Him by virtue of Him being the one and only Creator.

And God can *give* and *take* life as He pleases- according to His infinite Wisdom and Will and God never does anyone any wrong by doing that. God alone *created* human life and God alone decides what human life is to be for. And in that light- Jesus tells us, *“Be ready!”*

When Job lost his ten children in a tornado-like calamity (the house collapsed during a strong wind), the Bible says:

Job 1:20&21

20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.

21 He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

And Job didn't say this because he was heartless or because he was brave and courageous. Job somehow knew that the Lord alone is the Giver of all life and that God alone is the Taker of all life. Do we know that this morning? And I say that Job knew this- “somehow” because we need to understand that Job lived during the time of the Patriarchs like Abraham. And that means that Job didn't have 66

Books to read to give him inspired and infallible Truth like we do and Job didn't have 2,000 years of Church History to stand on like we do, and Job didn't have 6,000 years of human existence to learn from like we do. And yet Job somehow understood what we don't seem to understand and that is that God alone gives life and that God alone takes life as best suits Him. Or, as Job says later,

Job 12:9&10

9 “Who among all these does not know That the hand of the Lord has done this,

10 In whose hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind?

... so because that is true- Jesus says, “**Be ready!**”

Now when Hannah was thanking God for her son Samuel after years of barrenness, she said,

1Samuel 2:6

The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up.

And God himself said in **Deuteronomy 32:39**,

See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.

... and what all that means is that if any of us actually lives through this Service this morning- it will be by nothing more than a sheer gift of God's Grace. James, the brother of Jesus, put it like this:

James 4:13-16

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."

14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

15 Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

So if the Lord wills- you and I will live through this message. And if He does not- we won't. Our life is not our own. It belongs to God. It is a gift from God- not to live as we see fit- but as God has clearly and repeatedly instructed us. And because that is true- you and I have no right to take a life. And that is why abortion is evil in God's Eyes- because God is the Giver of Life.

So you have no right to take my life either but that is not because our life is our own- that is not the reason- but because our lives belong to God and He alone has the right to take both of us any time He chooses. Your life belongs to God, and He decides what that life is for. Jesus said, **“Be ready!”**

Oh, how jealous Jesus was, therefore, that people not waste their lives. Most of your lives are very much in front of you. At least you feel that it is. But it may not be. You may have already lived most of your life. But if God wills- many of you have several decades to live on the earth before you die and give an account of what you did with your life. And how jealous Jesus is that you be ready and not waste your life.

And if Jesus were physically here- He would make this point with these words:

Luke 12:15

Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not *even* when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

... so accumulating things in this life is *not* what the gift of life is for. The gift of life is so that we may live unto God- for His Glory! And then Jesus might tell this parable:

Luke 12:16-21

16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive.

17 And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?'

18 Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry.'"

20 But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?'

21 So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Oh, how jealous Jesus is that none of you here today be called a fool by God because of the way you used or misused the gift of life! The Bible says that life is not for the accumulating of things. This night your life will be required of you, and then whose will these possessions be? No sane person on his death bed ever was comforted by his possessions. Oh, I beg you, my friends- to hear the words of Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords as He says:

Matthew 16:24-27

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

25 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

27 For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and **WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.**

We have to acknowledge today that it is possible to waste our lives. Few things make me tremble more than the possibility of taking this onetime gift of life and wasting it. And now I am almost 60 years old and the river of life is spilling over the falls of my days with tremendous speed. More and more I smell eternity. And oh, how I want to use my life well- because life is so short and so fragile and so final. You only get one chance to live your life- and then the judgment. I speak as one who is jealous with Jesus that everyone be ready and that no- one wastes his life. Listen to what the Apostle Paul said in:

Galatians 6:14:

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

What we must understand this morning is that we do not have to know a lot of things for our lives to make a lasting difference in the

world. But you do have to know the few great things that matter, and then be willing to live for them and die for them.

The people that make a durable difference in the world are not the people who have mastered many things- but those who have been mastered by a few great things. If you want your life to count- if you want the ripple effect of the pebbles you drop to become waves that reach the ends of the earth and roll on for centuries and into eternity- then you don't have to have a high IQ or EQ, you don't have to have to have good looks or riches, you don't have to come from a fine family or a fine school. You have to know a few great, majestic, unchanging, obvious, simple, glorious things, and be set on fire by them.

But I know that not everybody in this crowd wants your life to make a difference. There are some of you who don't care whether you make a lasting difference for something great- you just want people to like you. And as long as people like you- you're satisfied. Of if you could just have good job with a good wife and a couple good kids and a nice car and long weekends and a few good friends, a fun retirement, and quick and easy death and no hell - if you could have all that (minus God and His Word and the Lordship Demands of Jesus Christ on the straight and narrow way- you'd be perfectly satisfied. And I just want to be the first person to say to you who think like that- THAT is a tragedy in the making.

Several years ago- Ruby Eliason and Laura Edwards were both killed in Cameroon. Ruby was over 80 years old. She was single all her life and so she poured her life out for one great thing: To make Jesus Christ known among the unreached, the poor, and the sick. Laura was a widow- a medical doctor, pushing 80 years old and serving at Ruby's side in Cameroon. The brakes on their truck failed and the car went over the cliff, and they were both killed instantly. They were ready, they were willing, they were busy, they were fruitful, and they were faithful- and they both died- probably very badly. So I want to ask you a question:

Was that a tragedy?

Two lives- driven by one great vision- completely spent in unheralded service to the perishing poor for the Glory of Jesus Christ- two decades after almost all their American counterparts had retired to

throw their lives away on trifles in Florida or New Mexico. And I want to answer that question for you.

No. That is not a tragedy. That is a glory.

I'll tell you what a tragedy is. And you can find it from the Reader's Digest dated Feb. 2000, p. 98. This is what a tragedy is:

"Bob and Penny... took early retirement from their jobs in the Northeast five years ago when he was 59 and she was 51. Now they live in Punta Gorda, Florida, where they spend their days cruising on their 30 foot trawler, playing softball and collecting sea shells."

The American Dream: come to the end of your life - your one and only life – the precious gift that God has given to you- that doesn't belong to you- and let the last great work before you give an account to your Creator, be "*I collected sea shells. See my sea shells!*" THAT is a tragedy! THAT is a wasted life, and THAT is *not* being ready!

And people today are spending billions of dollars to persuade you to embrace that tragic false wasted dream. And I only get an hour to plead with you: don't buy it- be ready!

One of the great tragedies of American culture is the way billions of dollars are invested to persuade people my age to waste the rest of their lives. This waste goes by the name of "retirement" and the entire message is:

You've worked hard for what you've got- and you deserve time to enjoy it!

And I will tell you with every fiber of my being that I cannot find anything like that philosophy in the Bible- not even close. But what I can find in the Bible- repeatedly and clearly- is that we must be ready and that it is a sin to waste your life.

Retirement as we understand it in this country is primarily a Western concept and one that is basically just a few hundred years old at that. And what that means is that it is not normal to work until a certain age and then stop; it is not natural to do that- and it isn't Biblical either. It also means that the overwhelming majority of all the

people who have ever lived did not retire in the American sense of that word.

When they feed your mind with the concept that we somehow deserve to enjoy "it"- the "it" that they are referring to is about twenty years of play and leisure. While the world is on fire and- millions of healthy older people are fishing and cruising and puttering and playing golf and bridge and bingo and shuffle board, and collecting sea shells. All of this in preparation for meeting Jesus Christ face to face with nail scars in His Hands.

And that is exactly the way you will waste your life if you do not make some radical decisions right now- today- and set your face like flint to walk another way. Oh, that we might all come to age 65 with fire in our bones, and say, "Now! Now! With my simple pension and my remaining energy and my new freedom I will pour out my life for Christ and his kingdom and that I will live my life in great anticipation of hearing these words:

Well done, good and faithful servant!

... instead of those awful words,

'Fool! How did all that pointless play put My Glory on display?''

So if you ask me today, *"All right, tell us then, what is the unwasted life? What does it look like to be ready? What is the essence of a life that is lived to God's Glory?"* I just mentioned it:

A life that puts the infinite Value of Christ on display for the world to see.

The passion of the unwasted life is to joyfully display the supreme Excellence of Christ by the way we live. Life is given to us so that we can use it to make much of Christ. Possessions are given to us so that by the way we use them- we can show that they are not our treasure- but that Christ is our Treasure. Money is given to us so that we will use it in a way that shows that money is not a treasure- but that Christ is our Treasure.

The great passion of the life that is ready is to magnify Christ. Here is the text that, perhaps more than any other, governs what life is really about- **Philippians 1:20-21:**

Philippians 1:20-21

20 ... my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Paul's all-consuming passion was that in his life and in his death Jesus Christ be honored- that is, that Jesus Christ be made to look like the infinite Treasure that He is. So what we have to understand is that the only reason you have life is to make Jesus Christ look great. So there is one central criterion that should govern all the decisions that we make in life and in death:

Will this help make Jesus Christ look like the Treasure that He is?

You can see this in the way Paul talks about the two halves of his statement in verse 20. He says that his passion is that Christ be honored (or magnified, or made to look great) whether by life or by death. There is the "life" half of the verse, and the "death" half. How does Paul show that Christ is his treasure *by life*? The answer is given in **Philippians 3:7:**

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

In other words, Paul displays the Worth of Christ by counting everything else as loss for Christ's sake.

"I count everything as loss because of the surpassing Worth of Christ."

... which means that the life that displays the Worth of Christ—the unwasted life- the life that is ready- is the life that uses everything to

show that Christ is more valuable than it is. So money is used to show that Christ is more valuable than money. Food is used to show that Christ is more valuable than food is. Houses and lands and cars and computers are used to show that Christ is more valuable than they are. Family and friends and your own life are a place to show that Christ is more valuable than any of them.

The way we display the supreme Worth of Jesus Christ in our lives is by treasuring Christ above all things, and then making life choices that show that our joy is not finally in things or even in other people, but in Christ.

And the same is true in the second half of what Paul said in **Philippians 1:20**, namely, his honoring Christ by the way *he dies*.

“It is my eager expectation and hope that . . . Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.”

So how is Christ honored—how do we make much of Christ and display His Worth—by our death? He gives the answer in the next verse

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

So why is death a “gain”? It’s a gain because verse 23 says,

“My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.”

So physical death is a “gain” because death means more of Christ and less of the things of this life- that compete with my affections. It means to depart and be with Him—with Him!—and that is far better.

So how do you show that Christ is a treasure in death? By experiencing death as “gain”. Christ will be most magnified in you, in your dying, when you delight in Him in your dying. When Christ is more precious to you than all that life can give- then being with Him through death will be a “gain”. And it will be plain to all that Christ is your Treasure above everything else on the earth.

So here is the essential lesson for being ready and of living the unwasted life and dying the unwasted death- three things:

- Life and death are given to us as means of displaying the supreme Value of Jesus Christ.
- The supreme Value of Christ is displayed when you treasure Him above all earthly things and all other earthly persons.
- This treasuring of Jesus above all earthly things and persons is most clearly seen in what you are gladly willing to risk, or to sacrifice in order to enjoy more of Him.

So being ready and not wasting your life has nothing to do with human bravery or human courage. Here is the radical way Paul put it in **2Corinthians 12:9**, where Christ refused to remove Paul's painful thorn in the flesh:

9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Magnifying the surpassing Glory of Jesus Christ in his own weakness and pain was Paul's supreme passion! I will rejoice in whatever makes Christ look magnificently satisfying—including all my pain.

So I ask all of you now, are you going to throw your life away with the rest of the world by striving to minimize your suffering and maximize your comforts in this life? Are you going to work for the bread that perishes? Build bigger barns? Lay up treasures on earth? Strive for the praise of man?

Or will you see in Christ crucified and risen, bearing the sins of his people—will you see in this God-Man the all-satisfying treasure of your life? Will you say with Paul, "To live is Christ and to die is gain . . . I count everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"?

I believe with all my heart that when God raises up a generation like this—and I pray that you are that generation—the completion of the Great Commission will come to pass. Because it will not come to pass unless a generation is joyfully willing to lay down their lives. The remaining unreached peoples of the world are almost all in dangerous places. If your generation buys

into the American mindset of preserving comfort and safety and security and ease, you will be passed over, and God will get his work done another way. And over your generation—as over much of mine—will be written “Fool! Whose will these things be?” And the tragic word: “Wasted!”

But if your passion is to display the worth of Christ, and thus to treasure him above all things, and thus to risk and sacrifice for the display of his supreme value, then I do not doubt that God will use you mightily and that the commitments you make to the hard places of East Asia or the Middle East or North Africa or post-Christian Europe or urban America, will be fulfilled. And in those places the glory of Christ will shine through you and thousands of people will see and put their trust in the Lord.

And over their lives and over your life will be written the words:

“This life was not wasted. This life gladly displayed the magnificent Glory of Jesus Christ, both in life and in death.”

Amen. Let's pray.