

Understanding the Times
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Luke 12:35-13:17

This morning it is my aim to plow through the rest of chapter 12, listening for Jesus' teachings about understanding our times and how we should live in these days.

Last week we focused on Jesus' promise that we don't need to be afraid, it is God's good pleasure to give us God's kingdom, and make us citizens of it, and so in light of that we are called to live as citizens of that kingdom now, which means life is different and lived on different terms.

First, verse 35 (p.98) we are to be ready for action. Jesus tells us; "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes." (v 37) And then Jesus compares the wise or blessed servants with the wise manager who is managing things well when his master arrives, taking care of his master's household.

Part of living life in the kingdom is living with an awareness that what we do in this day matters.

When you get up in the morning, do you ask God to use you this day?

Are you ready for God to interrupt your day, your plans, to care for someone in need? Are you ready to be used by God to speak a word of hope or compassion, or just listen to someone who's having a difficult day? Are you awake to what God is doing, and ready for what God will ask of you?

Was anyone surprised by verse 38? I was shocked.

If the Master comes in the middle of the night, what will the servants do? They are to be awake and ready for the Master's return and what do servants do? They serve. What do Masters do? They are served by servants.

But verse 38 says:

The Master will dress himself for service and have the servants recline at table and the Master will come and serve them.

Those words are spoken by Jesus, and that's what we see in the gospel. Life in the kingdom of God is upside down. Our Master and Lord invites us to his table and he serves. This is the example he has given to us.

The next section starting at verse 49 tells us that Jesus' message divides. I want to come back to this in a moment, but we know that there are choices and decisions that our faith leads us to.

Being a disciple of Jesus leads us to situations where sometimes we are in conflict with our families, our friends, and the world around us.

And then Jesus talks about interpreting the time we are in.

In Jesus' day what the people didn't see was that Jerusalem was going to be destroyed because people turned their back on Jesus and his message. The section about repent or perish has this in mind.

Rome is going to destroy Jerusalem and they are all going to perish because they rejected Jesus and his message.

The parable of the barren fig tree is about the time they have, there is still time to repent, there is still time to bear fruit as God's people, but the time isn't unlimited.

And then we have the narrative of Jesus healing in the synagogues on the Sabbath. Jesus was teaching and behold there was a woman who had a disabling spirit for eighteen years.

She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. Jesus saw her, he called her over, he laid his hands on her and he healed her. Immediately the woman was healed, and she glorified God.

The ruler of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. The Law, in the hands of the leaders, didn't give life and set people free, as it was intended.

And here we see Jesus' message dividing, there were some who glorified God, and there were others who were outraged by his actions.

Pastor Tim Keller preached something that has stayed with me about the word of God. A true "word from God", is going to make every culture of every time uncomfortable in some way. The word of God is always going to divide us from our culture in some way.

Jesus' message will always call us to make a decision to follow Him as the one non-negotiable in our life.

Jesus gives the example of how we live in this time. In our day we are not under threat of Rome, and the destruction of Jerusalem.

But this day, this time is similar to what it was for Luke's readers. We are awaiting the return of the Son of Man, and we don't know what hour he will come.

But Jesus shows what it looks like to be ready, doing the things he has left us to do, no matter the hour.

Teaching in the synagogue there was a woman in need, Jesus saw her, he reached out to her and he brought healing to her life, and glory to God.

Jesus bears fruit, he is ready to respond in generous love, even as he heading towards Jerusalem, even though there is opposition.

Life in God's kingdom calls us to be courageous in this world, standing even when God's ways are opposed.

Following Jesus calls us to be ready, knowing that today is important, and time is limited for all of us, so we are watchful for what God is doing, and what is calling us to do.

And we are blessed, wonderfully blessed as we learn Jesus' ways of life. Amen.