

Responsiveness: Right Attitudes Until the Last Day

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[0 : 00] Let's turn now to our reading for this morning and Matthew's Gospel. We're in Matthew chapter 24. And we're reading from Matthew 24 and just the very end of that chapter, verse 45, and we're reading into chapter 25.

So Matthew 24 and verse 45. But if that wicked servant says to himself, my master is delayed and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him.

And at an hour, he does not know. And he will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them. But the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

[1 : 47] As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight, there was a cry. Here is the bridegroom. Come out to meet him.

Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, Give us some of your oil for our lamps are going out.

But the wise answered, saying, Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves. And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came.

And those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast. And the door was shut.

Afterward, the other virgins came also, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

But he answered, Truly I say to you, I do not know you. Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

[2 : 45] For it will be like a man going on a journey. He called his servants and entrusted them to his property. To one he gave five talents.

To another two. To another one. To each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once.

And traded with them. And he made five talents more. So also he who had two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went. And dug in the ground.

And hid his master's money. Now after a long time. The master of those servants came. And settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward.

Bringing five talents more. Saying, Master, you delivered to me five talents. Here I have made five talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant.

[3 : 46] You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. He also who had received the one talent came forward saying, Master, I knew you to be a hard man.

Reaping where you did not sow. And gathering where you scattered no seed. So I was afraid. And I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.

But his master answered him. You wicked and slothful servant. You knew that I reap where I have not sown. And gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers.

And at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him. And give it to the one who has ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given.

And he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worth of servant into the outer darkness.

[5 : 10] In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Amen. May the Lord bless his word to us this morning. Well perhaps you would turn with me to the passage that we read together.

Beginning at the end there of Matthew 24. The very heart of the gospel of the New Testament is the announcement of the coming day of judgment on this world.

Judgment at the hand of Jesus Christ, the King. In Acts chapter 10 verse 42. Cornelius asks Peter to tell him everything that the Lord sent you, the apostles, to proclaim.

And Peter says, Jesus commanded us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.

Jesus is the judge of all. That is the heart of the New Testament gospel. And that's obviously a message not just for first century people, but for all people.

[6 : 31] And that's why here in Matthew chapter 24 and 25, the bulk of Jesus' own teaching about the coming judgment is not about a soon-to-come judgment in history on Judea and its temple and people, although he does speak very clearly about that, as we've seen.

Now, it's rather about preparing all people for the last day, for the return of the King himself. But everyone will experience that day.

Look at chapter 25 verse 32, just past our reading. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people from one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And so if all are to experience that day, then we must be prepared for that day. And that's what all Jesus' teaching in this discourse is about, preparation for judgment, not speculation about the dates and times of the end times.

And so having given realistic expectations of the last days, following his resurrection, and emphasizing that people must be ready always for his coming.

[7 : 46] Now, in these three parables, that begin here at verse 45 of chapter 24, right down to verse 30 of chapter 25, in these three parables, he expounds the warnings that he's just given in verse 42 there.

Stay awake. And in verse 46, be ready. He expounds them to show what that looks like in practice. How to be found responsive.

How to be found living with the right attitude to Christ and his kingdom right up until the last day.

And it's all about how to live now and how to live always prepared for that day, even if that coming may be long delayed.

And notice in each of these parables, Jesus clearly states the possibility of a long delay before his return. Verse 48 there, the master is delayed.

25, verse 5, the bridegroom is delayed. In chapter 25, verse 19, after a long time, the master comes to settle accounts.

[8 : 51] I emphasize that because there are people who claim that Jesus himself thought that his return would be immediate and it wasn't. So Jesus was obviously wrong. But he clearly says here, doesn't he?

Three times. There may be a long delay. In fact, that's the whole point of his teaching. And yet, despite that delay, he will certainly return.

Suddenly, and with total surprise. And the question is, what will be the attitudes that he finds when he does return? And that's a question for the whole world.

Jesus says he'll come as a thief, surprising everybody. But of course, that is the same for every one of us, isn't it? Because none of us know when we personally may be called before Christ as judge.

And the older we get, the clearer that becomes. But of course, it might be at any time, mightn't it, for any one of us. We'd be a fool to think otherwise. In fact, Jesus said that, didn't he, in Luke chapter 12, in the parable, to that self-made man.

[9 : 57] You fool, this very night, your soul will be required of you. And so the question, when that happens, for every single one of us, is the question here, in verse 45 of chapter 24, who then is, the faithful and wise servant?

Who's ready, who's prepared for that day, because, he's found truly responsive, with the right attitude, to Christ, and his kingdom, and his people. Well, Jesus gives us three parables here, arranged symmetrically.

Matthew loves symmetry. To teach us that, they're matching outer parables, and then there's one at the center. The first, and the third, are parallel, both about a master, and his servants.

And about being found faithful, or not faithful, when he returns. And both of those, you notice, end up with reward, or loss, with great reward, or terrible loss.

Verse 51, and verse 30 of chapter 25, weeping, and gnashing of teeth. And these two parables, focus on what being responsive, to Jesus really looks like.

[11:09] What it's expressed in now, and what it will issue in, eternally. And then in between, we have the parable of the virgins, which focuses very simply, on the fact, of being truly responsive.

And therefore prepared, and ready, for the sudden coming, of the bridegroom. So the central story there, states the simple fact, we must be responsive.

And therefore, we must always be prepared, for that return. Now the two, on either side, elaborate then, the features, of that true, and responsive faith, that is always prepared, on the last day.

So, who is, the faithful, and wise servant? Well, Jesus says, first, it's one who is sure, about the master's promise. That's the middle one, the ten virgins. And therefore, they're found serving, the master's people.

That's the first one. And sharing, in the master's purpose. That's the final parable. You see, it's very clear, isn't it? Very clearly, stated three point sermon, from Jesus.

[12:11] So let's start, with the central point. The fact, that, responsive preparation, for Christ's coming, is absolutely essential. Look at verses 1 to 13, of chapter 25, the parable of the ten virgins.

Probably be better, to call it the parable, of the coming bridegroom. And it's all about, being found sure, sure, of the master's promise. Real faith, that will be found ready, on the day of judgment, has grasped, for certain, that the bridegroom, will surely return.

And that there will be, that day, of final reckoning. And therefore, that faith is determined, not to be presumptuous, about that return. But to be prepared, always.

That's the simple message, of this parable. Of course, we are used to thinking, about a bride arriving late, aren't we? We had a 20 minute delay, yesterday, with Gemma, which was quite long, for our weddings here.

It's nowhere near, the worst that I've had. The worst I've had, was an hour and three quarters. Can you believe it? Some of you, will remember that wedding. But of course, in Jesus' day, the custom was quite different.

[13:22] It was a betrothal, that was a legal promise, to marry, more than just, our engagement. And the betrothal, would last for a whole year. And at the end of that year, the formal procession, comes to the bride's home.

And the bride, comes to take his bridegroom, to his own home. For the marriage, to be truly consummated. So here, in this story, these bridesmaids, are waiting, to take their part, in the dancing, by torchlight, of that procession.

And then to join in, that wonderful wedding feast. But, look at verse 5. The bridegroom was delayed. So, quite naturally, they all fall asleep.

There's no fault in that. But, when the cry, comes at midnight, verse 6, here's the bridegroom. Now, there's a crisis, you see. So, they all set about, trimming their lamps, verse 7, or their torches.

And some, are unprepared. They've been presumptuous. They've been unresponsive. Maybe they thought, they could, sort it all out later, nearer the time.

[14:27] But no, you see, it's too late. Those who are ready, verse 10, went in, with the bridegroom, to the feast. And look, the door, was shut. And no amount of knocking, will open that door to them.

Only the confirmation, of their awful predicament. In the terrible words, of verse 12, look, I don't know you, says the bridegroom. That's a confirmation, isn't it, of Jesus' warning, in Matthew chapter 7, where he says, saying, Lord, Lord, is not enough.

I don't know you, he says. It's a devastating exposure, isn't it? Because, they thought, that they knew him, and he knew them.

That's the real sting, in this parable. You see, Jesus isn't talking here, about a division, between the church, and the world. He's talking about, a judgment here, between people, in the professing church, who think they know, Jesus Christ.

who claim to know him, who sing, Lord, Lord, all the time. See, they all looked the same, didn't they, these virgins? They all had the same lamps.

[15:41] They're all waiting, they think, for the bridegroom to come, but the reality was, some of them, had deceived others, and, they'd deceived themselves. They presumed, to be ready, for that

coming, but, their presumption, is, is exposed, in a devastating way.

On the day, and the hour, that really mattered, they were, found to have no light, in their torches. And, that exposed, didn't it, the lack, of oil.

They had, not, proved, truly responsive. I mean, on that day, it suddenly became clear, that they needed, something to show. Well, it was too late, they were exposed, as empty vessels.

So, in verse 8, they say to the others, give us some of yours. But, you see, it doesn't work like that, does it? You can't, suddenly, acquire, responsive faithfulness, at the last minute, just before judgment comes.

You can't, you can't, presume, that other people's faithfulness, will somehow, sort of, transfuse into you. Now, each person, is personally responsible.

[16:57] You can't, coast along, carried by other people's faithfulness. What matters is, are you prepared, for that day? Yeah, it's very challenging, isn't it?

Jesus is telling us, you can't, presume, oh, oh, a decision for Jesus, years ago, is that that's going to fit you, for judgment. Remember the parable of the sower.

Jesus has absolutely no confidence, does he, in those impressive, first flushes, that's shown, by the seed on the rocky ground, and so on. No, Jesus says, it's the fruit, at harvest time, that counts.

Because that's the day, that exposes the reality. You can't presume, that just by being part, of a clear gospel church, with lots of other, wise, prepared believers, that that's going to be enough.

No, you've got to be known yourself, by the bridegroom. You've got to be ready, for his coming. It's very sobering, isn't it? It certainly should be, for all of us.

[18:01] So in verse 13, Jesus says, watch therefore, be ready, because you don't know, either the day, or the hour. He's telling us, isn't he, that there is such a thing, as being too late, in God's timetable.

There's such a thing, as the door being shut. And now, is the time to make sure, you're not on the wrong side, of that door. Jesus is, is saying, what Paul says, later to the church, in Corinth, in 2nd Corinthians 13, verse 5, examine yourselves, to see, whether you are, in the faith.

if you really do believe me, and trust me, if you are responsive, to my spirit, you will be, prepared for that day, you'll not be presumptuous. You'll be sure, of the master's promise, so you'll always be, ready to meet him.

Well that's the fact, you see, he will certainly return, and we must be ready, every one of us. But what are the features, that show, that true responsiveness, of heart?

What do faithful, and wise servants, with well filled flasks, of oil, actually look like? What tells us, that they are, prepared for Christ's coming?

[19:18] Well look at the first parable, there in verses 45 to 51, of chapter 24. The faithful, and wise servant, will be one, who is found always, serving the master's people. The real faith, that will be prepared, for that last day, shows itself now, in understanding, that it has a real obligation, to God's kingdom people.

Real servants of Christ, in other words, will be real servants, of his church, his beloved family.

Faithful and wise servants, are responsible, they're not reckless, in their attitude, and their treatment, of the master's household.

And their whole focus, you can see it here, is on responsible, self-giving, not in reckless, self-serving. The story is very clear, isn't it?

It's plain enough, you're the owner, of a family business, and you go off, for a time, and so you entrust, to your managing director, to run things, while you're away. Well you don't expect, to come back, do you?

And find that managing director, beating up the staff, sexually harassing, the secretaries, wrecking the whole business, wrecking your reputation, blowing it all, on wild drunken parties.

[20:33] What does that kind of, reckless behavior, tell you about that person? That's what you find. And above all, what does it tell you, about their loyalty, and their attitude, to you personally, and to everything, that you've worked for, that you've shared with them?

Well it's all a sham, obviously. He despises you, he disdains you, shows that, by totally abusing, the trust, that you put, in him, and everything, that you've given him, in terms of responsibilities, and opportunities.

So you've got no option, have you, but to take it all away, to make him face, the full force, of the law. And look at verse 51, doesn't it flinch, does it, in its severity?

This is Jesus' language, isn't it, for the full horrors, of hell itself. A place, where he says, the hypocrites, go.

Chapter 23, do you remember, was full of woes, for the hypocrites. It's very chilling, to read this, isn't it? Can't be again said, though can it? It's there. Because you see, any true servant, who is, faithful to his master, will be found, to be utterly different, from that.

[21 : 54] Verse 46, he'll actually be, doing the work, of his master, he'll be caring, for his fellow servants. He'll be showing, that he shares, his master's love, and care, for his servants, in his household.

And so in verse 47, he'll be rewarded, on that day, being set over, all his possessions. And so it will be, says Jesus, for the true disciple, who proves to be, a faithful and wise, servant of mine.

He'll be found, on that day, serving the master's people, loving them, caring for his household, caring for his church. That's obviously, what Jesus means, because Jesus, explicitly uses, that language, all the time, about being the master, and about his household.

Christ's household, Christ's family, are his most, precious possession. Remember his teaching, in chapter 18, about the church, and about the tenderness, with which he cares, for these little ones. He loves them, he protects them, so fiercely. It's not the will, of my father in heaven, that any one, of these little ones, should perish, he says. And if a servant, is like the master, well, our attitude, must be the same, as his, mustn't it?

[23 : 11] And Jesus says, that's the mark, of real faith, a heart response, to Christ, that will stand, on the last day. Love and care, and service, for what is most, precious, to the Lord.

That is his, little ones, his people. Now that is, especially clear word, I think, isn't it, to Christian leaders, whatever particular role, they might have, to feed, the master's household, with proper food, to keep them alive, and healthy, not to abuse them, in a self-serving way.

And it's a very tough, warning to those, who do wrong. Just as back, in chapter 18, Jesus said, very clearly, better to be cast, into the sea, with a millstone, around your neck, than to do harm, to any one, of my little ones.

And all Christian, Christian leaders, I think, especially pastors, need to read, verses 50 and 51, here, really seriously, before they would, abuse the trust, that they have, from the Lord.

And notice, that includes, just withholding, the food, that the church, needs in order to live. Or even just, feeding meager rations, or thin rations, to weaken the flock.

[24 : 25] No. No. But it also applies, equally, I think, to every single, Christian believer. Notice verse 49. He abuses his, fellow servants.

We're all, fellow servants, in the master's house. Well, are we? Are, each of us, loving and caring, for Christ's people, for our fellow servants?

Jesus says, that is an, unmistakable feature, of truly responsive faith. Of the attitude, that really will be ready, on the day of judgment, when Jesus comes.

So you can be confident, in facing that day. But you can't be, if you show absolutely, no interest, in being a servant, of Christ's people, your fellow servants.

That's a question, isn't it? That we all need to ask, am I giving myself, responsibly to Christ's family, to his church? Am I sharing, in his real tender care, his tangible care, for his people, as a natural part, of my, my daily life?

[25 : 34] Or am I just taking, from the church? Am I just actually, recklessly serving myself? My needs, my desires, perhaps, for my gifts, and my fulfillment?

How much care, am I really showing, in my life, for the local church, family of Christ, and for the worldwide, family of Christ? What about my prayers?

Are they, mostly all about me, and my life, and my family, and my situation? Or, do they, lift up my brothers, and sisters? Are they, constantly lifting up, the struggling ones, the suffering church, in so many places?

Do I ever join, with my fellow servants, in the family prayer, of the church, for his people here, and for his people, all around the world? There are lots more questions, aren't there, that we could ask ourselves.

But Jesus says, you can tell, a faithful and wise servant, who is prepared, for the last day, because they will be, serving the master's people, not just their own interests, not just their own egos, and their deeds, go before them, and their deeds, will judge them, on the last day.

[26 : 50] Verse 46, blessed is that servant, the master finds, so doing, when he comes. Not just singing, Lord, Lord, but serving, the Lord's people.

And look at the third parable there, in verses 14 to 30, of chapter 25. They'll be found also, on that day, sharing in the master's purpose. True faith, you see, responsive faith, that will be shown to be so, on that day, shows itself now, in understanding, that it has an obligation, to Christ's kingdom purpose.

Faithful and wise servants, are ambitious, not apathetic, in their attitude, to extending, the mission, and the reach, of Christ's kingdom. And this parable, shows that, it's all about, the total contrast, between those servants, who really understand, the master's goal, and purpose, and therefore, give themselves, wholeheartedly, to being productive, and increasing, the reach of his domain. a contrast, between that, and those who just really, have no sense of that at all, and display that, in their passivity, just burying, the riches, that God has given them, so that they prove, entirely fruitless, in the end.

Again, it's a perfectly clear story, isn't it? The master goes away, he gives vast treasures, to his servants, so that they're going, to make it work for him, and further his wealth, while he's away. It's very clear, that was the expectation.

[28 : 22] Even the third servant there, in verse 24, recognizes, that his master, expected to reap, and to gather. He clearly understood, the responsibility, he'd been given, as did the other two.

Hence, their accounting, when he returned, verse 20. It suggests, that they weren't, expecting, plaudits from the master, they just knew, it was their duty, to trade profitably.

Just like in Luke chapter 17, Jesus tells a similar story, and the servants say, well we've only done our duty. That's what you expect, isn't it? When you, invest your hard earned cash, in your pension fund, you expect the pension manager, to make a return, so that one day, you'll actually be able, to afford to retire.

Well I guess, that's getting a lot harder now, with inflation, and all the rest of it, but what that means, is you want your pension manager, to work harder, and harder. Not just to bury the money, in the ground, and lose its value. Well this man, gives his servants, really serious sums of money, look at verse 15.

It's an extraordinary, responsibility, that he gives, to these servants, bond servants, the footnote tells us, they were really, essentially indentured slaves, but even one talent, was 20 years, of wages.

[29 : 36] Well even on a modest, salary today, of 25,000 pounds a year, that's half a million pounds. Five talent man, two and a half million, probably a lot more. These are big, big sums, aren't they?

And that's the point, isn't it? This is great treasure. What is the great treasure? According to Jesus, remember in the parables, that you find, and you sell everything, in the world to get, because it's so great.

Well it's the pearl, of great price, isn't it? It's the treasure, of the gospel, of the kingdom of heaven, revealed to us, in Jesus Christ. And what is the master's, great purpose, for the whole, of these last days, until he comes, to judge the world?

Well we saw it, a couple of weeks ago, in chapter 24, verse 14, that this gospel, of the kingdom, will be proclaimed, to the whole world, as a testimony, to all nations. And so the true disciple, the faithful, and wise servant, knows, that he's got an obligation, he's got a great, responsibility, given to him, by the Lord himself, to share, his passion, for that mission, to the world.

And his response, is to make, his energy, and the focus, of his whole life, to be taken up, with that, above all other things.

[31 : 02] The Lord, has entrusted, great, gospel riches, to his servants. That's what verse 14, means. And all of us, bear that responsibility, according to our ability, says verse 15, to multiply, that kingdom wealth.

That's what, being a Christian, disciple means. We are to be, wealth creators, we are to be, wealth multipliers, with the greatest treasure, that the world, can ever have.

That is the gospel, of Jesus Christ. And you have to, invest actively, to accumulate. Being ambitious, is the only way, to make a return.

The one thing, you can't do, and mustn't do, is to be apathetic, and unproductive. Like the one talent man, verse 18, just burying, hiding, the master's capital.

And that is not, just foolishness. Look at verse 26. Jesus calls it wickedness, you wicked, and slothful servant.

[32 : 11] Do you see, what Jesus is saying? He's saying that, failure to share, in the purpose of the master, failure to share, in the mission of his kingdom, and the extension, of his kingdom, through the gospel, isn't just a mistake, it's culpable, it's wicked.

And it's evidence, you see, of presumption, and not of real faith. That kind of apathy, to the progress of the gospel, with no real ambition, for the growth, of the kingdom.

He's saying that's incompatible, with real heart faith, with real saving faith. Jesus is warning us, if we don't really care, about his mission, we don't care, about the increase, of the gospel, of evangelism, of the cause, of Christ spreading, here, where we live and work, in the whole world. He's saying, we can't look forward, to the day of Christ coming, with any confidence. The day when, look in the words, of verse 19, our master comes, to settle accounts, with us.

In fact, he's saying, it's quite the reverse, isn't it? Look at verses 28, and 29. You may think, you do have real faith, you may think, you do have some, lasting treasure, but Jesus says, no, even what you have, will be taken away.

[33 : 41] Perhaps, what you have, and you've cherished, is very sound doctrine, and very correct theology, or very special, spiritual gifts.

But look at verse 30, you see, that day, will expose, the awful truth, that all that you thought, you had of great value, is in fact worthless. because a servant, who has just buried, the precious gospel, of the kingdom, who's done nothing, with it, has really just shown, his scorn, for that gospel, and above all, his scorn, for the master, who gave that treasure, to him.

And so all along, despite being part, of the master's company, he's really been, unresponsive, in his heart, he's been a worthless servant. Not a true one, not a good and faithful one, not a fruitful one, he's just presumed, upon God's grace, and not prepared, therefore for judgment.

And on that day, Jesus says, he will be judged, by his works. Because lack of real fruit, betrays, lack of real faith.

So Jesus is saying to us, you need to examine yourselves. Can't be any excuses, everyone, in that story, had received great treasures, each, has received treasure, from Christ, according to our ability.

[35 : 13] And the only question, on that day is, well, what have we done with it? Are we being ambitious, with the gospel, of the kingdom? Jesus says, the day is coming, I'll hold each one, to account.

Everyone, will be judged, with what they have done, with the gospel of Jesus, and his kingdom. All three of these parables, are absolutely clear. Real saving faith, faith that prepares, for judgment, will be judged, by the Lord Jesus, by what it does, not by what it says.

Not by what it intends, to have done, but hasn't yet done. It's our deeds, that will follow us, says the spirit of God, in John's vision, in Revelation chapter 14, verse 3.

Now you might find, that unnerving. We're meant to find it, unnerving. You might object, well how is that, not a message of salvation, by works?

Surely doesn't, Jesus doesn't mean, we're saved by our works. Of course he doesn't, it's quite the opposite, in fact. You see, the faith, that shows itself, in this real doing, shows it is real faith, precisely because, it displays a real grasp, of the heart, of the gospel of grace.

[36 : 34] To be a dedicated servant, of Christ's people, shows, that we have grasped, God's gift, of utterly undeserved grace, and mercy, to us personally.

It shows that we've understood, that we are all, fellow servants, as verse 49, emphasizes there, at the end of chapter 24. We know, that we are all, fellow debtors, like the parable, back in chapter 18, of Matthew.

That we're all brothers, as Jesus spoke of, in chapter 23, that we have, one father, one master, who has lavished grace, upon every single one of us, who's welcomed, every single one of us, into his house, on the same basis, by grace alone.

And it's the person, who knows, that they are indeed, justified, only by God's grace, by nothing at all, that they've contributed, to that. That's the person, isn't it, who has been truly humbled, by that grace.

That's the person, who will serve God's people. Knowing that they've got, no superiority, over any of the rest, of God's people. It's not the proud man, is it? Who will wash, the feet of the saints.

[37 : 50] No, it's the faithful, and wise servant, who has been, truly humbled, by the grace of God. And likewise, you see, to rejoice, in sharing the master's purpose, of his mission, like these ambitious servants, the trading servants.

That too is evidence, isn't it, having really understood, the gospel of grace, which abounds in Christ, to all peoples, and all nations, of the world. God's grace, abounds, by its very nature, and therefore, it has to be shared, it has to grow.

It's like light, isn't it? It's the very antithesis, of the purpose of a light, to hide it under a bushel, just as it's the very antithesis, of the gospel, to hide it away, and bury it in the ground.

Christ's challenge to Israel, was constantly, that God blessed them, with his grace, so that it would be, a light to the nations. But so often they failed, they wanted to hoard, that grace of God, just for themselves.

But you see, that is impossible, with grace. You cannot do that, if you understand, the nature of God's grace. What is gospel, is really all about? It's for sharing.

[39 : 04] It's for growing. You must let your light shine. You must let, the treasure of the kingdom grow. If you don't, or if you don't want to, you just show, you've never understood the gospel. You've never understood, God himself.

So you see, the church, or even the Christian, who puts a great premium, on purity of doctrine, or morality, or Bible study, or preaching, but has no care, for the heart, of God's mission, to the world. No care for his desire, to save sinners. No care for his desire, to gather the little ones, into his home. They just can't have grasped, truly, the reality, of the saving grace, of God.

See, what Jesus is saying, is it's this kind, of faithful service, that shows, that you've actually grasped, the heart, of the true gospel, of God's saving grace. Which is another way, of saying, you've really grasped, and understood, the heart, of the true giver, of that grace, the heart of God himself.

All these things, are simply real evidence, that someone, who professes, to be a Christian, who professes, to be a disciple, of Christ, evidence, that they really do, savor the master's presence.

[40 : 23] That they really, know the master, they know him, for who he really is. The real Lord, Jesus. And ultimately, you see, that's the real heart of it. Look at verse 12 again.

Whether you really, do know, the bridegroom, and whether the bridegroom, really knows you, or not. That's all that matters. And that was the real problem, wasn't it, of this, of this third servant, in the last parable.

He totally, misunderstood, his master. He didn't know him at all. He had no grasp, of his master's heart. He was right, about his expected duty, to multiply the master's property.

But he was totally wrong, about the one, he was doing it for, and why he was doing it. Verse 24 there, he says, I knew you were a hard man.

That's what he thought, of his master. A hard man. A harsh, demanding taskmaster. And that's why he couldn't serve him, with rejoicing. He could only serve him, with resentment.

[41 : 28] He had no grasp at all, did he, of the true generosity, the grace, of this master, who had lavished so much, on his servants. The other two, had no such thoughts, of the hardness, of the master.

No, their reward, look at verse 21, was to enter, into the joy, of your master. Verse 23, enter into the joy, of your master. That's the vast gulf, isn't it, between real, relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, and mere religion.

The one serves, only with resentment, and misery. The other, with joy, and gladness, and generous grace. And notice, what entering, into the joy, of the master, consists of.

It's being given, the opportunity, to serve the master, even more. You've been faithful, over a little, I will set you, over much. See, what could be, a greater joy, if you really know, and love the master, and savor his presence, than to have more, from him, than he even given you, before, and more service.

Dear friends, let me ask you, is that responsive attitude, to Christ, our master, is that attitude, of those servants, filling your heart, today, and every day? Is that attitude, making us ready, to meet our master, to give joyfully, and gladly, our account to him?

[42 : 59] Are we prepared, as faithful, and wise servants? Or could it be said, of us, that we are, in fact, just presumptuous?

Well, here's a good indicator, I think, how much, do I really, savor the master's presence, and long to enter his joy, and rejoice, at the prospect, of real reward, being more service, for him, more service, for his kingdom?

Well, according to Jesus, you see, the answer to that question, can be seen now. If I am that person, I will be someone, who savors Christ's presence, and I will be that person, if I rejoice, and I don't resent, serving his people now, serving his precious little ones.

That will be my real, priority, won't it? And I'll be responsible, about that, never reckless, in my duty to them, my fellow servants, even when they drive me nuts.

And I'll be that person, if I rejoice, and never resent, in sharing, my master's purpose now, sharing in his compassion, for the lost sheep, and sharing his commission, for proclaiming the gospel, to the very ends of the earth.

[44 : 23] I'll be ambitious, determined, to be productive, for the gospel, never apathetic, never just passive. As if Christ died for nothing, as if he cared for no one.

Then you see, if on the day Christ returns, or when he calls me home, if I'm found so doing, found responsive in heart, with that attitude, right to the end, well I'll be prepared, for that day of judgment, won't I?

I welcome it. And I'll be eager, for that reward, the real reward, of being given, more of the same, more of caring, for his people, more of serving, his people, and more, of sharing in his purpose, forever, and ever, and ever.

Not desperate, to get away for it, and have a break. It was said of John Wesley, and somebody once, asked him, what would you do today, Mr. Wesley, if you knew, that Christ was coming tomorrow?

And he took his diary, out of his pocket, looked at it, and read out, what was in his diary, and said, I'll be doing exactly, what I've planned, to be doing today. Well that's the way to live, isn't it?

[45 : 38] According to the Lord Jesus, in these verses. to live every day, with that ever responsive, attitude of heart. So maybe we should have a look, at our diaries.

Have a look at our calendars. And see perhaps, that we can say the same. Stay awake, says Jesus. Be ready. Watch therefore, for you know, neither the day, nor the hour.

Amen. Let's pray together. Almighty and merciful God, of whose gift alone, it cometh, that thy faithful people, do unto thee, true and laudable service.

Grant, we beseech thee, that we, may so faithfully, serve thee, in this life, that we fail not, finally to attain, thy heavenly promises, through the merits, of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. Amen.