

Monday Morning Rewind – October 13, 2008

Good morning! Last Monday, the key words for the week, taken from the first parable of preparation in Matthew 24:42-44, were *keep watch*. Today, the key words for the week, taken from the second parable of preparation in Matthew 24:45-51, are *Keep on keeping on*.

On Sabbath we unpacked the parable of the faithful and wicked servants. Jesus uses this parable to expand His teaching on what it means to be watchful and ready for His coming. In the wise servant Jesus gives us a picture of *faithfulness*. Faithfulness is doing your duty when no one is looking, or applauding—and doing it to the best of your ability whether the Master is absent or whether He is present.

This is all that is said about the faithful servant. It's understated. It's as if Jesus is saying, to be ready for my coming, just do your duty. *Keep on keeping on!* As we wait for Jesus, we are not idle. We have work to do. You don't have to make a lot of noise and have complicated charts and graphs. All God expects is that we stay on task with giving the food of the gospel at the proper time. Be instant (ready) in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2), and "Always be prepared to **give an answer** to everyone who asks you to **give** the reason for the hope that you have." (1 Peter. 3:15)

In contrast, the wicked servant's "service" is characterized by three vices: carelessness, cruelty, and carousing (see Matt. 24:48, 49).

Carelessness – The servant says to himself, "My master is staying away for a long time..." The wicked servant, unlike the faithful and wise servant, is a clock watcher (or prophetic chart gazer). The delay produced delinquency. He dropped his guard and got careless with his charge. He's not an unbeliever who scoffs at the coming (2 Peter 3:4). He believes the master is coming, but not for "a long time." Therefore, he can relax.

Cruelty – In his carelessness, the wicked servant "begins to beat his fellow servants" (vs. 49). Christians are legendary for the way they beat up on each other! Why does this continue to happen? Thomas Sine said, "In the absence of a big dream, pettiness prevails." Instead of conquering neighborhoods and countries with the Gospel, most Christians are content to "conquer" a pew. Idleness inevitably produces idleness, and in their boredom, careless Christians inevitably turn on each other. In the absence of the King, many become a king unto themselves. And, in the name of Christ, they start using methods that Christ would never condone (see Matt. 23:34).

Carousing - The wicked servant not only is an abuser, but becomes a carouser. He begins "to eat and drink with drunkards (those outside the house—outside the church)" (vs. 49).

He abandons the food his master gave him (Jesus said, "I am the bread of life") and instead he starts eating and drinking the food and drink (the ideologies and values of the world) outside the house with drunkards—those who have no self-control. This is the wrong food, wrong drink, in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people. This is what *not* to be doing when Jesus comes.

Rewind to Luke 21:34 - "*Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation [hangover], drunkenness and the anxieties of life...*" Ever wonder why the "anxieties of life" are included in the list with hangovers caused by inebriation and drunkenness? Because *anxiety is an intoxicant, too!* Worry about making a living, paying the bills, soccer practice, dance recitals, emails, volunteer work, etc., can put us into a stupor and numb our spiritual sensibilities just as surely as alcohol can numb our minds.

The bottom line is this: Knowing *when* Jesus comes is not nearly as important as knowing the Jesus who is coming. The "when" is not important to faithful servants because they will be doing the Father's will regardless. Because they love Jesus and are *like* Jesus, they live to do the Father's will. They don't need a deadline as a motivator for faithful service. Their motivator is love for God and for His people. For them, all life is a constant preparation for that coming.

Wicked servants want the blessings and rewards of following Jesus, but they don't want to be like Him. They behave the way they really want to (see Matt. 15:8). Without the pressure of His master's imminent return the wicked servant did what he really wanted to do all along. The unexpected hour of the master's return is only a problem for hirelings, for club members, for superficial saints. They are groupies, not really disciples. Delay reveals their true colors. Their attitude is like that expressed by Augustine who said, "Lord, make me holy—but not yet."

Don't be like the wicked servant. If you want to be ready for Jesus to come, keep on keeping on. Be faithful in what God has given you to do. Use the following poem to maintain your focus this week.

KEEP AT YOUR WORK

"The Lord has given to every man his work. It is his business to do it, and the devil's business to hinder him if he can. So sure as God has given you a work to do, Satan will try to hinder you. He may present other things more promising. He may allure you by worldly prospects, he may assault you with slander, torment you with false accusations, set you to work defending your character, employ pious people to lie about you, editors to assail you, and excellent men to slander you. You may have Pilate and Herod, Ananias and Caiaphas all combined against you, and Judas standing by you ready to sell you for 30 pieces of silver; and you may wonder why all those things come upon you. Can you not see that the whole thing is brought about through the craft of the devil? To draw you off from your work and hinder your obedience to God?"

Keep about your work. Do not flinch because the lion roars; do not stop to stone the devil's dogs; do not fool away your time chasing the devil's rabbits. Do your work. Let liars lie, let sectarians quarrel, let corporations resolve, let editors publish, let the devil do his worst; but see to it that nothing hinders you from fulfilling the work that God has given you.

He has not sent you to make money. He has not commanded you to become rich. He has never bidden you to defend your character. He has not set you at work to contradict falsehood which Satan and his servants may start to peddle. If you do these things, you will do nothing else; you will be at work for yourself and not for the Lord.

Keep about your work. Let your aim be as steady as a star. Let the world brawl and bubble. You may be assaulted, wronged, insulted, slandered, wounded and rejected; you may be abused by foes, forsaken by friends and despised and rejected of men, but see to it with steadfast determination, with unfaltering zeal, that you pursue the great purpose of your life and object of your being, until at least you can say, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." (Author Unknown)

Keep on keeping on. –Pastor Randy