# Ready or Not

Cormac Parker Jr. · Luke · Luke 12:35-40; Luke 12:41-48; Luke 12:49-53; Luke 12:54-59

## AT A GLANCE

Finishing out Luke 12, with more of Luke still ahead, Cormac Parker Jr. takes Jesus's promise that he is coming back at an unnamed hour and asks how people wait without a countdown. His answer: stay dressed, stay faithful, stay awake. What we believe about a future reality shapes how we live today, and Jesus presses that belief into present stewardship and urgent obedience.

- Jesus's return rests on a promise, not a chart; because no calendar invite comes, readiness must be a standing posture rather than a last-minute scramble.
- Everything in our hands—knowledge of Christ, resources, influence—is entrusted, not owned, and faithfulness shows in how we treat others and govern appetites.
- The kingdom breaking in brings peace to those who receive Jesus and division to those who resist, so reading God's work now demands urgent response.

> *"What we believe about a future reality shapes how we live today."*

## EXPOSITION

### Scripture engaged

Luke 12:35-40 — 35"Be ready! Be fully dressed and have your lights shining. 36Be like servants who are waiting for their master to come home from a wedding party. The master comes and knocks, and the servants immediately open the door for him. 37When their master sees that they are ready and waiting for him, it will be a great day for those servants. I can tell you without a doubt, the master will get himself ready to serve a meal and tell the servants to sit down. Then he will serve them. 38Those servants might have to wait until midnight or later for their master. But they will be glad they did when he comes in and finds them still waiting. 39What would a homeowner do if he knew when a thief was coming? You know he would not let the thief break in. 40So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at a time when you don't expect him!" (ERV)

Luke 12:41-48 — 41Peter said, "Lord, did you tell this story for us or for all people?" 42The Lord said, "Who is the wise and trusted servant? The master trusts one servant to give the other servants their food at the right time. Who is the servant that the master trusts to do that work? 43When the master comes and finds him doing the work he gave him, it will be a day of blessing for that servant! 44I can tell you without a doubt, the master will choose that servant to take care of everything he owns.

[45]But what will happen if that servant is evil and thinks his master will not come back soon? He will begin to beat the other servants, men and women. He will eat and drink until he has had too much. [46]Then the master will come when the servant is not ready, at a time when the servant is not expecting him. Then the master will punish that servant and send him away to be with the other people who don't obey. [47]That servant knew what his master wanted him to do. But he did not make himself ready or try to do what his master wanted. So that servant will be punished very much! [48]But what about the servant who does not know what his master wants? He also does things that deserve punishment. But he will get less punishment than the servant who knew what he should do. Whoever has been given much will be responsible for much. Much more will be expected from the one who has been given more." (ERV)

Luke 12:49-53 — [49]Jesus continued speaking: "I came to bring fire to the world. I wish it were already burning! [50]There is a kind of baptism that I must suffer through. I feel very troubled until it is finished. [51]Do you think I came to give peace to the world? No, I came to divide the world! [52]From now on, a family of five will be divided, three against two, and two against three. [53]A father and son will be divided: The son will turn against his father. The father will turn against his son. A mother and her daughter will be divided: The daughter will turn against her mother. The mother will turn against her daughter. A mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law will be divided: The daughter-in-law will turn against her mother-in-law. The mother-in-law will turn against her daughter-in-law." (ERV)

Luke 12:54-59 — [54]Then Jesus said to the people, "When you see clouds growing bigger in the west, you say, 'A rainstorm is coming.' And soon it begins to rain. [55]When you feel the wind begin to blow from the south, you say, 'It will be a hot day.' And you are right. [56]You hypocrites! You can understand the weather. Why don't you understand what is happening now? [57]Why can't you decide for yourselves what is right? [58]Suppose someone is suing you, and you are both going to court. Try hard to settle it on the way. If you don't settle it, you may have to go before the judge. And the judge will hand you over to the officer, who will throw you into jail. [59]I tell you, you will not get out of there until you have paid every cent you owe." (ERV)

## The argument

### Readiness Is a Standing Posture, Not a Response to a Countdown — Why a promise without a date calls for being dressed now

Cormac Parker Jr. opens with hide-and-seek: the countdown tells us how long we have, and most of us get ready accordingly. Remove the numbers and delay whispers, "I'll get to it when we get closer." Jesus answers with a promise, not a chart, and Parker presses it: "Jesus is coming back. Let that resonate in your heart." Three images follow. Gathered robes, which he gives as the literal sense of "gird up," recall Israel dressed for Passover, ready to move at a moment's notice. Servants wait at the door for a master returning from a wedding feast that could last a week, with no phone to text ahead. And a thief digs through mud walls and never books an appointment, because "the only way to prepare for a thief is to stay ready."

> **Insight —** *Because Christ's return carries a promise but no date, the only fitting response is to live every ordinary day, including Monday at the desk, as one who expects him.*

### Faithfulness Is Stewarding What Was Never Yours — Peter's question and Jesus's graded answer

Peter asks whether the parable is for the disciples or for everyone, and Jesus, as he often does, answers without answering: he describes the faithful and wise manager. Parker notes where the text spends its words, mostly on unfaithfulness, in descending degrees. The evidence of failure is telling. The servant beats his fellow servants and indulges his appetite, forgetting that what was placed in his hands "was never his." Readiness, Parker says, "can be seen in how we treat others and how we manage appetites." Everyone holds something entrusted, whether knowledge of Christ, resources, or influence. Much given, much required: a new hire and a seasoned leader can make the same mistake and have two different conversations. "Faithfulness is in the in-between."

> **Insight —** *Waiting well means treating everything in your hands as a trust from the master, and the people near you and your own appetites are where that trust is tested.*

### Jesus's Peace and Jesus's Division Flow from the Same Truth — Fire, baptism, and a cross that demands a response

The turn to fire and division is a head-scratcher, and Parker stops to wrestle with it, as Scripture invites. The baptism is no water baptism; Jesus points to the cross, and Parker says "accomplished" is the same root word as "it is finished." Yet Luke opened with angels singing peace, and Jesus sent the healed away "in peace." Parker holds both as true. Peace belongs to those who receive the truth of who Jesus is, but that same truth "demands a response," and those who push against it will be divided. Then a pastoral aside for the coming holidays: make sure the division is "because of who Jesus is and not because of our attitudes."

> **Insight —** *Division that comes from the truth of Christ is not a contradiction of his peace, but it must never be confused with our own bad attitudes.*

### Staying Awake Means Reading What God Is Doing Now and Answering Without Delay — Weather, courtroom, and the urgency of the present time

The closing section turns on weather. Parker reads the geography: the Mediterranean lies west, so a rising cloud means rain; the desert lies south, so a south wind means scorching heat. The crowds read earth and sky fluently yet miss the Messiah in front of them. The courtroom image, he says, is not "best practices for court appearances" but a picture of urgency: settle accounts before the judge. Updating it, he imagines Jesus telling the Bay Area, so skilled at reading the stock market and technology, that it may be missing what God is doing. The pointed application: what obedience have we deferred with "I have time"? "There should be a sense of urgency in responding to the kingdom of God breaking forth now."

> **Insight —** *Deferred obedience is a quiet form of sleep, and the remedy is to notice what God is doing in front of you and answer it today.*

### The Waiting Ends in a Master Who Serves, So Return Is Hope as Well as Warning — Why "ready or not, here he comes" can be met with gladness

Waiting is not left as a grim vigil. Parker returns to the promise that the master who finds his servants awake will dress himself for service, seat them at table, and serve them, a counter-cultural picture of "God's upside down kingdom." "Ready or not, here he comes" carries real weight, he says, because eternity is in view. Yet when he played hide-and-seek with his three-year-old, the boy hid with his feet sticking out, then jumped out before the countdown ended: "Daddy, I'm right here." Parker sees in him a beautiful picture of readiness. He closes by thanking God that Christ's return "is actually our hope."

> **Insight —** *The coming of Christ is the arrival of a servant-master, so readiness can be eager rather than anxious.*

### Cross-references

- Exodus 12:11 — Israel girding their robes before Passover, ready to move at a moment's notice, as the background to Jesus's dressed-for-action image
- 1 Thessalonians 5:2 — the later Scripture saying the Son of Man will come like a thief in the night
- Luke 2:14 — the angelic choir's peace, set against Jesus's talk of division
- Luke 7:50 — Jesus telling the healed, "go in peace," as the other side of the tension
- John 19:30 — "It is finished" on the cross, linked to the accomplishment of the baptism Jesus anticipates

## DEVOTIONAL

Feet sticking out beneath the curtain, a giggle carrying across the room, and then a three-year-old bursting out before the count has finished: "Daddy, I'm right here." He has not learned the rules of the game. He may have learned something better about the one who is coming. We are practiced at countdowns. Give us a date and we will arrive early, dressed, checked in. It is the silence on the calendar that undoes us, because silence invites the slow thought that nothing is near, that obedience can wait until the numbers begin. Jesus gives no numbers. He gives a robe gathered at the waist, a lamp kept burning, a door, a knock, and a promise: the master who returns will dress himself for service and wait on the ones who waited for him. So the waiting is not empty. It is full of ordinary things placed in our hands: a neighborhood, a school, a job, a measure of knowledge and influence, none of it ours. It is full of how we speak to those under our care and what we do with our appetites. It is full of the

quiet obedience we have told ourselves we have time for. Ready or not, here he comes. The phrase can sound like a threat, and Jesus is honest that it carries weight. But the one coming is the master who serves. Let the countdown go unheard. Step out from behind the curtain, feet and all, and say what the child said: I am right here.

### Reflection

- What act of obedience have you told yourself you will get to when the time gets closer, and what is that delay actually protecting?
- Of knowledge of Christ, resources, and influence, which has God entrusted most heavily to you, and how do your treatment of others and your appetites show how you are holding it?
- Where are you reading the weather and the markets well while missing what God is doing in your own neighborhood, school, or workplace?

### Closing prayer

*God, thank you for the reminder that you are coming back; that is actually our hope. Make us not just hearers of your word but doers of it. For the areas where we have put off obedience and faithfulness because we thought we had more time, wake us by your Spirit, and let us be found faithful. Jesus, you are coming back, and we look forward to that day. In the between time, make us faithful servants waiting for our master's return.*

## FORMATION

### One thing to remember

We can't know the hour, so the question is not when he comes but whether what he has put in our hands is being faithfully kept today.

### This week

This week, read Luke 12:42-48 slowly and ask God what he has placed in your hands, and which obedience you have told yourself you have time to put off. Pray over it, and take one small, specific step toward it before the week ends.

*Return to* Luke 12:42-48