**EVER READY**

**Part 1**

**“Faith Ready”**

**Matthew 24:42-51 “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”**

**45 “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. 47 Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ 49 and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”**

**We have spent 4 weeks looking at the Last Days according to Jesus, and the signs He gave that would precede His return...**

**After giving them the signs they were to look for, He gave them 3 parables—all having to do with being ready for His return.**

**I call them the EVER READY parables!**

**Now, the 3 parables are:**

1. **The Faithful and the Evil Servant, which is to be *ready in your faith*.**
2. **The parable of the Ten Virgins, which is to be *ready in your walk*.**
3. **The parable of the Talents, which is to be *ready in your works.***

**Now today we’re going to look at the first parable—The Faithful and Evil Servant.**

**We have 3 key parts to this parable:**

* **A house owner who goes on a long journey.**
* **A servant he leaves in charge of the house with a task.**
* **The servant’s fatal thought—“My master delays his return.”**

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**Now, the house owner in the parable is, of course, the Lord Jesus who has left earth for an extended period of time and will return unexpectedly.**

**The house in the parable is His church, which He has purchased with His blood.**

**The servant in the parable represents all Christians, who have been entrusted to carry on in His name, and to “minister to one another” which Jesus describes in the parable as “giving each other food in due season.”**

**The fatal thought the servant has represents any believer who, in unbelief, loses faith in the return of Christ.**

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**So, let’s look First at...**

**I. The servant’s task**

**Jesus said, “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?”**

**This points to the calling God has placed on every Christian to play a role in “regularly feeding (spiritually speaking) the other members of the household, the church.”**

**Jesus’s words echo exactly what the rest of the New Testament says about the local church...**

**Every member of Christ’s body is gifted to minister to one another.**

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**Now, this is not how most Christians view church!**

**Most Christians see their church as a place where they come to be fed, for their own needs to be met, and it stops there.**

**We have developed a “consumer” mentality about church, sort of like eating at a restaurant...**

**We go to church like we go to a restaurant—to be waited on and fed.**

**We don’t view it the way Jesus describes it in the parable where each member is not just receiving, but also giving out.**

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**The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit literally plants us in a local fellowship, not only to meet our spiritual needs, but also so that we can strengthen that house by ministering to one another——“feeding one another in due season.”**

**1 Cor. 12:18 “But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it.” That’s the PLANTING part!**

**But Paul also says, “So here’s what I want you to do. When you gather for worship, each one of you be prepared with something that will be useful for all: Sing a hymn, teach a lesson, tell a story, lead a prayer, provide an insight” (1 Cor. 14:26-27). That’s the FEEDING part!**

**When you come to the church where God has planted you, you’re to come, not just to be fed, but with something to contribute!**

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**But since many Christians don’t understand God’s plan for the church, they’re not planted anywhere...**

**They wake up and say, “Where do you want to eat today?”**

**They go from church to church, like bees fly from flower to flower, and never make any one church their home.**

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**But church is supposed to be a place where we’re planted...**

**“Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God” (Ps. 92:13).**

**And once we’re planted in a local church, we’re called to minister to one another out of the spiritual gifting God has given us.**

**Peter writes, “God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another” (1 Pet 4:10).**

**1 Cor 12:7 “A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.”**

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**Paul’s favorite illustration of the church is that of a human body where every part contributes to the whole:**

**Eph 4:16 “Under his (Jesus’s) direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly, and each part in its own special way helps the other parts, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”**

**Each part has a special contribution to make.**

**Every member is a 10 in some area.**

**And no one member of the body can say to another member, “I have no need of you.”**

**“...*there are* many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ 22 And some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary” (1 Cor. 12:20-22).**

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**Here are a few verses about how each of us is to minister to others in the body:**

**“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up...” (1 Thes. 5:11).**

**“But encourage one another daily...so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness” (Heb. 3:13).**

**“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb 10:24-25).**

**“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another...” (Col. 3:16)**

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**ILLUS: Hold up empty cup and gift**

**Imagine that instead of only coming to church with an empty cup needing to be filled, you also come with a gift to bless others with!**

**This is how the NT paints the local church!**

**Not just as consumers to be fed, but contributors to be a blessing!**

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**Now, notice how right in the middle of this powerful parable about how we’re to care for each other until the Master returns, a fatal thought arises in one of the servants:**

**“But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master delays his coming,”**

**This is a defining moment for this man.**

**One thought changes his whole life!—MY LORD DELAYS HIS COMING..**

**As soon as he decides the master isn’t returning any time soon, notice the effect this has on him...**

**First, instead of *feeding* the household, he loses his *feeling* for them:**

**Jesus said He “begins to beat *his* fellow servants,”**

**In other words, he sours to the church...He ceases walking in love and develops a cynical and critical attitude toward God’s people.**

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**And second, he quits hanging with the *right* people and starts hanging with the *wrong* people, *backsliding* into a sinful lifestyle:**

**“...and (he begins) to eat and drink with the drunkards,”**

**Clearly, Jesus is pointing out just how important it is that God’s children live in daily expectancy that He could return at any moment!**

**And that’s the message of this parable—maintaining *ever ready faith!***

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**The old Apostle John wrote of the positive effect it has when we expect Jesus to return at any time:**

**“Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. 3 And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure” (1 John 3:2-3).**

**As long as we keep the eager expectation of Christ’s return alive in our hearts we will live as we should.**

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**The sum of this parable is:**

**While the master is gone, be a blessing to the household of God by feeding the members through your gift, AND always expect His soon return!**

**LET’S PRAY**