Incentives for Faithful Stewardship, Part 2

Luke 12:45-48

December 13, 2020

Luke chapter 12. Hopefully, we can finish this, this section of our Lord's teaching, which is about how to live in light of the second coming. We have an account to give before the Lord. We have a stewardship to keep before him and so Jesus is exhorting us and really motivating us with some enticements for faithful stewardship, incentives. I'm going to start by reading just to set some context, back in verse 35, we've already covered that section, but we'll start back there just to lay it all out there before us starting in Luke 12:35.

And Jesus says, "Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at the table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and

finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

Those words, that teaching, that parable prompted Peter to ask a question. It's one that all the Apostles really were wondering about, and it's a question that we have too. In verse 41, "Peter said, 'Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?'" For us apostles, or for all believers, or he could have been saying for us believers, or is he telling it for all people. What's the scope of the instruction here Lord? Who is included?

The Lord answered his question, but not directly. He answers in verse 42, "The Lord said, 'Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give him their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all of his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed incoming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day he does not" expect, "expect him and at an hour he does not know, he'll cut him in pieces, and put him with the

unfaithful. And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating.'" That's the end of the parable.

And then the Lord provides the principle undergirding the whole parable. This is the principle that we've been talking about, the principle of stewardship. So he gives that there at the end, at end of verse 48, "everyone to whom much was given of him much will be required and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more." Now, as I mentioned last time, I believe that Jesus has all people in mind when he is saying that. Everyone. Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female, believer and unbeliever. That is the most important division of the, of humanity, is into believer and unbeliever.

But every human being has a stewardship from God, and God holds everyone accountable to the stewardship they've received from God. Their life, their gifts, their education, their opportunities, their wealth, their time, their thought life, everything. Having said that though, if Jesus was to look at a bull's-eye through the scope of his rifle, I believe Jesus has put the crosshairs of that scope on the

hearts of his disciples, that's who he's aiming at; in particular, of all humanity, they are the ones to whom much has been given.

In fact, the most to a superlative degree, they're the ones, who've been entrusted with much. They've been granted the precious treasure of God's saving gospel. The gospel of God's saving grace. So I really think that he's put the crosshairs on them, in particular, but by extension, he's looking at all of us too, because we are the beneficiaries of the Apostle's ministry. We could say in particular if he's, if he's to draw back a little bit from the Apostles, then caught up in that bull's-eye area of the target, he's also looking at pastors and teachers, those who have positions of leadership and influence in the church.

The Apostles laid the foundation of the church and set that foundation guiding off the cornerstone of Christ and his gospel. The evangelists, the pastors and the teachers minister the word of God to his people, Ephesians 4:11. They continue to teach what the apostles laid down in that foundation. They are the men Christ gifted and gave to his churches to continue that Apostolic Ministry to his churches, to the local churches. So they too fall under the scope and the specter of this stewardship.

That means that through the Apostles and the pastors and teachers, if you expand it out just a little more, that means all the, all of us, all Christians are the beneficiaries of the Apostles ministry. They are responsible to be equipped with biblical truth, Ephesians 4:12, and that happens in the context of the local church. They put that truth into practice. They grow in unity and in harmony. They grow in maturity. They grow up into Christ. They express that pattern of obedience described in Ephesians 4:12-16, and so all Christians together in the church are under that same stewardship.

They are all partners in Gospel ministry. That's the stewardship of their lives. And that's what they'll be held accountable to before Christ. The text has implications beyond the Apostles, pastors and teachers, all Christians, it has implications also for the whole world and for every single human being in the world, because of what Jesus there, says there in verse 48, end of verse 48, that principle of stewardship applies to every single human being. That's what we talked about last time.

But the immediate audience, I think, Jesus has in mind those whom he intends to motivate the most, to remain faithful, because listen, if you get the leadership then you influence all the people, right? Bad leadership, bad followership, good leadership, good shepherding,

and there's more of a, an opportunity for the Christians to also hear their master's voice through the preaching and teaching of the word, hear Christ's voice, come follow the Good Shepherd through the mouthpiece of every pastor and teacher who's faithful.

So I think Jesus has in mind, his Apostles, the wider group of disciples. He's focused here on a believing audience. Even though the entire world will one day bow the knee, give an account to Christ. In Jesus' day, those who were in the positions of leadership and authority, those who had charge of God's word, it was the Pharisees and the scribes and the priests. They were worthy of condemnation because of their personal sins and their sinful abuse of authority.

And as those who held positions of spiritual leadership, and they had a stewardship of spiritual influence to exercise spiritual authority, they provide the most obvious contrast for Jesus' disciples and his Apostles and he alludes to them actually, and verses 45 and 46. That's where we're going to start today.

We saw some positive incentives last time in verses 43 to 44, to be faithful wise stewards. This week we're looking at some negative incentives. We can be influenced, incentivized through positive and

negative enticement and example. Warning, you might say, warnings against wicked, indifferent, or ignorant stewardship. That's what all flows out of the text here and my hope is that as you listen to this, you'll come to see your own stewardship in a clearer light than you ever have before in your life.

I mentioned this last time, but I think that could be for some the very first time you've heard. You have a stewardship just by the fact of being born, breathing God's air, having a body having, any mind about you at all. If you have anything from God, and you do, you have, if you're sitting here and you have a pulse, you have life from God. Everything you have is from God. Those who do not acknowledge that, they're called unbelievers.

So you do have a stewardship. We all have a stewardship. Even unbelievers have a stewardship, an account to give to Christ. But as Christians, we've been given so much more, haven't we? We've been entrusted with so, so much. How can we, if we name the name of Christ, how could we live like everybody else? How could we live for ourselves any longer? We can't.

As Christians, if we've been saved and our sins are taken away, we have everything to owe to Christ, don't we? If God has granted us eternal life in him, our future is set. What are we doing with the life that he's given us right now. As members of Grace Church, we have been given even more. Far more than many other people which, which means we've been entrusted with more.

I hear that all the time, people who visit through our church and maybe you're passing through, and they, they're just, they're just excited about what's going on here. They don't see this, you gotta realize you're sitting here every single week, and you know, familiarity breeds contempt, right? We can take things for granted. Let's not do that. We've got to realize and I, I realize this as I said, when people come through visit us, visit our, our church, visit other families in the church, they just have never, never seen this or see it very rarely.

This is a very special church. God has gifted, blessed this church. So many dear people here. You see their lives. You see their witness. You see the testimony that they live. You see the effect of God's word in a life. That's a stewardship we have, beloved. We're going to give an account for what we have done with what we have. So

we want to be faithful. We've been entrusted with so much. So as you listen to Jesus' teaching here, listen prayerfully.

Think carefully as we move through the text. Reflect honestly on your own life, the condition of your own stewardship and maybe, maybe consider what the Lord would have you to do, how you might become more informed in your stewardship, more interested. So you can take an interest to be a wise steward of what God has given so that you can grow in wisdom and faithfulness and become a better steward of the manifold grace of God. That's what I hope and pray for every single one of you.

As we return to the parable. Just notice in each scenario here, there's a master who has gone away continuing the same theme from last time. There's a master who's gone away, he's gone away for an unspecified period of time. He's left his household servants under the care of his chief steward. That chief steward is someone that he is trust, he trusts someone he relies on to do his will while he's gone. The master has equipped him, provisioned him and trusted him with an important task to deal out regular rations of food.

Now you might think, well, that's not a very glamorous task for a steward in the household of God, but you know what? It is an absolutely critical one, because servants don't work well or for long when they don't eat. So you gotta keep the servants fed. It's critical.

The servant needs to exercise wisdom in his work. He needs to remain faithful to it because the servants need to be fed. They need to stay healthy, strong in order to be productive until the master returns to assess them whenever that is. Whenever that master returns and that is the issue here, isn't it? That's the rub. There's the fact of his return, but the timing of his return is less certain to us, right?

We know it's going to happen, we just don't know when it's gonna happen. And it's the uncertainty about the timing of the master's return that is the issue here. Not knowing when he will come back, that becomes a test of faithfulness. Will the steward keep doing his masters will? Or will he lose interest and start doing something else?

This takes us into our first point, for today. Got four points. I'll just give it to you, one at a time. But first point for today: A

revelation of faithfulness. A revelation of faithfulness, that is to say, the Lord's absence will reveal a servant's faithfulness, or you could say his lack of faithfulness because that's what we see here.

The Lord's absence will reveal a servant's faithfulness, or his lack of faithfulness. Think about yourself as we read through this in the first scenario, verses 43-44. Like we saw this last time, the master returns to find the steward's faithfulness tested by his absence. Tested by the uncertainty of his return, but proven. His faithfulness is proven. In the Lord's absence, the faithful steward has been doing exactly what the master appointed him to do.

The master is so pleased with this steward, why? Because he can be counted on. He can be relied upon. The Lord's confidence has been maintained. His will's been performed. His servants have been cared for. Greater stewardship in the master's house. That is the reward for a faithful steward. So far so good.

Come to the unfaithful stewards in verses 45 and, through 48. In the master's absence has tested all of them and found them wanting. Their character is revealed in their works, their lack of love for the master comes to light. It's very clear. Varying degrees of

unfaithfulness here are exposed and revealed and then judged accordingly. And the worst of these three examples comes in the first, first, first couple verses verses 45-46. As this servant's faithfulness or you can say his faithlessness, his lack of faithfulness, it's been revealed in the master's absence. He's the one who's punished most severely. And Jesus reveals here a very different sort of person.

Verses 45, "If that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming.'" Delayed is the word *chronizo,* chronology. He's taking a long, long time to return. Okay, well what of it? If you're his servant, his steward, you're to be faithful and wise in the execution of your stewardship, who cares how long he takes to return? Is he not the master? What then?

Two proverbs come to mind when I read those words, "my master is delayed in his coming." You can probably think of them, right, the first one. You probably heard of it. In fact, I'll just give you the first part. You can tell me the rest when the cat's away what? The mice will play. People tend to mess around right when they're not under the watchful care of, the watchful eye of someone in authority. Doesn't that reveal the heart?

Absence scrutiny people tend to get less done, if anything at all. That ought not to be among Christians, of course. Paul says in Ephesians 6:5-8 and Colossians 3:22-25 Christians who work for others, they understand that they don't just work for somebody else, they work for Christ. Christ is above their boss. Christ is above the master and they, they do what they do for him, not for eye service to man.

"Whatever you do work heartily as for the Lord, not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward, you serve the Lord Christ." Listen, we already have an inheritance. We are already wealthy with infinite treasure in heaven, not working for a paycheck, paychecks come. We're working because we love Christ because we already have everything; we work to serve and please him.

So whether or not the boss is around, whether or not we're under the watchful eye of some human being, we know that God is watching us. He's always there, always watching over us, always seeing our diligence, seeing our labor. For those who are disobedient, though, they need the rule of law. They need the rule of fear. They need some form of tyranny. Those who are disobedient, ignore the reality of the omniscient, omnipresent God, then they go on doing whatever they want

to do, giving little or no regard for God, refusing to live in the fear of God.

And so there's a second proverb you may be familiar with. It's this: time and truth go hand in hand. Time and truth go hand in hand. That is to say, give it enough time, the truth will come out. What is concealed will be revealed. What's hidden in the darkness is brought into the light. What is whispered in the inner rooms will be shouted from the rooftops. The heart always, always, always becomes known.

For unbelievers that's a fear, to be exposed. To be exposed before the world and before those that they regard. They have no idea that the final exposure will be the worst when Christ comes and reveals everything. But for us as believers, man, this is why we wait so eagerly for our Lord's return that everything can be exposed. We want him to be seen for who he is. I'm tired aren't you? Aren't you tired of how the world portrays Christ and Christianity? Don't you want the truth to come out about who he really is?

He's no longer the suffering humiliated, dying on a cross. But yes, dying on a cross. But that is glory and look at the pathway to glory and who he is now. Eyes like a flame of fire, face, hair, bright

white like wool. Blazing glory. Sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth. Voice of many waters, thundering, roaring. That's Christ now. When he returns, people will see him and we long to see him. He's the object of our faith.

He's the focal point of our worship. When he, when he appears we'll, we'll see him and will be like him because we'll see him as he is. As we saw in the earlier parable, he longs to be with us too. He longs to return to share in that table fellowship, verse 37, he's eager to re, return home for the wedding feast. The father delays the return of Christ because, 2 Peter 3:9, he's patient toward you. He's patient toward the elect of God. "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness," 2 Peter 3:9, "He's patient toward you not willing that any of you should perish, but all should reach repentance." So he's patient toward you, toward the elect, toward believers.

There's another reason, though, that the father delays our Lord's return. That's because of what we're seeing right here. Because delay and time, reveals the truth. Delayed time delayed arrival it reveals the truth of what's in the heart. The Lord's return is delayed, to test faithfulness, to reveal the heart, to expose the things that are

hidden from plain view, from our eyes, human eyes, human scrutiny. The apparent delay is a test beloved.

I say apparent because it's really not delayed according to time, God's timetable. He's right on time, he's executing his plan perfectly. He will not send the Lord Jesus Christ too early or too late by a second. He'll come right on time. This is just an apparent delay for us, but it's, it's a test to see how we act when Christ is not physically present.

So for the believing, God tests, tests us, he tests us with his delay to prove our faithfulness, to prove it, to show that we are faithful to the stewardship that he has entrusted to us. That's how you can see a believer. That over their life, over time, you see that they have greater and greater acts of faithfulness, more maturity, more growth. If you see somebody and there is no change between this year and five years ago or ten years ago, you wanna question whether or not that person is really a Christian, because believers change. They grow. They become more faithful to the stewardship we've been, we've been entrusted. We grow in endurance for the sake of Christ's name.

Note, he's not testing us to see if we are faithful, he knows that already. He's testing to show that we are faithful. Peter writes to encourage Christians in the midst of trials that they face, some of them he describes his fiery trials. And so that, 1 Peter 1:7, "the tested genuineness of your faith more precious than gold that perishes, though it's tested by fire. So the tested genuineness of your faith may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." So listen, the waiting, especially when it's hard, the waiting is what proves, exposes, reveals Christian faithfulness.

For the unbelieving, God tests them too. Again, it's not to reveal anything to himself. He knows all things. God is testing the unbelieving to expose and reveal what's in them to make it apparent to make it apparent to us, make it apparent to everyone. It reveals what's in their hearts. It doesn't require fiery trials for them. In fact most, many unbelievers have relatively easy lives. We always wonder that, right?

Why do the, why do the wicked prosper? Why do they get appointed to positions of office? Why do they take our tax money and spend it on whatever they want? They don't need fiery trials to reveal their faithlessness, and then unfaithfulness, all it takes for them is a

little time, time, delay. The Lord's absence reveals a servant's faithfulness or lack of faithfulness, faithlessness. When the masters away, what will the servant do?

Well, here's one form of servant, verse 45, and this is a second point: An assignation with justice. Assignation, if you're wondering how to spell that right, write the word assign and then the word nation, and take out one of the Ns in the middle. Assignation with justice. The Lord's return is an assignation, appointment if you want to write that word. Appointment with justice. His return is an appointment with divine justice. The idea here is that a date has been set. It's been set by God for this reckoning with justice.

So again, verse 45, "If that servant" master "says to himself, my master is delayed incoming." Didn't even finish the thought. He just acts. Begins to beat the male and female servant, servants and to eat and drink and get drunk. Figuratively speaking, this is how Jesus saw the Jewish leadership. They're, they're self-serving, self-indulgent, self-gratifying. They're heavy handed, cruel, even sadistic. Notice unfaithfulness is first a matter of the heart, that heart that's known to the Lord.

The master's absence draws out his sinful desires. It sees the delay of a return as an opportunity for satisfying sinful desires. This wicked steward here has a covetous heart. It's been restrained in the presence of the master, but once that master leaves, and especially as that return is delayed, this guy's heart gets antsy. Gets wiggly. He can't sit still. Wants to get up and start doing sin. Wants to do his own will.

He's lured away from fidelity to the master. He's enticed by his own desire, which James says it conceives and gives birth to sin. And sin brings forth his own demise, his own death. The master's away. This guy is gonna go to play. Listen what you do when you think no one is looking. That's who you really are. Young people, are you listening? If you're under 25, are you listening?

What you do when you think no one is looking that is who you really are. A young couple once sat in front of their pastor, shamefaced as they were confessing to him that they got physical with one another while parked in a car, in the dark. They were heavy with the burden of their guilt. Felt ashamed as they confessed what they'd done out there when they thought no one was watching. The pastor told them to their horror, Actually, someone did see you out there. They went sheet white as the blood drained from their faces. And he said,

God saw you, and they replied, Oh, good. They were relieved, in their minds, that no one knew.

Kind of revealing, isn't it? Because God is always there, reveals that they had a fear of man and no fear of God. They're confessing their remorse before a pastor and yet, when it's revealed all they're, all they're concerned about is the exposure, but not before God, before man. God is always there. He always knows the heart. He's always seeing your actions. He's that all knowing ever present, always watching God. And what you do when you think no one is looking, that's who you really are. And so what does your private life say about you?

Would anyone mistake you for a Christian if they saw what you do in private? Think about your private time, your alone time, your me time. Think about that instead as God's time. Think about that instead as a stewardship you have from God. This servant, in verse 45, he sees that private time is time to get busy playing, partying, even engaging in sadistic cruelty. Those, in verse 45, he doesn't even deny the fact does he, doesn't deny the fact that the master will return.

"My master delays his coming," so he affirms the coming. He affirms that's his master, recognizes the Lord will in fact come back

one day. But that's really just mental ascent. He's not fully embracing the truth of that. He's actually wishing the master will never return. Because he sees here an opportunity for his covetous, wandering, unfaithful heart to run riot. It's like the Pharisees, Luke 11:39, inside this man is full of greed and wickedness.

Same thing today, isn't it? We see it getting worse all around us. Peter quotes the unfaithful challenging Christians, saying things like, 2 Peter 3:4, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." In saying everything staying the same, you know what they're actually saying. We want things to say the same. We like things the same. No return of the Lord. No, no second coming. Why? Because they're driven by covetous desire, they just wanna eat, drink and get drunk.

Look at the word there, in verse 45, beating, "beating the male and female servants." Very strong word there, and it's kind of a test to what was maybe shrugged at in the ancient world, among master slave relationships. And if a, if a slave was owned by the master, he could set to beating on that slave, never face any penalty of law. It's a very strong word. It's not at all what as you read through the master

slave relationships, the Lord regulates and forces in the Old Testament. There is not a hint of this.

It's not condoned. This guy is beating them, he's pummeling them, he's laying on blow after blow. It's shocking behavior. Even more shocking when you consider how Jesus sees this, he has not used the word slave here. Servants, *doulos*, instead here it's the word *pais* or *pidas.*

That portrays someone who is young in age, like a child, a boy or a girl. It can refer to a child who is someone son or someone's daughter, a child who's, who's a dependent in a, in a home. But he portrays the servants left under the steward's care here is tender and fragile, and more specific to this context the *pidas* and the *paidiskas,* that's the male servants and the female servants. They are people who are low in rank, in a position of dependency. This heightens the nature of the offense here, like what does this guy think he's doing beating these children, these dependents?

This is how the Lord sees this deplorable wickedness, total brazenness in this steward's crime. The very ones the Lord has charged him to care for and protect, and give them their rations of food at

the proper time. He's out there beating them. The master assigned this man to stand in his own place. He assigned this man the honor of representing him in the home, in his absence, to fulfill the role of loving and, loving provider, of a gentle protector. One of these the, this is the one that these dependents should be able to trust. They should be able to seek refuge in his care, and he turns out to be the greatest threat to their safety.

What do you do when your rock of refuge becomes a crushing weight and smashes down upon you, giving you a heavy burden of pain and sorrow? This is unconscionable. This is why Jesus' indictment of the scribes and the lawyers is so strong. God had given them a powerful intellect. He added to that the gift and opportunity of an education. He assigned them a privileged position, to feed his people. God allowed them to study the scripture with their time, discern the truth, teach the common people, help lift spiritual burdens.

Instead, they keep giving a spiritual beat down, on those that they're supposed to serve, in gentleness and care for with faithfulness. That's why he says back in Chapter 11, verse 46, he says, "Woe to you lawyers." Lawyers were like, hey, we're offended at this. Oh yeah, you're offended? Woe to you, too. "Woe to you lawyers. You load people with burdens hard to bear and you yourselves do not

touch the burdens with one of your fingers." This is the very reason bad religion is so cruel. Bad shepherding is so cruel.

This is what unfaithful servants do in a spiritual sense. They apply a beating to others while they keep indulging themselves. They fleece the flock to pay for their own lifestyles, to satiate their sensual impulses satisfy covetous desires for food and drink and living in excess. That's what the rich fool wanted, remember him back in verse 19? He imagined himself kind of building up enough money where he could satiate his desires with food and drink forever.

Eating and drinking, it portrays really a heart of consumption, just a consuming heart. Pursuit of carnal satisfaction always feeding sensual appetites and drunkenness is kind of the result of satisfaction gone too far. It's actually dissatisfaction, so you're dissatisfied. You keep feeding and keep feeding it and gluttony and drunkenness result. Exceeds the bounds of propriety to become sinful excess.

What this guy has coveted, he's consumed and what he's coveted and consumes, turns out to gobble him up. So the consumer becomes the consumed. Well this guy, the wicked servant, he's still here

recovering from a hangover. House is a mess. Servants are battered and bruised from a violent rage the night before.

But on this day, the master shows up. Lord's return is an assignation, an appointment with divine justice, verse 46, "The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him in an hour he does not know. He'll cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful." Of course, it's a, a day he doesn't expect him, in an hour he doesn't know; he doesn't expect him that day, because he hasn't expected him on any day. He's not even been looking for him at all. So it's an hour he doesn't know because it's it's an hour nobody knows. Jesus said that back in verse 39. It's what he warned us about.

Nobody knows the hour. So you gotta be ready when the Son of Man comes. This guy has no love for the master whatsoever, because he didn't ready himself. He didn't wait expectantly. He didn't remain watchful. He didn't heed the warning that the master can arrive at anytime, any hour, like a thief in the night. Why? Because whatever this man professed. This man's an unbeliever. He's an unbeliever. He does not believe and how do you know?

Because of what you see on the outside, there's no fruit, there's no action. What does the Lord do with this man? This man, who is his steward, charged with such a high stewardship. It says in verse 46, "He'll cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful." Cut him in pieces. The verb *dichotomeo,* we get the word dichotomy from that, means to cut in two, right? Graphic word, literally means to cut into and then cut in pieces. Dismember, ooh, it's a gruesome image, isn't it? I think we see the heart of the Lord in his anger toward this sin, don't we? And being willing to dismember, separate somebody's limbs from him and his body parts from him, because of this sin, he's so angry about it. This is an image that's graphic, isn't it? It's vivid.

Vivid severity. This is a brutal way of putting someone to death. In fact, the only other reference to dismembering someone apart from Matthew's account, which is kind of a parallel. It's a later instruction that Matthew is recording of Jesus few months later after this event. But in another place we can find a reference to someone being dismembered and cutting pieces, 1 Samuel 15:33, the prophet Samuel, in response to Saul's disobedience and not putting Agag the, the king to death, Amorite king, he hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. Hacked him to pieces.

And I think Jesus is intentional to bring this image into their minds at this time. This predominantly Jewish audience that's familiar with the Old Testament, they're going to get the point. No, no pun intended there. The commentator, James Edwards, he cites a book by K.R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire*. We got some insight there how to, how masters dealt with the infidelity of their slaves. As I mentioned, the slaves are property to these masters. They're animate tools, human tools, they're not on par with Roman citizens, and so the cruelty, well it didn't happen all the time. It could be legendary.

Edward cites several examples from this book. He says, for instance, quote, "A slave who stole silver from a banquet of Caligula, had his hands cut off and hung around his neck in punishment, in order to deter other slaves from similar behavior." And then another one, "A Roman noble nobleman, fed to his lampreys, a boy who broke a crystal cup." End quote. It's a dreadful one to imagine if you look up lampreys on the and take a look at those things and watch a video, you don't wanna be eaten by one.

Hard words. Strong words. They're warning for those who of us who are faithful. Who take our stewardship seriously, we don't want to be anywhere near this guy. We gotta watch how we treat other people, how

we execute our stewardship. But the execution here of this guy is not even the worst part of this. This is just a prelude to his actual judgment, his real punishment. He assigns him and says there, his place, his place, it belongs to him, his place with the unfaithful.

What's that? Eternal punishment. Clear indication Jesus is speaking figuratively here about himself, referring to judgments that will occur at his second coming. Look at the beginning of the chapter in Luke 12:4-5 where Jesus says, "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear. Fear him, who after he has killed. Has authority to cast into hell. Yes I tell you, fear him."

So who's the *him* in verse 5? It's Jesus, isn't it? It's the Son of Man who has authority after he has killed after he has dismembered, cut in two, he will then cast into hell. When Jesus puts this man with the unfaithful, he's merely acknowledging what's been revealed at his coming. He's just acknowledging the reality. He's being what you might call just. This is equitable treatment. He's getting what his deeds deserve. He's not a member of the Lord's household, the master's household, he never was. The Lord's absence exposed his true heart. In his return, in his return, he's revealed it. So Jesus sends this man to take his place, it's his place, alongside his own people. The rest

of the unfaithful, the unbelievers, those who will suffer the fate of eternal conscious torment in hell. As he'll say, a few months later, Matthew 24:51 records it, the returning master will "cut him in pieces, put him with the hypocrites," Well, "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Notice the weeping and gnashing of teeth comes after he's been cut into pieces. He's been cut into pieces is like, how does he do that? Well, it's eternal conscious torment. What is the Lord's delay in returning revealing in your life? What is it revealing about your own stewardship? How are you thinking about yourself at this point in the sermon? What's gonna happen upon his arrival when you face that appointment with divine justice?

I know there are some, some are attempted to say, well I'm no pastor. I mean I'm just a simple Christian. I, you know, not much is expected of me, right? If thoughts like that cross your mind. Just admit him for what they are. Just say yeah, that's crossed my mind I, I can admit that. But be careful that they're not masking over a heart of insolence. Be careful that your thoughts that are excusing yourself of accountability are not, masking over a heart of disregard for the Lord. A tendency to take the Lord's grace for granted.

Consider a third point here. There will be, number three: an evaluation of insolence. Number three, an evaluation of insolence or you might say an evaluation of disrespect. The Lord will evaluate the heart attitudes of all his servants, and we could just say all people. He'll evaluate the heart attitudes of everyone and the standard of that evaluation will be the servant's knowledge of the Lord's will. What does he know? What does he understand? The Lord knows.

Based on what every person knows, the Lord will evaluate his attitude of respect or disrespect. Insolence or regard. So we'll consider these next two types of servants together, because both are evaluated on their knowledge of the Lord's will. Look at those two, starting verse 47, "That servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating."

Look, you don't want to receive any beating. Okay, let's just get that down. When I kind of explain the word, you'll understand, you don't want that, but the first servant here he hears Jesus' words, verse 35, "Stay dressed for action. Keep your lamps burning." And he says, Nah. I got other stuff to do. I'm busy. He hears Jesus describe the master's desire for relational intimacy; closeness, in verse 37,

come inside, share table fellowship with the servants. He hears in verse 42, how the master cares for his servants. Shrugs, moves on. The man knew. I, I know there are some people listening right now, you know.

You know, because I just told you. This man knew, at least at some point in his life. He just didn't care enough to do anything about it. Time goes by. I mean he's got other things going. There's a life to live, kids to raise soccer practice for the kids, guys night out, ladies night out, whatever. What he once knew fades into a distant memory or disappears altogether in the fog of time, in the fog of busyness. Knowledge didn't produce any conviction of sin. He listened to sermons like this one, and he hardened his heart to any conviction. Didn't experience any remorse. There's no repentance, and so the knowledge it's gone. Gone.

Jesus portrays another kind of unbelieving heart here. It's a cold and indifferent heart. They say indifference is the coldest form of hatred, isn't it? Who could hate or show such cold indifference to a master like this? Such a loving, caring master. A master who would throw off his own royal garments, take on servant's garments and make his servants sit at the table so that he could serve them food, and fellowship with them. You ever heard of any ruler like that? Who could

hate somebody like this? Who could be indifferent? Who could dare blow him off, thinking nothing of disobeying the masters will?

James 4:17, "The one who knows the right thing to do and fails to do it for him it is," what? "sin." He's sinning against knowledge. He's sinning against the light. Listen, this punishment to, like the other, his punishment is utterly just. He's going to receive a severe beating before he's remanded to his place of eternal torment, along with the rest of the unfaithful and unbelieving servants.

In terms we're familiar with, he's horsewhipped here. He's receiving lashes with a cat of nine tails. He's getting a scourging. But after that it's, that's when the real torment begins. Paul said 1 Corinthians 16:22, "if anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be anathema." Let him be cursed. Let him be damned. That's the servant who sinned against the light that he had, what he was once taught.

And I just gotta tell you, it saddens me to think about some of the people who've sat in this church. Maybe still sitting in this church right now today hearing the sermons. They see evidence you, evidence of your change lives every single week throughout the week and they shrug, walk out as if this is nothing special. I think about

students, I think about younger people, you younger people. I pray for you.

That you'll hear what I'm saying. That your heart will soften. That you'll not be caught up in the distractions of this world. That you won't give your attention to what's on the Internet. That you won't give yourself to entertainment, that your, your mind will not be flooded with video games and desires for video games and desire for entertainment and desire for social connections with people you don't even know. That you won't be, your heart won't be filled with desire for sexual immorality and satisfying all kinds of covetous desires. Young people, it's a dangerous world.

The porthole of, the porthole to hell can sometimes be in your own home. Flee, flee. Some older people who've attended here, also, hearing and not perceiving, seeing and not believing and with all of you who are like that, in those in that category, I'm pleading, give your heart to Christ. Turn to him because the more light that you have, the more time you spend in this church listening to what I'm saying, I'm, I'm just, I'm, you can see it on the pages of this text. I'm just telling you what Jesus is saying here. He's teaching, he's the one speaking through me to you. He's confronting you. He's calling you. He's pleading with you. Will you repent?

The more light that you have, the more you're responsible for. Jesus said that, in verse, he's saying that in verse 48 we're gonna get to that. Peter also warned 2 Peter 2:21, "Would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness. And after knowing it to turn back from the Holy Commandment delivered to them." Friends, "it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Our God is consuming fire and our Christ wields a sword and he's going to use it. He wields a whip and he will use it.

There's one more servant Jesus is going to evaluate when he comes. First half of verse 48, Jesus says, "But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating, he received a light beating." The Old Testament made provision for sins that were high handed, sins that were kind of done presumptive, sins that were committed presumptuously, and then those like what's described here, sins done unintentionally or sins of ignorance. They're still sins.

I mean, if you're driving 75 miles an hour on the highway out there, I25. And you didn't notice the sign that warned of a construction zone, and it takes the speed limit down to 55 or 45. Cop pulls you over in that zone, you can't plead ignorance and say, hey, I didn't see the sign. I'm ignorant of your laws. Away with you. No.

It's the same term here used to describe the punishment, same scourging.

The ignorant person, though, it says here in the ESV "a light beating," that's not really the sense. It's not like Jesus looks the guy holding the whip and says Oh, lighten up on this one. Lighten up. No, just fewer blows. Fewer is actually the word there, *oligos*. He gets fewer blows than the other guy. The one who can't claim ignorance, that guy knew and he ignored. This guy didn't know, and yet he still sinned in ignorance, so he gets fewer blows.

Listen just a footnote here. This, this is one of the texts in Scripture that demonstrates a gradation of punishments in hell. So that the, the good Mormon, you know, the Mormon neighbor that we live next to and we love them, they're really friendly, but they don't have the gospel. In fact, they're peddling a false gospel, but they're living moral lives and having a, you know, big families that you'll really enjoy their children and everything like that. They're not going to be getting the same lashes as Adolf Hitler. Right? We understand that, we would, we would say we understand that there is gradation of punishment in Hell. This is what this is teaching here.

But listen that Mormon, he's still gonna be assigned his place because he does not have the gospel. He's gonna be assigned to his place in Hell along with Hitler, along with Stalin, along with so many of the, we can see in our world today, who are just like that.

This guy, sinning in ignorance, he's still, he's an unbeliever, clearly an unbeliever. He's an unfaithful servant. He doesn't get a pass just because he claims ignorance, just because he has less light. He's still got the light of divine creation that provides him with all the light he needs to do what's right by thanking God, honoring him as God and giving thanks repenting of his sins when he fails to do what he knows.

In fact, I want to show you this turn over to Romans 1:18. 1:18, just take a look there because Paul goes into this catalog, really, he goes into a catalog of sins that really describe America right now. Listen if, if God excused those who have never heard of Jesus who never heard the gospel, because maybe missionaries never visited them. If God, if God truly considers their ignorance and gives them access to heaven apart from the gospel, apart from the name of Jesus Christ, then what are we to make of verses like Acts 17:30, that "The times of ignorance God overlooked but now," now, "he commands all people everywhere to repent." Is that true or not? Is he gonna judge all the

world as he says in this text, Acts 17:31. Is he gonna judge him by Christ or not?

God continuing to overlook ignorance and letting those who are ignorant into heaven was actually, has actually been taught by some prominent evangelical leaders. It's known as the wider mercy view. Where God grants salvation of people who've never heard the gospel, never heard the name of Jesus Christ, but they've lived good lives by living up to the light that they have received, and so they're going to get in. Yeah, I know, evangelicals teaching that. I mean, what are they thinking? If that's true, which it's not, then why send missionaries anywhere? Why do that?

I mean, rather than preaching, giving knowledge so that they're put into the accountable category, which is what missionaries would be doing. The consequences of having that extra knowledge in light is a more severe beating. Assigning them to hell, so why not instead keep unbelievers ignorant about Jesus ignorant of the gospel? If they can get there without the light, that with all the life that they do have. Some evangelicals just get so squishy in doctrine, so emotional about people that they're ready to find any in every way to get that person into heaven and the sad thing is, it's a total fiction.

Anyone believing that, they're in for a rude awakening. Paul tells us in Romans 1:18 through 21, says there in this whole text that no one is truly ignorant. No one is fully ignorant. As it turns out everyone, every single human being, has some pretty profound knowledge of God. Paul says, verse 18, that "they suppress the truth in unrighteousness." That term for suppress is like, picture some kid in a pool in the backyard and he's trying to take one of those big inflatable beach balls and hold it underneath the water, and that truth just that, that beach ball just keeps jumping up outside the pool, right? But he tries really hard and the stronger he gets, the bigger he gets, the better he's able to hold that down and that's exactly what the world looks like. Kids have to be taught to be atheists.

They all come into this world kind of assuming God is; like uh, how else could I get here? Yeah, that's good. Exactly. But as they grow, as they get older as they come up with more philosophical muscle, they hold that beach ball down, they hold that truth down in unrighteousness. Verse 19, tells us there by the Holy Spirit that "what can be known about God is plain to them. Because God has shown it to them."

Okay, so who's right? The person who says, oh, I don't know anything. This isn't plain to me. Who's right that person testifying about themselves or God? God says he's shown it to you. You're gonna dispute him. Good luck with that. Verse 20, God has shown them his invisible attributes. What has he shown them that's invisible? His eternal power and his divine nature. They've been clearly perceived.

Huh, the unbeliever, the God-rejecting, the secular, that said, I don't see any evidence for God anywhere, uhuh. Clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made. So they're without excuse, because verse 21 says, "although they knew God," Calvin called that the census divinitatis, "they knew God, they just didn't honor him as God or give thanks to him." In a sense of him, a sense of the divine. I know, I know, I know, we continue going down this route here, but that's enough to show you that no one can claim absolute utter ignorance of God.

In fact, turn the page and look at Romans 2:14. 2:14, Paul tells us what God sees when he looks at the heart of the so called ignorant. Make no mistake, they know enough to be accountable "for when Gentiles who do not have the law," that is they don't have the Law of Moses. They don't have revelation written in a book. "By nature, they do what the law requires. They're a law to themselves, even though they don't

have the Law." How is that? How can that be? Well, they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. How did that get there? God put it there. They're, they're created in his image, and so they have the Law of God inscribed on their hearts. They have a sense of God, they know what's right and wrong, what they ought to do, and ought not to do, what they should do, what they should not do, right here.

The law of, the work of the law is written on their hearts, and they can't claim ignorance. Why? Because they've got a conscience within them, and their conscience is going to reveal that their conscience reveals or is in agreement with God. Their conscience bears witness their conflicting thoughts either accuse or excuse them. "On that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus." They say they're atheists. They say they don't know. They say there's no evidence. They're lying to you. They're holding it secret, secret that they know.

They flaunt their sin. They flaunt their depravity. They take great pride in it, almost to try to outdo themselves in showing you, I'm not accountable to God, I can do whatever I want to. They're like petulant children. Now they know, they know.

Go back now to Luke 12:48. This ignorant man claims ignorance, so called ignorant man. He's also received a stewardship from God and he too will give an account to Christ. He's not going to be excused for ignorance because his ignorance is willful. We just saw that in Romans 1, it's willful. It reveals an insolent dis, disregard for the masters will.

Alfred Plummer says this guy, seeing he is a servant, he might have known his masters will, had he been anxious to find it out. Moms you ever see that with your kids? Well, you didn't tell me not to draw on the, on the wall. You know you didn't tell me. You didn't tell me not to eat all the cookies. I should have to tell you that? If you had cared you would have sought the master's will. Mom, can I draw all over this wall with my crayons? My color marks, can't do that? No. Because I care what my Mom thinks. Mom can I eat all the cookies? Is that OK? No, it's not. Okay, I just wanna do your will, Mom.

Leon Morris says, "We're apt to be disturbed by the thought that one who sins in ignorance will be punished. But we must bear in mind there is no such thing as absolute moral ignorance." And then he says, "This God's servant must make every effort to find out what God's will is and do it. All are accountable." End quote. So true. We're all accountable.

None of us can claim ignorance, none can shrug it off. This man has been content really to suppress the truth. He's been content to stay ignorant because he wants to avoid accountability. He doesn't wanna hear anything that's coming out of this book. He didn't want to inform his conscience. He wants to just keep on doing what he wants to do. That is not going to fly on the day that Jesus Christ visits him. As the brilliant light of the glory of Christ return, his mask of this so called ignorant man, his mask is going to be ripped away. As the secrets of his heart come out and are exposed on his face, as his mouth gives testimony, you knew this, didn't you? Yeah I did.

They didn't know their master's will because they didn't want to know his will. So this insolent lazy attitude is going to be revealed, it's going to be punished along with the rest of the unbelieving, the rest of the unfaithful. Listen, God is not under, no obligation, to give more to one who squanders and neglects what he's already received. In fact, the principle is that without using what he has been given, even what he has will be taken away. Luke 8:18, "Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has more will be given, and from the one who has not even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

As Jesus said in his rebuke to the Laodicean church, which we read earlier in the service. He says, "I counsel you to buy from me." He says several things there, and then he says, "Salve to anoint your eyes. So that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous." Don't be indifferent, lazy, insolent, "be zealous, and repent," and then this, "behold, I stand at the door and knock." Let me just tell you, this is not an evangelistic verse. God's knocking on the door of your heart, he just opened the door and let him in, please. He's just waiting, waiting for you to, no, that's not what this is saying. "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone of my servants hears my voice opens the door I'll come into him, eat with him, and he with me." What's it describing?

The table fellowship back here in verse 37, "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he'll dress himself for service, have them recline at the table. He'll come and serve them." Why? Because previous verse they are going to open the door at once immediately when he comes and knocks. Revelation 3:20 is connected right here to Luke 12. Those servants, we need to be like them, ready, waiting, watchful for the, when the master comes home from the wedding feast. When he knocks, we immediately open to him.

You know what he's gonna do? Rejoice. He's gonna rejoice with us. He's gonna say, hey, you sit down I got so much to tell you, so much to bring to your attention, let me, let me tell you what happened here, I've been praying for you, let me, let me explain it. Man, what a day.

Well, we've covered three points. A revelation of faithfulness, an assignation with justice, an evaluation of insolence, all these are negative incentives for us, as Christ's faithful stewards as believing stewards, we don't want any of this stuff to happen to us. One more: This is at the very end. We're just gonna wrap this up. A motivation to excellence. A motivation to excellence in our stewardship.

The Lord's grace is a motivation for us, it's encouragement to us, to excel in our stewardship. Look at the last part of verse 48, we'll draw it to a close, "Everyone to whom much was given of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much they'll demand the more." Now, makes perfect sense, just the way Jesus said it there. If we think carefully, but just a word of clarification that those are parallel statements, we can hear that. But they're not synonymous.

They, they're saying slightly different things, related but not synonymous. In the first case, when Jesus says "Everyone to whom much was given of him much will be required." Think about that guy in the company who makes an honorable salary, to live a middle class life. He's making one level of pay for work performed. The guy higher up from him up the corporate ladder. Who makes that six figure salary or even, I guess in these days, would be a seven figure salary. Who does the company expect to get more out of? Who do they consider they have owner, more ownership over? It's the one they're paying more, right? So if God has given you a surplus of anything, much will be required of you. There's more expected.

In the second case, when Jesus says "from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more." He's not making the same point. He's making a different one. To give someone something is one level of stewardship, to entrust someone with something, that's on a whole different level. You could think of it like the difference between being a beneficiary of a will, inheriting some amount of money or being entrusted as an executor of the will. Entrusted to distribute the funds of the will and the assets of the will faithfully.

The one who has been given a gift, one level of stewardship. The one who's been given a trust, like us Christians, trusted with the

gospel, pastors and elders entrusted with the stewardship of souls, entrusted with Christ's precious sheep. Those whom he shed his blood to die for. That's a whole other level of accountability, isn't it?

Let me make two applications as we close here, one for unbelievers, for non-Christians who are listening, and another for believers. For those of you who are not yet Christians, what are you waiting for? You've been listening to this sermon, my friend, and maybe you've been listening to some other sermons as well. Listen, you know now, it's a dangerous thing for you to ignore this exhortation. It's dangerous to refuse to repent of your sins, knowing what you now know. Put your faith in Christ Jesus, because all of us at one point were sitting exactly where you are, hearing sermons like this and then provoked into repentance. By exhortations just like this, repent of your sins. Put your faith in Jesus Christ. Follow in obedience as Lord, because he's coming one day, and so you need to heed the biblical warning: Behold, now is the favorable time.

Why is it favorable? Because he's not standing there with a sword ready to cut you up. He's not standing there with a whip. It's a favorable time because there is time. Now is the favorable time, 2 Corinthians 6:2, "Behold today is the day of salvation." There's time for you to repent of your sins. There's time right now to bow the

knee. There's time to reckon with the fact of your accountability before Christ, there's time to embrace the stewardship you've received from God, because you will give an account one day.

For you Christians, especially us members of Grace Church. We've been so incredibly blessed, haven't we? Greatly, greatly blessed. I pinch myself all the time and say this is real, it is. We're here. We've received a trust. We've got great gifts, gifting, competences, all the rest, but we've received something even greater. We've gotten a trust from God, a trust from Christ. We've been entrusted with an eternal gospel, and we have a charge to keep. We have this treasure in jars of clay, 2 Corinthians 4:7. We're breakable, and that's the point, because the more we break, the more it opens up and it shows and reveals the surpassing power belongs to God, and not to us, reveals the treasure inside when we're broken.

But we have stewardship of our jar. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he's done in the body, whether we're good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others." That's what we're called to do. We have a gospel that we keep and guard. We guard it and keep it by giving it away, by proclaiming it. I know so many of you are doing just that. I, I know

you're doing it you, you tell me about the conversations you have with friends, neighbors, coworkers, family members, some of them, just difficult situations you're in.

You know how it is with family? Sometimes it's the hardest thing because they push your buttons and so you're in each other's grill and everything but, we're doing it. We're giving ourselves faithfully to the stewardship we've received. Our stewardship is from God, 2 Corinthians 5:18, "God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. Not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

What a high and holy privilege we have as Christians, as believers, as members of Grace Church, to take this gospel to the nations. We do it starting right here in Greeley, at our own Jerusalem and Judea, then to Colorado, then to the nation, then to the uttermost parts of the earth, Amen.

Father, thank you so much for our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for his clear, incisive teaching. We thank you for how he gets to the heart of the matter with such vivid imagery and, a graphic portrayal of what is coming. We as Christians cannot wait to see him. We love him so much and we long to be reunited with him in person. To see the one that we've read about, to embrace him, to fall down at his feet and worship. And we pray, Father, that the stewardship that you've given to us, you've given us great gifts. But you've also entrusted us. With the stewardship, the stewardship of your saving gospel, so help us to be faithful. Let us all examine ourselves even today this afternoon, as we, as we think about the priorities that we have and keep and what's important to us. How we set aside time for the assembly of the saints, to be with one another. Let us examine on the times that we don't, assemble and get together with one another, that we wonder what is it that's keeping us from that desire.

Help us to be ruthless with the things that are in our lives, that ought not to be. Work in our hearts by the Holy Spirit to mortify all things that don't please you. We put before our eyes no, no vain thing. We wanna give ourselves wholly to you Father, that you would use us to proclaim this gospel. To be faithful stewards. So that when Christ comes, we are eager, quick, because we've been ready waiting, staying watchful, eager, expectant, anticipating his return. We want to be those upon his return, that when he knocks our, that door flies

open and we fall into his arms and share fellowship, and joy. Thank you so much for what Christ has taught us and please bless us today. In Jesus' name, amen.