

# Luke 12:35-40

*"Dressed for Action"*

*August 10, 2025*

## 1. Intro

- a. Well last week, we looked at a rather lengthy portion of Luke 12, as we saw Jesus give two clear warnings against the treasures of this world
  - i. The first warning was for those who already have an abundance of treasures
    1. Their businesses are successful...
      - a. Their barns are overflowing...
        - i. And now it's finally time for them to kick back and enjoy all the hard-earned riches they've amassed for themselves
        - ii. Again, this is the epitome of the American Dream, isn't it?
      - b. And yet Jesus says to us, "If THAT is the life you are chasing after, then you are a FOOL"
        - i. For your life could be ended this very moment
          1. And what are you going to do with all those riches then?
          2. As the old cliché goes, "You'll never see a hearse with a U-Haul trailer attached behind it
      - c. You could gain the whole world, friends, and yet still lose your soul
        - i. So don't spend your life in the pursuit of possessions...
          1. Instead spend your life being rich TOWARD God
            - a. By giving to those in need
            - b. By being exceedingly generous with all that you've been given
            - c. By being rich – not in your finances, but in GOOD WORKS
          - ii. For TRUE life has nothing to do with the abundance of our possessions here on earth
            1. But it has EVERYTHING to do with laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven
        - d. This was the warning for those who already have an abundance of treasures
      2. But the second warning was for those who DO NOT have an abundance of money and stuff and resources in this life
        - a. For those in this group are often consumed with the sins of worry and fear and anxiety, aren't they?
          - i. We aren't sure how we're going to keep putting food on the table
          - ii. We aren't sure what we'll do if our car breaks down
          - iii. We aren't sure if there is going to be enough money at the end of the month to pay all the bills
            1. So we worry, and fret, and we live our lives in constant anxiety about the fears of tomorrow
              - a. And Jesus says to this group, "Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to the span of his life?"
                - i. Look at the birds, my friends
                - ii. Look at the flowers in the fields
              - b. If God takes such care of these, will he not take much more care of you, O you of little faith?

- ii. So Jesus warned us last week about the sins of greed and self-indulgence
    - 1. He warned us about the sins of worry and anxiety
      - a. And then he gave us this one simple, foundational truth that has the power to change our perspective about EVERYTHING in this life...
        - i. Fear not, little flock, for it gave your Father great delight to give you HIS KINGDOM
          - 1. Before the foundation of the world, God decreed that you, Christian, would have an inheritance
            - a. This inheritance cannot be stolen by thieves or eaten by moths
            - b. It is not affected by the instability of the stock market or international trade
            - c. This inheritance cannot be shaken in the least by ANYTHING in this world
          - 2. For this is the Kingdom of God Himself
            - a. Your citizenship in this Kingdom has been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ
            - b. And it has been sealed by the very Spirit of God that dwells within you
        - ii. All of this was set in place before you were even born, brothers and sisters in Christ
          - 1. And this Kingdom is UNSHAKABLE
- iii. So fear not, little flock, for this Kingdom is yours, NOW
  - 1. What incredible freedom we could find if we simply walked in the light of this truth!
    - a. We could be FREE to not be governed by what is or isn't in our bank accounts
    - b. We could be FREE to pour out our lives in radical generosity and sacrifice for others
    - c. We could be FREE to spend our time and energy and resources advancing GOD'S Kingdom here on earth, as it is in heaven
      - i. Free from the distractions of this world
      - ii. Free from anxiety and fear
        - 1. All because we KNOW that the Father was greatly delighted to give HIS Kingdom to all who put their hope in His Son
- iv. But there is a second truth that we must acknowledge this morning, friends
  - 1. And that is the truth that while the Kingdom of God has already been given to us NOW...
    - a. We do not yet walk in the FULLNESS of this Kingdom
      - i. For the King has gone away, hasn't he?
        - 1. According to the Parable of the Talents in Luke chapter 19,
          - a. *"A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a Kingdom... and then return"*
        - 2. We know that Jesus is indeed this nobleman
          - a. He has indeed ascended into the far country of heaven, where he sits at the right hand of God the Father
          - b. And he will indeed return to this earth once again
- v. But until his return, we are living "IN THE MEANTIME," aren't we?
  - 1. The Kingdom of God IS advancing all around the world
    - a. But we still face daily trials and temptations, don't we?
    - b. We still face loss and grief

- c. We still face hardships and persecution
- d. We still face the daily struggle as we war against the sinfulness of our very own flesh
  - i. The Kingdom of God has already arrived on this earth, but it has not yet arrived in its fullness
    - 1. For the King is still away
      - a. So how then are we to live?
    - 2. Well, Jesus gives us the answer in Luke 12, verses 35-40...

2. Luke 12:35-40

- a. *<sup>35</sup>“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, <sup>36</sup>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. <sup>37</sup>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 table, and he will come and serve them. <sup>38</sup>If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! <sup>39</sup>But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, heh would not have left his house to be broken into. <sup>40</sup>You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*

3. So how are we to live in light of the reality that our Master is still long in returning back to his people?

- a. Stay dressed for action, and keep your lamps burning!
    - i. Our modern-day translations have kind of cleaned-up the language that Jesus is using in this first verse
    - ii. But the old King James version gets it right when it says,
      - 1. “Let your loins be girded about you...”
        - a. This was an Old Testament phrase that the Jewish people would have been very familiar with
          - i. Throughout the centuries, from the earliest days of ancient Israel, on through to the days of Jesus, there is an important cultural fact that we have to remember...
            - 1. The Jewish people didn’t wear pants
              - a. Instead, they wore long tunics
                - i. It didn’t matter what time of the year it was, or what season
                - ii. It didn’t matter whether they were out in the fields at work, or resting at home
              - b. All of the Jewish people, both men and women, wore these long tunics that went all the way down to their ankles
            - b. Now, while this might have been comfortable and non-restrictive attire, it was NOT the best thing to be wearing when you needed to run quickly...
              - i. OR, when you needed to go into battle
2. So in those moments, the men especially, would reach down and grab the bottom part of their tunics...
  - a. They would bring it up between their legs and toward their waist
    - i. And then they would tuck all the excess cloth into their belts, basically creating for themselves a set of shorts that they could now move quickly and freely in
3. This practice was known as, “girding up your loins”
  - a. The first record of its use is found in Exodus chapter 12, as God is preparing His people for the Passover

- i. He's already warned them about the coming of the angel of destruction, who would come to destroy all the firstborn in the land of Egypt...
    1. EXCEPT for those who painted the doorposts of their homes with the blood of a lamb
      - a. For THOSE homes, the angel would "pass over" them, and they would be spared from the wrath of God
      - b. And as angel passed over these homes, the people inside were to eat a very specific meal, in a very specific way
        - i. This meal would of course be known as the Passover Meal
4. And in Exodus 12, verses 11-12, God says to His people,
  - a. *<sup>11</sup>In this manner you shall eat it: **with your belt fastened**, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. <sup>12</sup>For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord.*
    - i. The ESV says for them to eat this meal with their belts fastened
      1. But again, in the King James, it says,
        - a. "And thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded..."
    - ii. The people were to be ready... they were to be dressed for action
      1. Because in the middle of the night, the Egyptians were going to beg them to leave their land, out of fear of the God of the Hebrews
        - a. Their freedom... their salvation... was IMMANENT
      2. So the Lord said to them,
        - a. "Gird up your loins... BE READY for your deliverance!"
5. We see this need for haste again in 2 Kings, chapter 4, as the prophet Elisha is given word that a young boy who was very dear to him had died
  - a. In his great concern, Elisha sends his servant on ahead of him to try to do something, and verse 29 says,
    - i. *<sup>9</sup>[Elisha] said to Gehazi, "**Tie up your garment** and take my staff in your hand and go. If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not reply. And lay my staff on the face of the child."*
      1. Tie up your garment and go, Gehazi... GIRD UP YOUR LOINS and make haste!
6. We see this again in 2 Kings 9, as the two nations of Israel and Judah are in ever-increasing conflict and turmoil
  - a. And the prophet Elisha is given a word from the Lord regarding a man who is to be one of the new kings
    - i. We read in verses 1-3,
      1. *<sup>1</sup>Then Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets and said to him, "**Tie up your garments**, and take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth-Gilead. <sup>2</sup>And when you arrive, look there for Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi. And go in and have him rise from among his fellows, and lead him to an inner chamber. <sup>3</sup>Then take the flask of oil*

*and pour it on his head and say, 'Thus says the Lord, I anoint you king over Israel.' Then open the door and flee; do not linger."*

- a. Tie up your garments and go, young man, GIRD UP YOUR LOINS and run to find this man Jehu!

7. We see this again in Jeremiah, chapter 1

- a. At this point in Jeremiah's story, Jeremiah is just a young man, maybe in his teenage years
  - i. His dad was a priest in the land of Benjamin, but Jeremiah himself was just a kid
    1. He wasn't a great public speaker
    2. He had never stood before governors or kings
      - a. And yet the Lord says to Jeremiah in his youth, *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."*
  - b. And then God said to him in verse 17,
    - i. <sup>17</sup>"But you, **dress yourself for work**; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them."
      1. Be dressed for action, Jeremiah... GIRD UP YOUR LOINS... for I have MUCH work for you to do!
- b. Friends, when Jesus said to his disciples, "Stay dressed for action," they would have known EXACTLY what he was talking about
  - i. GIRD UP YOUR LOINS, for like it was in the days of Jeremiah, there is MUCH work to do in the Kingdom
  - ii. GIRD UP YOUR LOINS, for like it was in the days of Elisha, I have need of those who will run with great haste and UNQUESTIONING obedience
  - iii. GIRD UP YOUR LOINS, for like it was in the days of Moses, Christians, your deliverance is IMMANENT
    1. The Master may not come until the second watch of the night...
      - a. He may not come until the third watch of the night...
        - i. But have no doubt about it – he IS coming back
          1. So stay dressed and be ready for action!
- c. Christians, if I could ask it with such a blunt question... are YOUR loins girded? Are YOU dressed and ready for action?
  - i. This is the expectation for all who have been given the Kingdom... are you dressed and ready for the King's return?
    1. In these Old Testament examples that we've looked at this morning, we find our answer to this question
- d. I think most all of us probably relate to Jeremiah to some extent, don't we?
  - i. We may not all be young men or young women anymore, but when it comes to proclaiming the words of God to men, most all of us have fears...
    1. Most all of us have apprehension and anxiety
      - a. And yet, God says to Jeremiah, and he says to US as well,
        - i. *"But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them."*

- [illegible]

- i. When he tells you to go out into the world, a place of death and sorrow, are you willing to gird up your loins and go and proclaim a message of a resurrection and a hope?
    - ii. When he tells you to go into enemy territory, amidst a people who are in outright rebellion against their Creator...
      - 1. When he tells you to go into such a place with the message that a NEW King has been anointed, and they are to bow to him,
        - a. Are you willing to gird up your loins and go?
          - i. Without question?
- f. We are to stay dressed for action, Christians
  - i. For as it was in the days of Moses, our deliverance is IMMANENT
    - 1. Our Master could arrive at any moment
      - a. Therefore, let us be dressed for action, and let us keep our lamps burning
  - ii. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 25, as we see an illustration of what Jesus is talking about here
    - 1. In Matthew 24, Jesus had just spent a lengthy discourse telling his disciples what things would look like as his return drew near
      - a. And then, here in chapter 25, starting in verse 1, Jesus gives them this parable,
        - i. *<sup>1</sup>“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup>For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup>but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup>But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ <sup>7</sup>Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup>And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup>But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup>And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup>Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ <sup>12</sup>But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ <sup>13</sup>Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.*
    - 2. So how do we keep our lamps burning?
      - a. Make sure they are filled with oil!
      - b. Make sure that you have plenty of oil to spare!
        - i. For again, the return of the Bridegroom is immanent
          - 1. But he might not come back until the second watch of the night
          - 2. He might not come back until the third watch
  - iii. Therefore, friends, this is a call for endurance for the saints
    - 1. We’ve all seen the examples of far too many who have not endured, haven’t we?
      - a. Maybe for a season they seemed like they were dressed for action
        - i. Maybe for a time it seemed like they had girded up their loins, and resolved to walk in obedience to the King’s commands

1. But as the King was delayed in his return, their oil began to run out
    - a. Maybe they started looking around them at all the fun everyone else was having
      - i. While they were running and toiling with their loins girded and ready for action, all of their friends were relaxing and eating and drinking and being merry
      - ii. So they abandoned their lamps in pursuit of the treasures of this world
    - b. Maybe, as they girded up their loins and began to acknowledge Christ before men, their family and friends and neighbors and coworkers all rose up against them
      - i. The mocking became too hard
      - ii. The trials became too difficult
      - iii. The persecution became too real
    - c. So they abandoned their lamps in order to avoid trials and tribulations
  - b. By all outward appearances, it had seemed like they were ready to wait for the return of the Bridegroom
    - i. But in the end, he just took too long
      1. And their lamps ran out of oil
- iv. This is one of the great tensions that exists within the Scriptures
1. We are certainly saved by the grace of God, simply through our faith in Jesus Christ
    - a. And it is Christ who keeps us firmly in our grasp, preserving us through to the very end
  2. But AT THE SAME TIME, the Scriptures are clear...
    - a. We are called to ENDURE
      - i. The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2:11-12,
        1. *<sup>11</sup>The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; <sup>12</sup>**if we endure**, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us...*
      - ii. The writer of the book of Hebrews says in Hebrews 12:1-2,
        1. *<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and **let us run with endurance** the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*
      - iii. And Jesus himself says in Luke 21:16-19,
        1. *<sup>16</sup>You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. <sup>17</sup>You will be hated by all for my name's sake. <sup>18</sup>But not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup>**By your endurance** you will gain your lives.*
- v. Keep your lamps burning, my friends



1. There are going to be all sorts of opportunities in this life for you to exchange your oil for something else...
  - a. Some sort of immediate gratification...
  - b. Some sort of immediate escape...
    - i. But these are all foolish trades, brothers and sisters
      1. The Bridegroom IS coming back, even though in our minds he is tarrying far too long
  - c. So hear these words of Jesus that he wrote in Revelation 3 to the church in Philadelphia,
    - i. <sup>10</sup>Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup>I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.
      1. Hold fast, Christian, that no one may seize your crown
      2. Hold fast, Christian, that your lamp would remain full of oil till the end
      3. Hold fast, Christian, for the Master is coming soon!
- g. We don't know when the hour of his return will be
  - i. Satan, the so-called "master" of the house of this world, knows not when Jesus will come back
  - ii. Even Jesus himself, according to the divine counsel of the Triune God, in some way has withheld this knowledge from himself
    1. As he said in Matthew 24:36,
      - a. 36"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."
  - iii. But there are two things we know for certain based off of our passage this morning...
    1. The first is this, that Christ IS coming back!
      - a. So therefore, be dressed and ready for service
      - b. Keep your lamps burning
      - c. Stay awake
    2. But the second thing we know for certain is almost too staggering to believe...
      - a. When the Lord DOES return, he will look around him at all of his servants who have been waiting for him in obedience and with great expectation
        - i. And then HE will dress himself for service
          1. HE will have you recline at the great feast of his table
          2. And HE... will serve us!
      - ii. That almost sounds blasphemous, doesn't it?
        1. That's not what we've been taught over the years...
          - a. When we enter into heaven, we'll all fall to our knees in continual worship of our great King
          - b. When we enter into the Kingdom of God, we'll take all our crowns and lay them at HIS feet
          - c. When we are brought into the New Jerusalem, it is Jesus who we will all joyfully serve and worship and honor, for all eternity
            - i. Yes, and amen...
    - b. But the Scriptures are also clear, that at the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb, Jesus himself will serve US

- i. Isn't this what he modeled for the disciples when he took off his outer garments in John 13,
      - 1. Tied a towel around his waist,
        - a. And began washing the feet of his disciples?
      - 2. Peter couldn't handle something so backwards, could he?
        - a. *"You shall NEVER wash my feet,"* he said to Jesus in that moment
      - 3. But then Jesus said these words to him...
        - a. *"If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."*
    - c. For this is the essence of who Jesus is...
      - i. The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many
  - iv. He came in the form of a servant, giving up all the glories of heaven to die on the cross on our behalf
  - v. He lived the life of a servant, pouring himself out for many, even as he himself was despised and rejected
  - vi. And when he returns, Jesus will be the great Servant-King once again, as dresses himself for service, and he prepares for us a meal more glorious than we could ever imagine!
    - 1. This was what we heard at the beginning of the service, in Isaiah 25, verses 6-9
      - a. On this mountain, WHO will prepare the feast?
        - i. The LORD OF HOSTS will make for all peoples,
          - 1. *"A feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, 'Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'"*
  - vii. My friends, are you waiting for him?
    - 1. Are you dressed and ready for action?
      - a. Do you have enough oil in your lamp to last until the end?
        - i. Behold, your Master will stand at the door and knock
          - 1. If anyone hears his voice and opens the door, he will come in to him and eat with him
        - ii. So are you waiting at the door?
          - 1. Are you listening for the knock?
    - 2. If so, then hear these words of the Apostle John in Revelation 19, and may they encourage you as you endure to the end...
      - a. *<sup>6</sup>Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. <sup>7</sup>Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; <sup>8</sup>it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure'— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. <sup>9</sup>And the angel said to [John], 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited*

*to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”*

- viii. As John writes at the end of his Revelation,
  - 1. “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”