

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Gospel of Luke, Session 21, Watch Out for the One to Fear, Luke 12:35-59

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This is Dr. Daniel K. Darko in his teaching on the Gospel of Luke. This is session 21. Watch out for the one to fear. Luke 12:35-59.

Welcome back to the Biblica e-learning lecture series on the Gospel of Luke. In the previous lecture, we looked at how Jesus answered someone who asked questions on the need to divide an inheritance and how Jesus used that to cover issues of covetousness and go right to the issue that what true disciples need to pursue is to seek first the kingdom, understanding that God is the one who will provide that which is lasting.

Here, we see Jesus will move on into in a prophetic mode to begin to address the need to watch out because the one to fear is still dealing with the issue of anxiety or fear if you remember the previous verse, he said do not fear my little flock, do not be anxious or worry a lot my little flock but as one to fear and here you will highlight from chapter 12 verse 35 to 48 that the one to fear in fact is the God of judgment. I read from verse 35 of Luke chapter 12. Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning. By the way, note the connection. He says not to worry about what you put on and all that.

But he says God will give you, and if you seek the kingdom, all these things will be added to you. And then he goes on here and says stay dressed as if God has already supplied you. Stay dressed 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. By the way, the word servants here also translates as slaves, but notice That if the master, the curious, the lord of the house, had known at what hour the thief was coming, He would have left his house 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. From verse 41, Peter said, Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all? And the Lord said, Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is the servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, My master is

delayed in coming and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the imagery you may recall from the foolish landowner, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour when he does not know, and he will 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 receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating. Look at the part that I have put in yellow for you.

To everyone to whom much was given, much will be required of him. And from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. Jesus is moving on here with the imagery he pointed out earlier on to begin to show some areas of readiness that the disciples should think about.

They should not fear about things they have no control over, and they should not live in fear or anxiety about the future they have no control over. They should rather be vigilant and be afraid about their readiness when the Lord enters. The first imagery he projects is the imagery of slaves and their masters.

Slaves are expected to be so ready for a wedding that the master is going to show up, and they do not know when the master will come. The idea is that the master may come in the middle of the night, but he will be expecting that they are right at the gate to be able to open when he enters. I like this kind of protocol when living in England when you see some of the royal activities that will come up.

And then we'll see that here Jesus is showing that readiness is going to be important because the lack of readiness will actually command some punishment or prompt some kind of punishment from the master. And then, of course, Peter's question will deviate the whole discussion now into another leadership issue where Jesus will use another imagery. He will use the imagery of a steward, who is the head of slaves that the master appoints to preside over them.

Then, Jesus will talk about leadership in this regard as stewardship and how the steward ought to discharge his duties or receive beatings or punishment when the master comes, and the duty has not been well executed. Watch out for the one to fear. The one to fear is the God of judgment.

He comes at a time no one expects. He comes expecting that those who have been entrusted with responsibilities will discharge their duties. So quickly, let's look at the first part of this passage.

I highlight here two things. The call for readiness, and, two, the story about an unexpected coming of the master. Let's begin to look quickly at the call for readiness.

Here, we find Jesus calling for readiness by using these imageries. Clinch your belt, verse 35. Clinch your belt or get your loins.

It is the imagery of saying with your loose kind of gown, bring it up so that your legs must be free to run. I give you on the screen the imagery of Exodus 12, verse 11. It is the passage that talks about how the Hebrew people are supposed to be ready while they eat and prepare for the Passover feast to be able to move on.

That sense of readiness. He says, get ready. You need to be on this kind of watch of readiness and preparedness to be free enough to move.

Get your light lest there is so much darkness that you cannot move. Then, in the story about an unexpected coming servant, Jesus will go on to begin to bring in some vivid pictures in the parable of how the slaves needed to wait. Here, we realize that Jesus' emphasis on the Lord will lead him to portray the subjects as slaves.

The master will be referred to as Kurios, Lord. And the subjects would then be referred to as slaves. And then, we will see that he will portray the slaves as those waiting for the master at the wedding banquet.

The master is not supposed to touch the gate himself to open the door. The slaves should be just ready so that as soon as he arrives there, they will open for him to enter. This requires exactitude and impressive readiness.

If you like, clear vigilance in expectation of the master's coming. You see, we see here in verse 37 what Luke is telling us in the parable as Jesus says. Jesus says when the master comes, and the servants are ready, this is what the master himself will do.

The master himself will get dressed, and when he comes to the table because the slaves or the servants are so ready, the master will turn around and serve the slaves. That is remarkable. In fact, Jesus is saying in this parable that those who are ready for the coming of the Lord, the Lord himself, will turn around and be at their service.

But it is also true that they must know that the reward, the esteem, and the honor that will be given to them at that table will only materialize if they understand that the coming of the master is unexpected. He may come at any time. He may enter the wedding banquet at any time.

And when he shows up, they must be ready. Why is Jesus telling this? Jesus is challenging them in terms of discipleship and readiness to be a true disciple in the

kingdom of God. That readiness requires this sense of vigilance to do the master's bidding at any hour, at any minute, at any second.

The great part of this particular parable, I find, is when the master whom the slaves are waiting for comes in. And the master, in rewarding the slaves, serves the slaves. You know, I recall a passage in John chapter 21.

After the resurrection, Jesus came, and the disciples ran from Judea, and they went back to Galilee fishing. They spent all night fishing. They caught nothing in John 21.

And it's one of those passages. Any time I think about the character of the Lord Jesus, it just puzzles me. That's why I bring this up a little bit here. Jesus comes in.

These are people who were, in effect, killing the vision. Basically, they had returned to their previous career, thinking that the arrest and death of Jesus had killed the dream about the kingdom of God. And yet, when Jesus went there, he saw them far away on the lake.

He realized they were hungry. Jesus himself cooked breakfast for them. And then, when they came ashore, Jesus himself fed them.

I like to say in the church something that, if I were Jesus feeding people like Peter on that particular incident, I would have put breakfast on a plate like how I open my Bible here. And when I get to Peter, I would say, Peter, breakfast, sir. And just as he scoops around, I would put it in his face.

Because he is the one who stood up and said, I'm going fishing. Everybody stopped everything and followed him to deviate from the mission. But you see, in this parable, Jesus is giving us that kind of picture.

The master comes in, and the slaves, who were so vigilant in doing their work, find the master himself waiting at the table serving them. In honor and shame society, you are talking about the highest form of honor and dignity being accorded to slaves. Jesus says the kingdom of God is like this.

Those who are vigilant and ready will be rewarded. You see, but they should know that the unexpected coming will be like a thief coming into a place. And if anybody knows when the thief is coming, they will be ready.

The thief image that is used here in Luke is not new. We find it in Matthew 24, verse 43, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 2:3, 10. We find the same imagery in Revelation 16, verse 15.

So that is not new. But notice the emphasis that Jesus is putting forward here. He will come.

And he will come like a thief in the night. Disciples must be ready. Disciples must be ready.

I like the words of Joel Greene. I'm falling in love with Joel Greene as I look through his commentary. Greene puts it this way.

You see, the master undergoes a status reversal so that he engages in slavish activity on behalf of his slaves. However, Jesus does not push so far as to portray them now as masters. Instead, he seems to posit in the place of common household conventions governed by a hyper-concern with status consciousness, the household of God.

Characterized by blindness with respect to issues of status and roles that attend them. Jesus provides for his audience a vision of the eschaton, of a household reality wherein hierarchies of status are nullified. With this vision, he both declares the nature of the reward awaiting the faithful and alerts his audience to the nature of fidelity in the interim and in the eschaton.

Jesus is calling those disciples. Place your priorities in the right place and be ready as you look for the one to fear, and you will be honored. But Peter's question was very puzzling to Jesus.

When Peter turned around and asked Jesus that question, he was 41 and said, By the way, Jesus, are you actually talking to us, or are you talking to all of them? I mean, what you are saying here is quite tricky here. I mean, you are trying to challenge us to do certain things. Do you mean it's about us or it's all of them? Now Jesus says, let me tell you another parable.

In this English translation of this parable, we come across the word manager. I'd like you to know that the Greek word should be translated as steward. It is somebody who could be a slave or anybody who helps in a house that the master trusts to appoint that in his absence, he can entrust this person to be the custodian of his estate.

If he has business undertakings, this person will run all that. It is something that is ascribed or given with respect to a lot of observation and trust in the individual. Jesus will use that to convey to Peter and the rest that leadership in the kingdom of God also comes with a sense of obligation.

There is a need for fidelity and the need to discharge one's duty in a manner that when the one to fear comes, the God of judgment comes. The God of judgment will

not rise to judge harshly, but as we saw in the previous parable, the Lord, the master, will be willing to even serve the faithful servants. You see, Peter's question here raises a few things, and I highlight six things from that part of the parable.

Jesus now brings the subject to leadership because a member of the apostolic band asks questions on the application. When Jesus used the word manager, he was not necessarily talking about an external person that is brought in, but as the parable shows, he was talking about one of the slaves who had been raised and trusted to be able to have that charge. In other words, in the kingdom of God, we are all equal.

We may be given and assigned certain leadership responsibilities, and even with that, major accountability is required. One sees that when the master was entrusting possession, the master did not entrust part of it; the master entrusted all to the care of the economist, the steward. The steward is expected to have a commensurate response in regard to the trust the master has in him.

To discharge duties faithfully, to serve as a loyal servant, to represent the master in his honor. Here in this parable, Jesus seems to be talking about the obvious, also knowing that some stewards are likely to abuse their position, highlighting that fidelity will receive blessings and promotion. Leaders who do their work and do their work well will be rewarded, but abuse of subjects in terms of the male slaves and the female slaves or resources in matters of eating and drinking will be punished.

But the master is fair enough to say that when he comes in, he would actually apportion the punishment according to the level of knowledge people have in regard to their job description. Jesus, in effect, is doing something quite interesting in these parables. He is showing that, in the first instance, the slaves or servants who are faithful will find dishonor with the master who would even serve them.

Leadership in the kingdom of God, though, must be viewed not as a superior standing to abuse. Remember, in the immediate preceding parable, Jesus had already subverted issues of power and status as he narrated how the master himself would turn around and serve the slaves at the table. Here, if Peter is interested in knowing, he is reminding Peter that fidelity will be rewarded if he does his job well as an apostle.

But if he doesn't, the God of judgment will come and the God of judgment will judge them proportionately. It is from here that Jesus will continue in Luke 12, verses 49-59 to call for decision. I read, I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled.

I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished. Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you,

but rather division. From now on, in one house, there will be five divided, three against two, two against three.

There will be divided father against son, son against father, mother against daughter, daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. Verse 54. He also said to the crowds, When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, A shower is coming.

And so, it happens. And when you see the soft wind blowing, you say, There will be scorching heat. And it happens.

You hypocrites, you know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky. And why do you not know how to interpret the present time? And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drags you to the judge, and the judge hands you over to the officer, and the officer puts you in prison. I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last.

Jesus calls these disciples for decision. And it seems that he is aware that his parable to Peter will not go down well. When he told him that the steward has to discharge his duties well, fidelity will be rewarded, but irresponsible leadership will be punished.

Now, he goes on to actually lay down this major statement that has caused some scholars to wonder what is going on here. Jesus said I have come to bring division. And in this, he will make this passionate assertion to why he came.

Then, he will show that, in fact, he has not come to bring tranquility to kinship group dynamics. He has not come to make family members too comfortable or too cozy around each other under all circumstances. His kingdom decisions are going to be so poignant that people are going to be required to make decisions that may affect relationships.

Priority in following Jesus may cost some people their desire and need to belong to their family network. Jesus challenges and criticizes them about the fact that they have ability to interpret seasons. And they can read when rain is coming or heat is coming.

But they don't seem to have the ability to read about the science of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is at hand and they would have to respond and make a decision. When Jesus makes the fire imagery, we know that there are fire imageries that have been made here and there in the Bible in regard to many, many instances.

One of which, I think, is that the way Johnson portrays it seems to complement how we are reading this text. In the Gospel of Luke's commentary, Timothy Johnson writes, The image of fire recalls the prophet Elijah who drew down fire from the Lord against the prophets of Baal, and also the soldiers of King Ahaz. Jesus' disciples wanted to exercise this sort of retaliation against the Samaritans in chapter 9, verse 54, but he did not allow it.

If the prophetic background governs the saying that Jesus desires eschatological judgment that was promised by John, the tree not bearing fruit will be cut down in the fire. The chaff is strong in the unquenchable fire. Fire as the instrument of judgment recurs in chapter 17, verse 29.

On the other hand, Luke also associates it with the gift of the Holy Spirit later on in Acts 2:3, as we see in reference to John's ministry in Luke 3.16. But you see, when Jesus gets into his passionate appeal, he mentions clearly that he has come to bring fire and judgment as the reason why people have to make decisions for radical discipleship. He has a baptism to undergo. What is the baptism? A few views have been expressed regarding the nature of this baptism.

Some say that the baptism language refers to calamity or it refers to Jesus' own death. Others have associated it with spirit baptism at Pentecost. Others say it may be a combination of both.

I read it as Jesus saying he has some challenges trying things ahead if you like, some calamities to go through or death to go through ahead. And the kingdom business is no joke. He has not come to give cheap peace, a kind of cheap understanding of tranquility.

He has come to bring division. Jesus is not saying that in the kingdom of God family members cease to be family members. Jesus is saying, on the other hand, that in the kingdom of God, kingdom priorities must supersede kingship priorities.

We find a parallel of this kind of teaching in the Gospel of Thomas. I must say the Gospel of Thomas is not in our Bible. It is in one of those writings in the Apostolic Fathers or some of the pseudepigraphic writings.

So, for those who are not familiar, I am not suggesting that this is part of the Bible. I am just suggesting that the early Christians had access to a text like this. The tradition of that text seems to resonate with what we see here.

In the Gospel of Thomas 16, we read, Jesus said, perhaps men think that I am come to cast peace upon the world. And they do not know that I am come to cast ascension upon the earth, fire, sword, war. For there will be five who are in a house.

Three shall be against two, and two against three, and the father against the son, and the son against the father, and they shall stand as solitaries. If you become my disciples, as I put in the underlining for you, if you become my disciples and pay attention to my sayings, these stones will serve you, for there are five trees in paradise for you. They do not change summer or winter, and their leaves do not fail.

Whoever knows them will not taste death. In other words, Jesus says, I have come for judgment. I call for radical discipleship, and for those who heed to this radical discipleship, there will be a better place, an honorable standing in the eschaton for them.

Jesus comes for no tranquility. The most important institutions of Second Temple Judaism or the Jewish culture is now brought under scrutiny here. He says even a father-and-son relationship could be marred when one makes decisions about the kingdom, and the other may not necessarily want to participate in that.

You should know that this radical call for discipleship is not new. In the Quran, the saint community, the all-male sect, will even decide to leave and settle in the desert and be with their friends. Jesus is calling for priority, not complete abolishing of your family ties.

The division he speaks about here is not division that destroys natural kinship. No, the division he talks about here is the division in terms of decisions about the kingdom not being agreed upon. Households, we know from Acts, will be saved.

But what if members of the household do not want to follow Jesus? You see, the named relationships that he brings up here are the closest ties of members in the kinship of the time. Jesus still says that he wants them to prioritize the relationship of the kingdom of God above those relationships. But as I've said earlier on in one of the earlier lectures and expanded further in that particular session, does Jesus suggest that fictive kinship, in other words, the family dynamics in the kingdom of God, should supersede natural kinship, our natural family relationship? No.

But I also need to clarify that there are scholars who disagree with me on that. Some scholars argue that in the teachings of Jesus, fictive kinship has come to abolish natural ties. So, members of the church become one new family.

And that becomes their family, their first and foremost family. Now I tend to argue against that. My position is that we have seen Jesus visiting and being involved with people who needed to attend to their family members.

He did not call them to follow them and leave their family aside. But in radical discipleship like Peter, we know that when Peter left things to come and follow Jesus, he left his wife behind. It does not mean that he ceased to be married.

I don't see a pattern in the ministry of Jesus, even when he speaks about fathers who know the best for their children. I don't see him undermining the natural ties, but I see him appealing to the kinship sensibilities that the people know to make a bigger point. To understand the ties that people have in kinship, natural kinship as brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, parents and children, in-laws, mothers-in-law, and daughters-in-law.

All this relationship, the ties they have, the priority, and the sense of emotion and loyalty that goes into this relationship are what Jesus seems to be getting at. Those senses of commitment should be channeled back to the kingdom and its business. In that sense, priority is what is at stake and not abolished in my view.

Some scholars have said earlier on, have sharply written to disagree with me. I have worked on this subject a little bit, and I can tell you that some are eager to say that Jesus doesn't care a lot about the earthly family because he's consistent in his teachings. I just want you to know that the way I read this is to say, Jesus is saying the decision to make is this.

Choose matters of the kingdom first in your level of commitment, fidelity, and loyalty, not the dissociation of your natural family ties. In other words, I don't hear Jesus saying, if you're a husband and you become a Christ follower, you have every good reason to abandon your family. To shun your responsibilities as a father, as a husband, or if you're a wife, you become a Christ follower, and you have every reason to abandon or shun your family ties.

Maybe because some members of your family are not Christ followers. No, but I see what Jesus is saying here to be this. Prioritize commitment and loyalty, as well as fidelity to God and the kingdom above that.

And if you prioritize that, as he said even earlier on, other things will be added. But the kingdom should not be secondary in one's levels of commitment, as he lays out. Because the one to fear who comes in judgment comes demanding absolute fidelity that requires vigilance and commitment to the team.

You see, the ability to interpret seasons is known by the people. And if these same people who seem to have a good knowledge of how the rain is coming or how the weather is going to change cannot read the coming of the Son of Man, then that is a problem. It is the reason why one needs to understand clearly that Jesus in the kingdom business is not going to tolerate hypocrisy.

He calls hypocrites those who think they can discern the seasons but are not interpreting the signs of the coming of the Son of Man correctly. The coming judge is God. They should be afraid of him.

As Green puts it, if they were able to judge for themselves the nature of Jesus' ministry, not least with respect to the judgment already present on account of his propagation of the divine purpose, they would act to avoid eschatological judgment. The one to fear is coming. The coming judge is coming as the king of the kingdom of God.

As we look at this, which looks very, very harsh in the teachings of Jesus, which sounds very, very demanding, quite stretching, the demand to prioritize a relationship with God above other relationships. But you see, Jesus is interested in every aspect of your life. So, when he calls you into discipleship, he is calling you, knowing that when you commit to discipleship, he will make all the others work.

It's not always going to be rosy, but he will give you the other things that you may need. Because when the God of judgment comes, there will be no excuses to say, oh, it's because I don't have time because of my family. Oh, I don't have time because of X, Y, Z, as we will see in subsequent teachings.

No, he says those excuses will not stand. That is why the call is now. The time to respond is now.

The time for the decision for Jesus is now. May I encourage you as you watch this video and join this discussion that you do not panic if you are not already a follower of Jesus, that perhaps Jesus is demanding so much of you. But understand what he means there.

If we want God's involvement in every part of our lives, God, in turn, demands and requires all of our commitment, fidelity, or loyalty. He comes to judge only those who have failed in their commitment and in their service. And judge them with punitive retaliation.

He comes to reward and honor those who are faithful. May he find you and me faithful, loyal, diligent in our work, in our service, in our commitment to making Christ known in God's world. Thank you very much for listening to this lecture.

And I hope and pray that God will bless you and enrich your walk with Jesus. Thank you.

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