



“In Service of the King”

Introduction:

Today’s text presents us with a question we need to ask ourselves: If Christ were to return today, would we be found faithful?

Today’s Scripture Text Matthew 24:45-51

Sermon Points

Christ’s imminent return should continually change the way we live.

#1. Christ’s imminent return should fuel our faithfulness

- **Read Matthew 24:45-46**

God has given us the charge to steward faithfully, that which he has entrusted to us. Everything we have been given is not just for our own benefit and enjoyment but to be used to love and serve others. Jesus paints the picture of ‘master and servant’ to illustrate the relationship and responsibility we have with and for our possessions, abilities and blessings. We are not the owners or providers of anything that we currently have. Instead, we are given the responsibility to manage all these things, for which we will give an account when he returns. This totally flips on its head, the idea of self-made success and entitlement. Regardless of our station in life, all that we have has been granted to us by God, and has been given to us to steward, not hoard or hide.

We just need to look at the life of Christ to understand what it means to faithfully steward. He could have come in might and power, but he chose to come as a nobody. He poured out his life, giving his time to teach and serve others, instead of being served. He deserved every bit of fame and success, but he took none of it, because he was there to do his Father’s will. He did not grasp anything for himself, but poured out his life for others. When we are tempted to believe the lie that we are deserving of anything we have, or that we do not need to give or sacrifice for others, we look to Christ, and remember that we are called to live in the same way – as servants.

- Q. Why is it difficult for us to believe that everything (absolutely everything) we have has been given to us by God?
- Q. Working hard often (but not always) produces results, which is why many of us have managed to increase/multiply our wealth. Is it true to say that this “fruit” from our labour is also from God? Explain.
- Q. What is the difference between being the owner of all your blessings, wealth abilities and talents, and being a steward?
- Q. What is the difference between being faithful and being successful?
- Q. How do you think we can appropriately measure our faithfulness with what God has entrusted us?
- Q. How does our identity as a servant of Christ change the way we view our wealth, specifically?



#2. Christ's imminent reward the faithful

- Read Matthew 24:46-47, Luke 19:16-17 & Matthew 15:21

In this life we know that in order to get anywhere, we need to perform. We get financially rewarded for hard work, and we admire those who climb the ladder because we all know how hard he/she must have worked to get there. The ladder-climber also feels chuffed, sometimes even superior, because he/she worked hard to get there. However, that's not the experience of most of the world, where poverty is the norm. In those places, everyone has to work hard. Some are enslaved for no wages, some are overworked and ridiculously underpaid. In our own back yards, some people get paid as little as R170 a day for a full day's work. There is no reward, there is no ladder and there is no opportunity, there is no education. Reward is something only for the rich, and at times only for those willing to compromise.

For those who have no ability to work their way up a ladder, or for those who are exhausted by the drill they are stuck in, the gospel is such good news. Regardless of your talent or ability, you are IN. You cannot get any higher. Being IN Christ means you are IN Christ. You can't get deeper in or be pushed out, regardless of your performance. This brings REST!

But we are going to be rewarded for our faithfulness (not for our success) on earth, which is quite amazing. Both the Christian CEO and street sweeper who work in town are going to be assessed according to their faithfulness, and not according to their success. What we judge as unsuccessful on earth will hold no sway before the Great King. He will look at the tools and time given to each of us and he will look at the heart and test its motives.

We are going to be amazed and thrilled when we see, for example, how many domestic workers, gardeners, or till operators, who served faithfully all their lives, are put in senior positions in God's coming kingdom, because they were faithful with what they were given. Being rewarded for faithfulness is going to be a day of such joy for people who loved God and just did the best with what he gave them. This life is so short. We have one shot at using whatever station, position or status we have been given to glorify God. The question remains, will be found faithful or will be found only to be successful?

- Q. How does it make you feel knowing that you will be assessed and rewarded by God based on your motives and your faithfulness, along with everybody else?
- Q. If you are an employer, think about your most diligent employee. How great do you think their reward will be, when they get assessed by God, and how do you think it will compare with your reward for faithfulness?
- Q. Why is it so encouraging for those stuck in poverty to know that they are going to be rewarded according to their faithfulness and not according to the world's measure of success?
- Q. Have you ever been asked by God to choose faithfulness over success? What was the cost to you, and how do you gain comfort knowing that in the end, your faithfulness will be rewarded, despite possible lack here and now?
- Q. Discuss how you think it would look like to be both successful and faithful in our context.



#3. Christ's imminent return will expose the wicked

- Read Matthew 24:48-51, Mark 2:15-17, James 2:14-16, Matthew 24:50-51, Luke 13:22-30, Ephesians 5:1-6

Our hearts are seen fully by God. He knows if we do things to appear holy, to be liked or respected. We do this in church all the time, and it is important to stop and consider where our hearts are at. Appearing religious and being one of God's children are not the same thing. Confessing to our friends that we are "Christian" doesn't make us a Christian. Being a Christian means to be a Christ-follower, walking with him and imitating him, because we have been captured by his love and bought with a price, knowing we are no longer our own.

When Christ returns for his church, he will assess every one of us based on the righteousness of Christ. Believing who Jesus says he is, is not the same as accepting his gift of righteousness, and submitting and surrendering our lives to him as Lord (i.e. master, one in control). We can all do the right things, but only those who are IN Christ, will produce fruit that comes from Christ's righteousness. Any fruit that does not come from this place will be assessed as bad fruit, and will not be considered faithful. It is impossible for a genuine believer to continue in a life of absolute selfishness, without being changed by the Spirit of God. A Christian will produce fruit, because he will be connected to Christ, and living his/her life for Him.

There will be times when we give into sin, and our hearts will become colder, but the Spirit of God will draw us back, and revive our hearts for him. We need one another to help keep focused on Christ, and to remind us of his love for us, so that we do not fall into sin. This is one of the roles community plays. We are to encourage one another to remain faithful to Christ in all that we do, and to enjoy the fruit that comes from it. When last did your community assess some of the fruit that God has brought into your life, and thanked God for it?

If we have grown cold of heart, and begun living according to the worlds standards, the Spirit of God will be drawing us to repent and turn back to a full life of faithfulness. If you can feel that, soften your heart and repent.

- Q. Why do you think it is so easy for us to be religious and not think about our heart motives?
- Q. Why is it sobering to know that God will assess our hearts and not the outward appearance of things?
- Q. In what area of your life has the Spirit of God convicted you, and why is this SUCH a wonderful thing, even though deeply uncomfortable?
- Q. What is one thing that God has taught you through this message that has deeply impacted you, and what response is he calling you to?