



Be Faithful!

Matthew 24:45-51

1. An Exhortation - Be Faithful!
2. Some Examples - Joseph and Gehazi
3. The End Result

Matthew 24 is a wonderful chapter in which Jesus taught about His return. In the first 31 verses of this chapter, Jesus spoke about the signs of His coming. For the next 66 verses (beginning in verse 32 through the end of chapter 25), Jesus will give us some implications of His coming. Please notice that Jesus devotes twice as much time to the application of His coming than to the signs of His coming. It ought to tell you something. When we think about the return of the Lord, it should change the way that we live. Far from being a cold academic exercise, the coming of the Lord will affect the manner in which we live our lives. What is true of the teaching of Jesus is true of all prophetic writings. Prophecy always has this practical element to it!

The one who lives on the east coast, but ignores the coming hurricane has lost his mind. The one who lives in Kansas, but fails to seek shelter during a tornado warning is a fool. So also, the one who ignores the coming of Jesus, by living as if He were never coming back, is in great danger of eternal perdition. When you believe in your heart that Jesus is coming back, your life will be different than if you didn't believe this. We will be challenged this morning to hear Jesus speak about the manner of our lives in light of His return.

Two weeks ago, we began to hear of the lessons that Jesus would have for us to learn. We could easily summarize our first lesson with two words: Be Ready! When the branch of the fig tree becomes tender and puts forth its leaf, you know that summer is near (Matt. 24:32). When you see the signs of the Lord's return, you know that His coming is near. The testimony of the Biblical writers (Paul, Peter, and James) is that His coming is near. So, be ready!

In the days of Noah, the world wasn't ready. They were "eating and drinking; they were marrying and giving in marriage" (Matt. 24:38). The flood came and destroyed them all, except for the eight people who were ready for the flood. The Son of man will come as a thief in the night. His coming will be sudden and unexpected for many, who will leave their windows open and their doors unlocked. But, for those who know that the thief is coming, they will be ready for Him. "The Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will" (Matt. 24:44). So, be ready for His coming! (verse 44).

This morning, we will hear the second lesson: Be faithful!

Matthew 24:45-51

Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that evil slave says in his heart, "My master is not coming for a long time," and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth.

This story is very simple to understand. There is a master and there is a servant. Now, for some reason, this master is planning on leaving his household for a time. Perhaps business draws him away. Perhaps pleasure draws him away. We don't know. But, in his absence, he leaves this servant in charge of his household. This servant is to oversee the affairs of the house while his master is gone. He is to make sure that those in the house are fed at the proper time (verse 45). He is to coordinate the other servants in their duties (verse 49). He is responsible for his master's house.

The servant can respond in one of two ways. Either he can be a faithful and a sensible servant, who does exactly as his master has instructed him to do, by feeding the family (verse 45), directing the other servants (verse 49), and by managing the affairs of his master's house. Or, he can be an evil servant, who doubts the return of his master (verse 48), who neglects the duties that were given to him (verse 49), who abuses his fellow slaves (verse 49), and who lives a life of drunken pleasure (verse 49).

Now, when the master comes back, his response to his servant will depend upon which course of action the servant has chosen. If the servant is faithful and sensible, he will be rewarded for his faithful behavior. He will be put in charge of many possessions (verse 47). If the servant is evil and self-seeking, he will be punished. He will be cut in pieces and assigned a place of shame (verse 51). The simple lesson for us this morning is this: Be the faithful servant. Or, to put it simply, "Be faithful."

We all have a master in heaven. His name is Jesus. Many of us have bowed our knee to the Lord Jesus and have pleaded that He would be merciful to us, unworthy sinners. Many of us have professed to be a servant of the Lord. Our situation is just like that with the servant in the parable.

Like the master in this parable, Jesus has gone away to heaven. His disciples saw Him leave. The Bible tells us that Jesus "was lifted up" in the presence of His disciples, while "a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9).

Like the master in this parable, Jesus is coming back. These disciples, who watched Jesus departing, were told, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). A few weeks ago, we read about His return "on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30).

Like the master in this parable, Jesus has clearly given to us instructions while He is away. They are contained here in the Bible. And as faithful servants, we want to be about pleasing our master, according to His revealed will. (1) The Lord has told us what to believe. We are to believe that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross justified us. We are to believe that His kindness to us has reconciled us to Himself. (2) The Lord has told us how to view ourselves. We are His servants! Anything that we have has come to us as a gift from Him! We merit nothing. All has been given to us. (3) The Lord has told us what to do. We are to "seek His kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). We are to "lay up treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19). We are to cultivate an inner holiness, which will flow outward (Matt. 6:10-15). We are to forgive others when they sin against us (Matt. 6:14-15).

Like the servant in this parable, we are called to be faithful, while our master is away. When you read this parable, you get the sense that the faithful servant simply put his head down and did what his master told him to do. In doing so, he was the perfect employee. When the Bible instructs servants (and by extension, employees) how to live, it is always with a heart of obedience. Listen to Ephesians 6:5-6, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." I remember reading a humorous story that illustrates this verse very well. Two men were in conversation. The one said to the other, "I'm so nearsighted I nearly worked myself to death." A bit confused, the other asked, "What's being nearsighted got to do with working yourself to death?" He said, "I couldn't tell whether the boss was watching me or not, so I had to work all the time" (Col. 3:23). This is the faithful servant: the one who works all the time, regardless of who is looking at him. He doesn't look to see if his master is watching him. He doesn't only work when it will be noticed by his boss. He simply does what has been commanded of him.

Here is the question of the day: Are you a faithful servant to your master? I'm not talking about your employment situation. I'm talking about your service rendered to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Is your life one of such integrity that Jesus could return at any moment and find you doing His will? This is what it means to be faithful.

I read a poem this week that captured the issue exactly. It is entitled, "If Jesus Came," (by Reginald Patton). If Jesus Came, ...

Would you have to change your clothes before you let Him in?
Or hide some magazines, and put some Bibles where they'd been?
Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out?
Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?

Would the truth be known, many of us would rush about, if Jesus came. But the faithful one has nothing to hide! He says, "Lord, come on in! I've been waiting for you. It's been a while, but I've been working on making my house a place where you would like to dwell." The faithful child has no fear when mom or dad comes in the room, because mom or dad will find him doing his homework when they come! The faithful employee isn't worried about whether the boss will come and examine his work, because he knows that it will be found true. The faithful servant isn't concerned with the timing of his master's return, because he knows that he is doing his master's business. The faithful Christian has no fear regarding the return of the Lord. When he comes again, it will be a welcome time of rejoicing, not hiding! But, there are those who flee at the sound of a rustling leaf (Lev. 26:36). There are those who shudder when the door opens upon them. There are those who will fear when the Lord returns, because they have not been about doing His will. They have been unfaithful.

I am here to declare to you this morning that Jesus, the Lord, is coming back. Your welfare on that day will be determined by your faithfulness here on earth, today. If Jesus finds you doing His will when He returns, you will be blessed in great measure. If Jesus finds you ignoring His will when He returns, you will face incredible punishment. I guarantee you, that you want to be the one who is about doing the Lord's business when He returns.

In our flock Bible studies, we have recently surveyed the words of Jesus in Matthew 7. What a good time it has been for our souls, as we have examined the Lord Jesus turning people away from His kingdom, because they did not do "the will of the Father who is in heaven." They did a lot of things that looked good! But in the end, they missed it! This morning, I trust that a similar examination would take place in your heart as well. When He returns, will He find you to be faithful or unfaithful?

2. Some Examples - Joseph and Gehazi

I want to show you a faithful servant and an unfaithful servant. First, let's examine the faithful servant, Joseph. We will pick up his story in Genesis 39, just after his brothers had just sold him into slavery to a travelling band of Ishmaelites, who brought him down to Egypt.

Genesis 39:1-3

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. And the LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.

Here was Joseph, having every reason in the world to complain at his circumstances. He was Jacob's favorite son! He was living in relative ease! And now, he finds himself as a servant. But, he labored hard. The Lord blessed him. And it was obvious to all, that the LORD was with him.

Genesis 39:4-6a

So Joseph found favor in his sight, and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. And it came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate.

Joseph was faithful in slavery. Notice how his faithfulness was because the LORD was with him. Verse 2 says, "The LORD was with Joseph." Verse 3 repeats the same thing, "The LORD was with him." Verse 5 is very similar, "The LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph." This is how it works with the Lord. As we are faithful to the task given to us, He is faithful to prosper His servants. This is exactly like the situation of our parable this morning. The faithful servant is the one who is put in charge of everything of his master's house. The story continues in the last half of verse 6, ...

Genesis 39:6b-12

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And it came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?" And it came about as she spoke to Joseph day after day, that he did not listen to her to lie beside her, or be with her. Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. And she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.

In Potiphar's house, Joseph met with a desperate housewife, who tried to drag him down. The initial temptation comes in verse 7, "Potiphar's wife said, 'Lie with me.'" But "he refused" (verse 8). In verse 10 we learn that the temptation came "day after day." And yet, he refused to lie with her. In verse 12, the climax of the temptation comes when nobody is around. Potiphar's wife grabs his garment and pleaded, "lie with me." And, he still refused.

We could spend much time in these verses, looking at how Joseph dealt with temptation. (1) He considered it a serious thing. (2) He saw that such sin is against the LORD. (3) He took drastic measures to avoid it: spinning out of his tunic which was wrapped about him and running away in his underwear! But, the point I want to show you is that Joseph was a faithful man. **Joseph was faithful in temptation.** And what took place after this? Did the LORD bless him? Let's read on.

Genesis 39:13-20

When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and had fled outside, she called to the men of her household, and said to them, "See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. And it came about when he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and fled, and went outside." So she left his garment beside her until his master came home. Then she spoke to him with these words, "The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me; and it happened as I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and fled outside." Now it came about when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me," that his anger burned. So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.

Joseph was wrongfully accused. He was sent to jail! In Joseph's day, this was certainly a lenient penalty. The Egyptians thought nothing of hanging unfaithful servants (40:22 - the chief baker). And yet, Joseph found himself in prison. In such difficulties, the LORD doesn't forsake those who love him. Our story continues in verse 21, ...

Genesis 39:21-24

But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. And the chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.

I want for you to see that **Joseph was faithful in prison.** Today, he would have received a shorter sentence for good behavior. In Joseph's day, we see "all the prisoners ... [being] committed to Joseph's charge" (verse 22). This is almost the same language that Jesus used in His parable in Matthew 24. Please notice again that Joseph's faithfulness wasn't derived from his own strength. We read that Joseph prospered ... because "the LORD was with Joseph" (verse 21). We also read that "the LORD was with Joseph" (verse 22). "Whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper" (verse 22).

Joseph is such a great example for us of those who are ready for the return of Christ: being faithful in whatever his circumstance. Joseph was faithful in slavery. Joseph was faithful in temptation. Joseph was faithful in prison, because the Lord was with him. I believe that Joseph so lived as we ought to live as we await the return of Christ. Joseph wasn't laboring in his work so that Potiphar would see his labor. Joseph

wasn't being a model prisoner so that the chief jailer would see his labor and reward him. He was faithful and the Lord blessed him. Joseph is an example of a faithful servant.

The Bible also contains stories for us of unfaithful servants. One that comes to my mind is Gehazi. He was Elisha's servant. His story is told in 2 Kings 5. This chapter contains the story of the healing of Naaman, the king of Aram, who was healed of his leprosy by Elisha. After he was healed, he offered to give Elisha some type of payment for his miracle, but Elisha refused. He said in verse 16, "As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will take nothing." Though Naaman urged him to take something (verse 16). But Elisha continually refused (verse 16, 19). The conversation that Elisha had with Naaman was similar to the friends who argue over who will pick up the bill for dinner. We will pick up the story in verse 20, ...

2 Kings 5:20

But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, thought, "Behold, my master has spared this Naaman the Aramean, by not receiving from his hands what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him."

At this point, Gehazi is not being a faithful servant. He is being ruled by his own passions and desires. He is being driven by his own greed to get what he wants. He said, "I will ... take something from him" (verse 20).

2 Kings 5:21-22

So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw one running after him, he came down from the chariot to meet him and said, "Is all well?" And he said, "All is well. My master has sent me, saying, 'Behold, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothes.'"

Here, he lied! Elisha didn't send Gehazi back to Naaman for help as he claimed (verse 22). I doubt whether these "two young men" even existed. He was seeking for his own. As we read on, we see that Gehazi takes this money and clothes and put it in his house.

2 Kings 5:23-24

And Naaman said, "Be pleased to take two talents." And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags with two changes of clothes, and gave them to two of his servants; and they carried them before him. When he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and deposited them in the house, and he sent the men away, and they departed.

And then, we find him lying again. This time, he lies to Elisha.

2 Kings 5:25-27

But he went in and stood before his master. And Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant went nowhere." Then he said to him, "Did not my heart go with you, when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Is it a time to receive money and to receive clothes and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and male and female servants? Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to you and to your descendants forever." So he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

Whereas the Lord was with Joseph and blessed Joseph, we see a curse coming upon Gehazi. From that day forward, Gehazi became a leper and an outcast, along with all of his family. Here was an unfaithful servant, who was in it for himself. He was faithful in the presence of his master. But away from him, he is filled with greed and lying. His absence from his master allowed his true colors to show.

Are you a Joseph? Or, are you a Gehazi? Is the Lord with you? Or, has the Lord cursed you? Do you behave in such a way as you are not ashamed for the whole world to see? Are your actions done in secret, seeking to hide from your master? Your type of service will reap its reward. For those who are faithful, they will receive a reward at the coming of Christ. For those who are unfaithful, they will be punished severely at the coming of Christ. Our parable in Matthew 24 demonstrates the end that will accompany faithfulness and unfaithfulness.

3. The End Result

The end result of the faithful will be a reward. If the Lord finds you to be a faithful servant at his return, you will be given much. In verse 47, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions" (verse 47).

Those who are faithful until the end will ...

- ... be saved (Matt. 24:13).
- ... obtain as the outcome of their faith, the salvation of their souls (1 Pet. 1:9).
- ... be revealed as a son of God (Rom. 8:19).
- ... be given an imperishable body (1 Cor. 15:53).
- ... receive the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8).
- ... eat of the tree of life (Rev. 2:7).
- ... receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).
- ... be clothed in white garments (Rev. 3:5).
- ... sit with Jesus on His throne (Rev. 3:21).
- ... dwell in the new Jerusalem with God forever (Rev. 21:3).

... drink from the water of life (Rev. 21:6; 22:17).
... never mourn, cry, suffer or die (Rev. 21:4).
... have fulness of joy (Ps. 16:11).
... enjoy pleasures forevermore (Ps. 16:11).
... enjoy a glory that far surpasses any sufferings of this present time (Rom. 8:18).

The reward at the end ought to spur you on to be a faithful servant. If you would but believe that the reward is within your grasp, you would labor and toil to serve your absent master.

We have some friends in California, who we have an opportunity to visit each summer. Their son, Jason, recently was the Sacramento area spelling bee. They sent out a very nicely done DVD that showed what he accomplished. In December, Jason won a spelling bee of about twelve children. In January, he took a written examination, which dwindled the 250 local spelling bee winners down to the final 60, who would compete in the city-wide competition. This video showed him standing up and spelling word after word after word correctly. Here are some of the words that he spelled correctly:

1. scalpel
2. centurion
3. kenning
4. cyanosis
5. ostmen
6. clematis
7. pentateuchal
8. skirret
9. picayune
10. decreolization

Having spelled those ten words correctly, it was down to the final two contestants. They battled back and forth for nearly 45 minutes, until Jason finally spelled the word, "niveau" correctly. He was declared the Sacramento area spelling bee champion and will be travelling to Washington D. C. in a few weeks for the national competition.

Now, my children watched this video with us this week and came away thrilled at the prospect of doing the same thing that Jason did. That night, several of our children told us, "Mom and Dad, I would really like to enter a spelling bee and do what Jason did." Our children saw the reward of being a good speller and wanted desperately to do what Jason did. However, Yvonne and I have our doubts as to whether or not they are willing to put in the hour each day of spelling practice in order to get there! To get the reward, you need to be willing to make the sacrifice. In Proverbs 13:4, we read, "The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the soul of the diligent is made fat." What is true in general is true of the Christian life as well.

In the parable before us this morning, the labor is simply faithfulness. For us, being faithful to Jesus means (among other things) the following, ...

- ... believing in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16),
- ... trusting in the righteousness of Jesus as your sufficient substitute! (2 Cor. 5:21).
- ... turning from your sin to follow Christ (Mark 1:15).
- ... loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength (Matt. 22:37).
- ... loving your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:39).
- ... confessing your sin to the Lord and to each other (1 John 1:9).
- ... denying yourself and taking up your cross and following Him (Matt. 16:24).
- ... giving up all your possessions to be used of the Lord (Luke 14:33).

As followers of Christ, Jesus demands much from us. At one point, He used the imagery of a yoke to symbolize what it means to follow Him. He said, "Take My yoke upon you" (Matt. 11:29). It's the yoke of submission and service. He said, "Place upon yourselves the harness of a beast of burden, who pulls a plow or a wagon, and begin to pull." The yoke of Jesus has many requirements and calls us to hard work. But also, the yoke of Jesus is an easy yoke and His load is a light load (Matt. 11:30). We aren't saved by pulling Jesus' plow. We aren't saved by pulling Jesus on a wagon. We are saved by free and abundant grace. We place His yoke willingly upon our shoulders, because of our delight to submit to Him. Surprisingly, we find it easy. 1 John 5:3 says, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."

The Lord is coming back! Of this you can be sure. He will reward the "faithful and sensible" servant. Are you a faithful servant? If so, your reward will be great! The Biblical principle is this, faithful in little, faithful in much (Luke 12:48); Unfaithful in little, unfaithful in much. This life is little. In the next life, there will be much.

For the wicked, the end result will be much different. They can only expect judgment.

In our parable, we find the evil slave neglecting his assigned duties. First of all, in verse 48, we see him denying his master's return. He says, "in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time.'" Such thoughts come from an evil heart. We are all so easily prone to such thought, which is dangerous.

William Barclay shares a fable at this point in his commentary, which is most instructive. He tells "of three apprentice devils who were coming to this earth to finish their apprenticeship. They were talking to Satan, the chief of the devils, about their plan to tempt and ruin men. The first said, 'I will tell them there is no God.' Satan said, 'That will not delude many, for they know that there is a God.' The second said, 'I will tell men there is no hell.' Satan answered, 'You will deceive no one that way; men know even now that there is a hell for sin.' The third said, 'I will tell men there is no hurry.' 'Go,' said Satan, 'and you will ruin them by the thousand.'" [1](#)

To live without the reality of the return of the Lord in your mind is a very dangerous thing to do. For, when you expect the Lord to delay in His coming and to presume upon tomorrow, you may find yourself easily distracted from your work at hand. I believe that the faithful and sensible slave was helped on in his labor, because he knew that his master was coming back. His work would be rewarded. But, when you deny your master's return, you lose your accountability. You lose your sense of urgency. And you seek to please only yourself. This is exactly what the evil slave did in his actions.

Verse 49 says that he "began to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards." Rather than using his authority to enforce the will of his master, he used it for his own means. Rather than subjecting himself to the will of his master, he sought his own will. He abused his freedom and was living only for himself. (1) He beat his fellow slaves, forcing them to labor beyond what was reasonable. (2) He ate and drank with drunkards, becoming one himself. The slave was expecting a long delay. The slave expected many days of easy living. At some point, the reality of his master's return would probably become a reality in his mind. At this point, he would begin to reform his ways.

I know what this is about. My in-laws live in California. As a family, we try to go out and visit them each summer. On several occasions, I have sent my family ahead a week early, so that the grandchildren might have an extra week to be with grandma and grandpa. During those occasions, I have lived as a bachelor. Knowing that Yvonne wouldn't see the home for some time, I let a few things slide, like dishes and clothes and newspapers. At times, I haven't made the bed or sorted the mail. But when I have expected her to actually come home and see the house, I have put myself to work so that she would be happy upon her return.

Now, suppose she had made a surprise return home. I would have had a bit of really fast cleaning to do. I wouldn't have been ready for her. It's to my shame that I'm not faithful in these things. I want to change. In a few weeks I have an opportunity to demonstrate my heart in these matters, my wife and daughter are soon going on a trip. I'm going to be home with our other three children for a few days. But for a few days, they will be with their cousins, and so I will be all alone. In recent days, we have had discussions about the cleanliness of our house in Yvonne's absence. I think to myself, "I know exactly when she is coming back home! The house doesn't need to be cleaned up until then." But, the principle of faithfulness will give me reason to be ready to expect Yvonne to come home early.

This is exactly what Jesus said took place with this servant. Verse 50 tells us that the master returned home a bit sooner than expected. Without warning, the slave had to give account for his work. It was a dreadful day for this slave when the master returned. The proverb says, "Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the lazy one to those who send him" (Prov. 10:26). As the master found his slave not doing what he had assigned him to do, it was as if the slave took a big puff of smoke and blew it into his face, so that it irritated his eyes. The master, with irritated eyes and an irritated heart, poured out his great anger upon this servant of his.

We read of his judgment in verse 51, "[the master] ... (1) shall cut him in pieces and (2) assign him a place with the hypocrites; (3) Weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth." With these words, Jesus slides out of the parable and into the language of ultimate judgement. Let's look at these phrases in reverse order.

First, let's look at the phrase, "weeping ... and the gnashing of teeth." Six times in the book of Matthew, Jesus has described those who will be sent to where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:13; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). Every time, Jesus is describing the torments of hell. Here it is no different. The unfaithful, evil servant, who thought that the coming of his master was still a long way off, will spend an eternity in torment. The lesson for us is that we ought to be faithful now! For, we don't know the hour of his return (verse 36).

Second, this slave will find himself in "A place with the hypocrites." This is the place where those who have professed allegiance to God with their lips, but have denied Him with their lives, will be found. It's where the Pharisees will be. It's where the Sadducees will be. It's where the Sunday church-goer, who has no heart for God will be. It's very appropriate here in this parable.

Notice that this man was a servant of his master. He admitted this in verse 48, "My master is not coming for a long time." Though he denied the return of his master, he still claimed that he was his master's servant. How appropriate for this one to be with the hypocrites. Though he gave allegiance to his master, he failed to do the will of his master (see Matt. 7:21).

Thirdly, Jesus said that His master "shall cut him in pieces" (verse 51). Literally, the Greek text reads, "[he] ... shall cut him in two." He will slice him like a piece of pizza, right down the middle. This is not soft language. This is serious stuff.

In recent days, I have noticed a mouse in our garage. So, we have purchased a few mousetraps. A strong spring is laid open. A piece of cheese is placed as bait. When the mouse nibbles at the cheese, you know what's going to happen. That big spring will slap over on top of that mouse, breaking his back and almost cutting the little varmint in half. This is the language used here! He will be cut in two! The punishment that awaits the wicked is terrible.

As I close my message this morning, I want for you also to notice that Jesus portrays this master to be without mercy at this point. It's a very appropriate comparison. When Jesus returns, the time of mercy is over. He's coming to reward the faithful and to punish the evil. In that day, there will be no time to clean the house. There will be no time to set things in order. The Lord will return and will find the manner of your service to him as either faithful or evil!

The obvious question for all of us here this morning is this: Which type of servant are you? Are you the faithful servant? Or, are you the evil servant? When Jesus returns, there will be no setting things in order to prepare for His coming. You will be exposed for exactly what you are!

May the LORD find us faithful! May the LORD find us believing in Christ as our only hope! May the LORD be with us strengthening us to be faithful to His word!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 15, 2005 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] William Barclay, The Gospel of Matthew, p. 317.