

Watching - waiting - Working for the Lord

Part 1

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[00:00:00] This afternoon a section of scripture in Luke's Gospel chapter 12. I would like to cover the section from Luke 12 verse 13 through to verse 48. Perhaps we could read it in sections. So first of all from verse 13 to verse 21. And one of the company said unto him, Master speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, take heed and beware of covetousness. For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance [00:01:04] of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do. I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required [00:02:15] of thee. Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. Thus far, the Word of God. There used to be a Christian periodical, and its title was Watching and Waiting. And today, I'd like to speak about [00:03:13] watching and waiting for the Lord Jesus. Actually, no. I'd like to speak about watching and waiting and working for the Lord Jesus. We have the watching and waiting in verses 31 to 39 of Luke's Gospel 12, and we have the waiting in verses 41 through to 48 of Luke's Gospel chapter 12. And I trust that we will come to those verses in due course, but we have just read Luke 12 from verses 13 to 21, just to get the setting and to cover some of the preliminaries. And at first sight, [00:04:06] verse 14 might seem peculiar to us. This person approaches the Lord Jesus and he says to him, Teacher, speak to my brother to divide the inheritance with me. And the Lord Jesus gives the reply, Who established me as a judge or a divider over you? Jesus is the Messiah. He'd come to his own people. He'd been presented to the nation. Makes me think of Solomon and the two mothers, one of whom had lost a child, one who was a true mother, one who made claims to the child, [00:05:05] to the baby who was not the true mother. They applied to Solomon, king, for his wisdom to settle the dispute. As he said, divide the child. And the true mother said, no, no, don't harm the baby. Well, it's the most natural thing, is it not? In Emmanuel's land and with the Messiah present in the midst of his people that he would settle matters of an earthly inheritance because we know from Ezekiel during the kingdom, the land will be divided amongst the tribes. We have the details of that there. But he says, no. He says, man, who made me a judge or a divider? The first thing we see here is [00:06:06] that Christ is rejected. Christ is refused. We've reached that point in Luke's Gospel where he is not

received by his own people. And this distinction is very marked in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 12. And there they attribute the wonderful powers in casting out a demon. And they say it's only by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons, that he has done this. And the Lord Jesus characterizes that as a sin or blasphemy against the Holy Spirit that will not be forgiven unto men. And he pronounces the wills then on that adulterous generation. And at the beginning of chapter 13, [00:07:10] we see the dividing point. Jesus went out from the house, Matthew 13, verse 1, and sat by the seaside. The house, Judea, the seaside, the nations, the Gentiles. And in the previous verses at the end of chapter 12, he only owns a spiritual link. He says, who's my mother and who are my brethren? He stretches forth his hand and says, those who do the will of my father, which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother. Similar thing here in Luke chapter 12. He's only going to own the spiritual link now. Earthly purposes in God's wisdom and in God's ways are making way for the heavenly purposes. And of course, the time was not yet when the Lord could [00:08:07] speak openly and clearly about these things. He said unto them, I've many things to say unto you now, but you cannot bear them. They weren't able to take them in. This new spiritual heavenly truth, this change of ways, change of dealings, change of dispensations in God's ways, which we know comes out more fully in the book of Acts. The formation of the assembly by the sending down of the Holy Spirit and the teaching that Paul gives us in his epistles. All this was future when the Lord was speaking, but there's a little indication of it here that he's moving on to heavenly purposes when he says that he wouldn't divide the inheritance. In the verses we've read, he speaks first of all to a person and he speaks to individuals. And our Lord Jesus Christ still [00:09:03] speaks to individuals today. And we're very thankful, are we not, that he's spoken to us in a deep and a meaningful and real and spiritual way. The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live. That's what would distinguish us, I take it, as believers from men and women in general. He speaks to an individual, but he also says unto them in verse 15, he said to them. He's speaking to people in general. And how thankful we are that God in his mercy and Christ in his grace is still speaking in this world. Paul could say, we beseech you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God. Christ's voice was heard in the preaching [00:10:02] of the apostles. And of the gospel preachers quoting the psalm, is it not it says their sound has gone out unto all the earth. Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. So we believe in the general call. We believe that the word of God should not just be for individuals. And when we come to verse 22, he says to his disciples, not just for individuals and not just for believers or disciples, but to those who may hear and those who will hear, he says unto them. And he widens out the truth. And it may well be when he says in verse 15, beware of covetousness, that there was an element of covetousness in the heart of the man who came [00:11:05] to him and asked to divide the inheritance. Be that as it may. Is it not true of all our hearts that we and men and women in general need to beware of covetousness. And so in verse 15 he says, take heed and beware of this covetousness. Why? It's not because a man is in abundance that his life is in his possessions. You might have a nice house, an earthquake could come and demolish it. Or wind could come, a hurricane could come and blow it away. You might have your money in the [00:12:03] bank and the bank might crash. Such things have certainly happened in the past. But the lesson, I want to bring out of this, is that our lives, anybody's lives, do not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses. We've not to be occupied only with material things. Not to be occupied with how much we have in the bank or how much we have in our barns. This man, going to pull down his barns, he would build greater. He had it all planned out with his fruits and goods for many years. He thought he could retire. He thought he'd have ease, laid up, repose for many years. That was the human aspect of things. God says to him, thou fool. If we're [00:13:17] living for this world, if we're living for pounds, shillings and pence, some will remember what that means. If we're only after what the scripture says elsewhere is filthy lucre, or our barns, or our houses, or our motor cars, or our fashionable dress, the latest electronic gadget or whatever it may be. We can give

thanks for the relative comfort that we have in this land. Go to a place like India and you've got the believers and families and maybe just two [00:14:05] rooms to live in. So God gives us abundantly all things to enjoy and we are thankful to him for his mercies. But this man, he made the mistake. He was only taking up with things down here in this earth, the here and now. And very often, the plans of mice and men, you know, he had one, he'd one idea and one prospect. But a soul is required, sickness, death. We do not have a lease on life. And this very important lesson is learned. And in verse 21, it's capable even of application to us as believers in measure. It says, so is he, so is the one who lays up treasure for [00:15:11] himself, evidently on earth and is not rich toward God. Is it treasure for ourselves? Or are we rich toward God? It's in striking contrast to Luke 16, verse 9, where the Lord again says, make and I'll read it in the new translation, which may well bring out the sense somewhat better. Make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails, you may be received into the everlasting tabernacles. That gives a hint in that verse that we can even use our material benefits.

[00:16:12] We can use mammon or money described here as the mammon of unrighteousness. We can use it for spiritual ends. We can use it to help others. We can use it to extend the kingdom of God. It's going to fail anyway. It says, when it shall have failed, you may be received into the everlasting tabernacles. There's a sense there that even what we have in a material way may be used for spiritual gain. And then the exhortation is given in verse 10, he that is faithful in the least is faithful [00:17:08] also in much. And he that is unrighteous in the least is unrighteous also in the much. The least there being the earthly things, being material possessions, and the much being the spiritual possessions. And actually, verse 12 here says, if you've been faithful in that which is another's, our material wealth, whatever we have, it's not actually ours. It's another's. It's Christ's. It's to be used for Christ. He's our Lord and Savior. He's Lord, he should have control. He's not Lord of all. He's not Lord at all. And it says, we have to be faithful in that which is another's, in our material possessions, which are Christ's. It says then, who shall give to you your own, [00:18:06] and our own possessions, that which is really and truly ours, is actually our spiritual portion. That's what is truly the believers. That is something which will not be taken from us. That's something that's going to go through. That's something that is eternal, and the benefits that we have along the road, they're actually under the control and authority of the Lord Jesus. So, what we have in Luke 16, in their use of material things, is in contrast to this man here, who was laying up treasure for himself, and who did not bring God into his reckoning. So, now we might read the next section to continue, verse 22 through to verse 30. He said unto his disciples, [00:19:04] therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feedeth them. How much more are ye better than the fowls? Which of you with taking thought can add to a statue one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow, they toil not, they spin not, and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not a red like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you? O ye of little faith, [00:20:10] and seek not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after, and your father knoweth that you have need of these things, but seek ye first, rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms, provide yourselves bags, which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that filleth not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there [00:21:08] will your heart be also. Thus far, the Word of God, 2 verse 34. And I wonder, did you bring a bag with you this afternoon, some of you? I wonder, have you brought

any bags with you? It's a great question now if we go into some of the supermarkets. Some of them, they won't even give you a bag at all. Some of them, they'll just give you a paper bag now, they'll not issue plastic bags any longer because of the environment. Certainly in the Republic of Ireland, if you want to purchase something there, and you buy a bag, you have to pay for it. I think there's some government tax on it. So this is the history of bags. But the sort of bags I'm asking you about [00:22:05] this afternoon is spiritual bags. It says here that we have to provide ourselves bags which don't grow old. Perhaps a more literal translation would be make to yourself purses which do not grow old. I had to get a new purse because somehow or other the coins I had in it had worn a hole on it and the coins were starting to fall out. But here's a purse which doesn't grow old and here's a treasure which does not fail in the heavens. Because it says where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. It doesn't say where your heart is, there will your treasure be. [00:23:04] It's very often quoted that way but it says no, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. If we realized the treasure that we have in Christ and in the heavens, if we have a proper understanding and appreciation of it this afternoon, our hearts would automatically go there. And here we're reminded once again, life is more than food and more than clothing and we should not in the first instance be concerned about these things because the answer is God will take care of you. He feeds the ravens which were common in Palestine. They don't sow nor root. They don't have a storehouse nor a barn. They don't store it up. Yet God feedeth them. He says [00:24:07] to us, you're better than the birds. God takes care of the birds. Surely he can take care of his sins. This is the assurance we have from the Lord Jesus. And he said we can't add to our height. Some of us would, perhaps some of us might have liked to at one time, add to our physical height or growth. Some of us might like to reduce in other ways, might like to reduce our girth. But certainly in the natural process of growing, we can't determine that. We can't add to it. That's the natural process. And God says that's the least thing, you know, if you can't do that which is [00:25:04] least, why are you giving thought to the rest? And then the lesson is drawn from nature, from the lilies. And their beauty was more than that in which, their glory was more than that in which Solomon was around. He says God, you know, look at the create, look at the beauty of the creation, even in the very grass. And it's only here momentarily, maybe someone can help me with the meaning of that word momentarily. In America, they do things momentarily and they get on aeroplanes momentarily and so on. The grass is just here today, here today and gone tomorrow. It's burnt up. If God cares for nature, says he can care for you. Isn't it true? So we've not to be unduly anxious about our meals, what we eat or drink or what we should put on because all the [00:26:06] nations seek after these things. And verse 30 brings in wonderful encouragement. Your father knows that you have need of these things. Isn't it wonderful to know that the great God in heaven, dear one today, he's your father. He's my father. The spiritual relationship comes into view in resurrection. The Lord Jesus says I ascend to your father, excuse me, I ascend to my father. He's preeminent in all things. He must have the preeminence. I ascend to my father and your father and to my God and your God. The spiritual link is there brought in. But even in regard to the material [00:27:03] things, we have a father in heaven. I can say my father, I can say to you as a Christian believer, your father, he knows what things you have need of. We have to be aware of covetousness. That was the first thing we learnt. But then on the other side, we have to be aware of overall anxiety. Because God will take care of you. He knows those things that you need. And he tells us to get our priorities right in verse 32. Seek the kingdom of God. In Matthew's gospel, I almost quoted it wrongly because we're so familiar with it. In Matthew it says seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. All these things shall be added unto you. So we have to give God's things first [00:28:03] place in our life. But here it's just, it's not a comparison here. It's just a statement in itself. Seek the kingdom of God. And in regard to our physical and material needs, we'll be taking care of. All these things shall be added unto you. And then there's wonderful encouragement in verse 32. Fear not, little flock. Again this tells us that the Lord is rejected. It's telling us he's refusing. His followers in this world are going to be a

little flock. At this particular time, he says fear not, little flock. To me, I'll be glad to hear what anyone has to say, but to me it supposes his rejection. We've already looked at that. He's bringing in heavenly purposes. He's [00:29:04] not concerned with earthly inheritances. Here again, he's rejected. When we come down to the verses, we start watching and waiting and working for him in view of his return. We find he's in absent Christ. He was rejected here. He was accepted there. He's no longer on earth, but he's in heaven. So he is a rejected Christ. And he is an absent Christ. And his followers are a little flock. And we may just be a little flock here this afternoon. And not all the chairs may be out. And not all the places may be filled. Do you think God doesn't take notice of us? Do you think God doesn't weigh up the faithfulness? It's in view that we travel across London to be present with [00:30:04] the saints. And under the sound of the word of God or from further afield, just a little flock. Let's not get discouraged because we're few in number. Because we're already told it's going to be the case here. Even the Lord Jesus said, where two or three are gathered unto my name, there am I in the middle. He knew it would come down to that in certain instances and in certain localities. And he provided for it. The two just comes down to a husband and wife or the three. Maybe more in number we can be thankful. For every evidence of God's working here in this world and where believers are more numerous. But he's provided for the lowest plurality for just two or three. [00:31:04] And he's promised his presence to be with such who are gathered to his name. And here, speaking of those surrounding him, he says to the disciples, you're a little flock. But we may be fewer than earth. Christianity may be unpopular in reproach. We may speak of post-Christian Britain, post-Christian society. We may be diminished down here. We may be stricken. We may be feeble. We may be fewer. Fear not, little flock. It's your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. What a view that gives us. What expansion. What glory. He comes out of heaven, the rider.

[00:32:11] In Revelation 19, there are those who follow him who are called and faithful and through the armies that are in heaven. What a wonderful sight. That is the rider on the white horse, called faithful and true in righteousness. He judges and makes law. But there are those, the armies which are in heaven, followed him. He comes. All the saints with him. What a glorious day that will be. Of course, he'll come to take us to be with himself. It's necessary. The rapture is necessary in order for [00:33:05] the appearing. Because when he appears, according to Colossians, then shall we appear with him in glory. We may be in the sufferings of the plague, but the glories of the mount, the glories will follow. Sufferings of Christ and the glory which will follow. We're a little flock. Christ is absent. He's refused. The cause is in reproach. Let's not get discouraged by looking at present things. Let's seek the things that are above. Let's seek the kingdom of God. Let's have Christ in view. Let's look where our treasure really is, where our possessions really are. Let's fill our purses or our bags of spiritual treasures. Let's encourage one another. Because we're going on to [00:34:06] endless day. We're going on to the glories of the kingdom. Not that we deserve it. Not because of any merit in ourselves, but because it's our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. It's in the purpose of God. Surely if anybody could give it, he can give it. He's the power to give it. Let God be true. Every man a liar, God says. The Lord Jesus says that he's going to give us the kingdom. Let's keep our treasure. Let's keep heaven. Let's keep the kingdom in view, even though there may be discouragements on the earthly side of things. It's our Father's good pleasure to give us kingdom. And [00:35:04] then where our treasure is, our hearts going to be there also. So now let's move on to verses 35 to 30 to 40. Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord when he will return from the wedding. When he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. Verily I say unto you that he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to food, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch or come in the third watch and find them so, blessed are those servants. This know that if the good men of the [00:36:01] house had known what

hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not have suffered the his house to be broken through. Be you therefore also ready for the Son of Man comes as an army when you think not. It's the coming of the Lord that's in view. And in Luke's gospel, it's viewed as a moral truth. And the parable that he speaks is giving an analogy. And the bottom line, the point that he's emphasizing is that we should be watching for the Lord to come. He desires that we should be watching. And he desires that we should be waiting. And the significance of Peter asks the question in verse 41, Lord speakest thou this parable unto us or even to all? And the Lord in [00:37:01] his answer in verse 42, he says, who then? That clearly indicates that the moral of the story, that the application is to each one of us. Dear brothers and sisters, this is a truth for us. It's a truth for our hearts. And what the Lord says here is something which should characterize the believer. And not only so, he says that there's a blessing in doing it. There's a blessing in doing it. Blessed are those servants, verse 37. And then in verse 38, he speaks about the second watch or the third watch. And if he comes then and finds those servants watching, blessed are those servants. There may be a little indication in that verse where it speaks of the second watch or the third watch. Looking back, not from the perspective from which he was speaking, but now for us, second watch, third watch. May suggest a lengthened period of time before the Lord may [00:38:06] return. And the first millennium has gone and the second millennium, we're in the third millennium of the Christian era, the third watch. There's no fourth watch. And we know he may come at any moment. And in view of his coming, it says we should have our loins girded about. Peter tells us that we're to gird up the loins of our mind. And we're to have our loins, as it says elsewhere, girded about with truth. So our thinking processes, our attitude of mind should be governed by the truth of the word of God. But our loins girded was the servant's attitude as well. Suggest movement. Children of Israel, when they were about to move out of Israel the night of the Passover, [00:39:01] they had their loins girded. They were ready to go. Practically speaking, we should be ready to go, ready to meet the Lord at any time. The servant, when the Lord got down to wash the disciples feet, he girded himself. That's service. Readiness, watchfulness. And are lights burning? Testimony. In view of the Lord's coming, are we seeking to witness to others? With the lamp of testimony, are we seeking to have our lamps burning? And we, like unto men, that wit for their Lord. It's the picture of an Eastern marriage where the wedding takes place and the groom will return with his bride and those in the home are waiting. It's a joyful occasion. In their joy, they're waiting, in expectancy. So as soon as they hear the knock, they say, it's him. And they open unto him [00:40:05] immediately. Well, as I say, it's a moral truth and that should characterize our hearts. We need to be watching and like unto men that wit for their Lord. We've got the two things here, waiting and watching. And the Lord says, dear one, today, if that's your attitude, if that's your attitude, you'll be blessed. There'll be a character of blessing and it's a blessing of a high character because it says that the Lord will come forth and make us to sit down, recline at table, and he will serve them. We know that his servant shall serve him. But what grace that when the Lord comes for us, that he'll be there taking account of, even in the language [00:41:10] of the scripture here, serving those who have watched and waited for him. We'll be blessed by his company and we'll be blessed by his care for us when he comes. If we watch for him down here, in the here and now, we have to watch and wait. And then we'll read on from verse 41. And Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us or even to all? And he makes it general. The Lord said, who then is the faithful and wise servant whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over [00:42:04] all that he hath. And we'll stop our reading there with verse 44. We have in verse 45, that servant, unfaithful Christendom, false profession, I take it down to verse 48. And you can look at that in your own time. But here the Lord says, there's blessing in activity, in service. And if we serve the Lord during his absence, surely we will have the blessing. And the blessing here is in giving the household their portion of meat in due season. How important it is,

the food supply, the measure of corn in season. And that's why the brothers have arranged this opportunity for us to be together, that we might be fed, that we might be built up spiritually. We might profit from the Word of God, [00:43:07] this exercise to sustain the Catford Lecture. How important the ministry of the Word of God is, food for the people of God, the measure of corn in season. It says that also, the portion of meat in due season. That which is appropriate for the occasion. We don't give an infant nursing at his mother's breast. We don't give strong meat. We don't give it sirloin steak. That would cause problems. So, we need to realistically find out where our brothers, our sisters are, spiritually. Be it on a one-to-one basis, or be it collectively. Paul in his ministry, he said publicly and from [00:44:06] house to house. That was his pastoral heart. That was his method of proceeding. And he got down alongside the people. And he gave them convenient food. The menu was suitable. And we can think of it in connection with spoken ministry, conferences, and the local Bible readings, and the open ministry. And brothers, no doubt, are here, who are exercised from time to time, to bring something of a spiritual nature before their hearers. It can be in the gospel. It can be in written ministry, daily readings, printed books. Let's be exercised, despite our feebleness, to get the truth of God out.

[00:45:06] To have food for the people of God. To have the measure of corn in season. To look round about the households, and to have the care of souls. So, there's blessing in that also. And our time has gone. But may we be blessed in looking for Christ to come. Readiness of heart, watching and waiting for him, so we can open to him. And go into him, to those eternal habitations. And may we also be blessed, and seek to feed the people of God. And to ensure that they get that, which will build them up spiritually. Building yourselves up, Jude says, in your most holy faith. Now, in closing, we might be saying, that in which begins, we seek the things that are above 492.