



Kirkcaldy and East Calder Parish Church of Scotland

Minister: Rev Dr André J Groenewald

8 Manse Court, East Calder, Livingston, EH53 0HF

Tel: 01506 884585, Mob: 075 888 458 14, email: groenstes@yahoo.com

www.knec4jesus.org.uk



Date: 8th August 2010

Sermon: Rev Dr André Groenewald

Reading: Luke 12:32-40

Background of the reading

What is the background to our reading?

Well verses 32-34 provide an introduction to the rest of our reading this morning. Jesus wanted to emphasize that his followers must be ready to await his coming.

The Greek word βαλλάντια “purse” occurs only 4 times in the New Testament all in the gospel of Luke. Matthew and Mark did not speak of a purse since they were referring to the practice of only carrying small amounts of money by tying coins in the girdle. Luke assumes the possession of a special purse and is thus thinking in terms of a greater amount. It is possible; however, that Luke mentions the purse because it was part of the equipment of the well-to-do townsman. If the disciples were not to carry it, this would imply renunciation of the financial security of civic society as elsewhere indicated in Luke. The point is that the disciples are not to rely on greater or smaller sums of money which travellers usually carry to meet their needs.

Jesus says as an introduction: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” meaning that whatever is most important to you has all your attention and care. He said this because most of his Jewish contemporaries longed and prayed for the time of future redemption, being more preoccupied with daily needs than with extraordinary preparation for the future judgment. There were of course the exceptions like the group of people who lived at Qumran who particularly focused on the future judgment. Jesus is saying that those who are prepared for the future and its judgment travel lightly.

Like military watchmen or guards who stay prepared when others sleep, Jesus' followers must be dressed and ready for action, always. Keeping lamps lit would literally mean having a ready supply of oil and staying awake so they could draw on this supply which was a figure of speech or preparedness. And then to illustrate this Jesus tells us two parables.

Jesus says it is like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. Well-to-do householders often had a special slave or slaves in charge of keeping the door; these slave-porters would keep unwanted persons out but admit members of the household. If Jewish banquets resembled Greek and Roman banquets, the feasting itself could last well into the night. Whether or not he had remained for the full seven days of the feast, it would be unusual for a well-to-do householder to return from a distant banquet (as opposed to one in the same city) in the night. Robbers made night travel more dangerous, though the danger was reduced by a large entourage.

Jesus says then he will reward the servants who stayed awake for his return home. He will then do quite a shocking thing. He will dress himself as a servant and start serving them! In Jesus' day something like this was unheard of. But it serves as a powerful symbol to Jesus being the perfect Servant for humanity. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. Here Jesus follows a Jewish division of night into three watches namely 6–10pm, 10–2am, 2–6am. The Romans followed a practice of dividing the night into four watches namely 6–9pm, 9–12pm, 12–3am, and 3–6am.

It is also like a house owner who would be ready if he knew when a thief was coming to steal his belongings. The Greek word διορυχθῆναι that is translated with “broken into” is actually a bit out of context since the word literally means “dug through”. Houses were usually built of mud or clay and one could easily dig through them to gain access to the house.

The background tells us in context how important it is for us to be ready because no one knows when Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead!

Reflection and meaning of the reading

The text verses for the sermon are 33b: "Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys." ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

In Biblical times they considered the heart as the centre not only of spiritual activity, but of all the operations of human life. The heart is the "home of the personal life," and hence a man is designated, according to his heart, wise, upright and righteous, pious and good. The heart is also the seat of the conscience. It is naturally wicked and hence it contaminates the whole life and character. Hence the heart must be changed, regenerated before a man can willingly obey God. The process of salvation begins in the heart by the believing reception of the testimony of God, while the rejection of that testimony hardens the heart

So your actions would be controlled by your "heart"! If your heart was fixed on God, your actions would be the witnesses.

What is the state of our hearts this morning?

Do we focus only on this life and struggle each day just to get through it? Or do we spend enough time to render our hearts to God? Do we live our lives fully devoted to God or do we forget that we must be ready when He comes again to judge the living and the dead?

I think the emphasis that Jesus wanted to lay was the fact that his second coming will be unexpected. No-one knows the time and his followers must be prepared!

I read an incredible story on the internet that depicts this.

"While touring Europe a tourist visited a lovely estate in Italy. He admired the beautiful garden and encountering the gardener he said, "You've done a beautiful job. How long have you worked here?" 25 years, came the answer. "How often has the owner been to this estate?" – 4 times – "when was he here last?" – 12 years ago. "You keep the garden so lovely one would assume you were expecting the owner tomorrow." – "Today, sir, today!"

I think this is exactly what our attitudes must be. We must treasure our faith in God. We must spend time with him. We must use everything we have in our power to make this world a better place for all without any hidden agendas. We must use our talents, our riches, our abilities, our

gifts to help others. We must live in the sure and certain knowledge that everything belongs to God and that this world is only a temporarily dwelling place. We must be able to stand firm against all the choices that want to lure us away from God. We must resist each and every opportunity that does not glorify God's Holy name. We must be ready to travel lightly like people who are rescued from a storm.

We must treasure the love of God in such a way that we inspire others. The love that God had for us in Jesus Christ must help us to look beyond discrimination. We must be like aliens in this world – different in our actions of love to all people. We must carry the love of God everywhere we go. As we go about life and normally put on our watches in the morning and put our wallets in our pockets, we must likewise do with our faith, hope and love. We must be living witnesses of God's love for us.

We must treasure the hope of God's kingdom. We must keep this hope alive by reading the Bible, by regularly talking to him and appearing in his company.

We must be able to discern what is important and what is not as important. Treasure is not always what we think it is. The treasures of God are all around us in unexpected places. In being prepared, let us be prepared to recognise them, to take our eyes away from all that glitters and is gold, and find the stuff of God in the dust of the world.

May we all be prepared to meet our Lord and Saviour whenever the time comes with gladness, cheerfulness and joy! May we be like the gardener in Italy who said not tomorrow but today!

Amen