

TELL ME THE STORIES OF JESUS

Purpose

August 7, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – The Year of the Lord’s Favor (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point:

As the world awakens from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “the year of the Lord’s favor” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new possibilities with God this Lenten season and always.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Luke 12:35-40 NRSV

³⁵“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; ³⁶be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. ³⁷Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. ³⁹“But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

Commentary:

In these verses we have the basics of two parables: (1) servants awaiting the bridegroom and (2) the householder. The first assures blessing on the faithful; the second warns of judgment on the unprepared. To be ‘dressed for action’ literally means to draw up the long outer garment and tuck it into the sash around one’s waist or hips so as to be prepared for vigorous activity. As an exhortation to readiness it appears prominently in the

instructions for the celebration of the first Passover (Exod 12:11). The lamps in the tabernacle were to be lit with pure oil so that they would burn steadily. (The theme of readiness for a returning master is also seen in Mark 13:33-37).

The situation assumed in verse 36 is that the master of the house has gone to his bride's home to be married. His servants await his return so that they may open the door for him when he knocks, but they do not know when he will come.

Verse 37 is a beatitude announcing a blessing on those who are watchful. In the parable setting, the danger is that the servants may fall asleep. In Luke the disciples occasionally sleep when they should be awake, watching and praying (Luke 9:32; 22:45-46). Watchfulness is marked by prayer, while sleep indicates neglect and unpreparedness.

The promise of the master's generosity toward his servants takes the form of a dramatic reversal of roles. Instead of serving the master, the servants will find that he serves them. The master's invitation to the servants to sit at table is an allusion to the great eschatological banquet.

The second parable (verse 39) warns of the alternative. For some the master's coming will be like the approach of a thief in the night. Jesus warns his audience to be ready. From instructions in earlier contexts, the reader may assume that readiness means trust in God as a heavenly Father, putting away all hypocrisy, handling one's material possessions faithfully, obeying the ethic of the kingdom, and making life a matter of constant prayer.

- Adapted from The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol IX, pp. 262-63

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. How ready are you for the future? Do your preparations merely include how to handle your material possessions (important as that may be) or are you also preparing by prayer and trust in God?
2. As you look at the prepared servants and the unprepared householder, do your thoughts about preparation change?
3. As you consider the future, what might you do differently to be prepared?
4. Is your life a matter of constant prayer?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Luke 12:40 NRSV
⁴⁰You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."