



Matthew 24:45–51

45 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ 49 and he then begins

to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. 50 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. 51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Reflection

Acts chapter 1. The moment is Jesus' ascension. Jesus has risen from the dead. He's appeared to his disciples for forty days, and for one final time while he's eating with them they ask him about the kingdom of God,

“Lord, are you at this time going to

restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Jesus says to them,

“It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The very next verses are these,

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when sudden-

ly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

The angels are speaking about Jesus’ Second Coming. Jesus has been having a similar discussion with his disciples over the last couple of days in Matthew 24. He has compared the nature of his Second Coming to the flood in Noah’s day, to a thief striking unexpectedly at night, and in today’s passage, to a master returning unexpectedly to his household which he had left in charge of his servants. As usual Jesus’ imagery is vivid, memorable and

powerfully clear.

Tom Wright offers us a contemporary example to help us understand Jesus' illustration in today's passage. Instead of a master and a servant in charge of his household, think instead of a managing director, coming back from a meeting out of town and seeing a familiar but unexpected sight. One of his company's vans is turning out of a street in a part of town that the company doesn't do business in. What is going on? So the managing director takes down the license plate and later in the day calls the driver. He confesses. He's been moonlighting – working for another company at the same time, while he was supposed to be making deliveries for the company which owns the vans. He's been, in a sense, a hypocrite, a play-actor,

pretending to be one thing while in fact being another. That was his last day working for the company. And fair enough right?

Jesus makes the same point about his return in today's passage, let's read it again,

45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' 49 and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to

eat and drink with drunkards. 50 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. 51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In Psalm 24 we read that,

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

And in Genesis 1:26–28 we read that God has given the earth over into our care. The earth and everything in it, with a particular focus on people. At Jesus' ascension he left his followers with the Great Commis-

sion which focuses us on the spread of the gospel in our world. On leaving earth Jesus entrusted us to continue his ministry. He entrusted us with the care of our planet and in particular with the salvation of its people. 'Who then is the faithful and wise servant?' he asks. It's the one whom he finds doing these things on his return. The one who stays about his master's business until his master returns and rewards him richly.

However Jesus also points to another, like that moonlighting van driver. The one who takes advantage of his master's delay and leaves off his master's business. 'He's a hypocrite,' says Jesus. Instead of working for his master he begins to work for himself. He becomes careless, even cruel and indulges in an excessive life-

style of eating, drinking and living life in the moment, much like those right before the flood came in Noah's day. For him, Jesus will return like the flood, and place him with the other hypocrites, cutting him down to size and subjecting him to eternal judgment. As always, Jesus' illustration is vivid, memorable, powerful and clear.

Think & Pray

And it's a thought provoking question, isn't it?

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant?”

Spending some time considering it now. Are you waiting expectantly for Jesus' return? Are you faithfully going about your

master's business in his absence? Are you caring for his world and especially for his people, as he would if he were still walking amongst us? And on his return, will he be able to look you in the eyes and say,

... 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' Matthew 25:23

What needs to change? What more can be done? What is there to celebrate in your life and ministry that is faithfully and wisely precisely aligned with how Jesus would see you living your life? What good thing can you do for our world today? What good thing can you do for God's people today?

What good thing can you do for the advancement of the gospel today? Ponder these things this morning. And then pray for the wisdom and courage that you'll need to keep faithfully caring for God's world and God's people until the return of God's Son.