

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship
February 7, 2021
“A Servant’s Heart”

Sunday school at 8:30, Service at 9:15, Service at 10:45 with King’s Kids.

NEWS

Wednesday Night Activities at 6:30 PM

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

Visit the website ~ www.myaletheia.com

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As an overview, be ready to keep running the race through unexpected obstacles and be ready to cross the finish line sooner than expected.

Who sets the course?

Whom does it serve?

Will you obey Him? If the answer is, “It depends on what He asks,” you have just demonstrated your _____ in Him.

The Holy Spirit is a gentleman. What does that mean?

MATTHEW 24:43&44 ~

Grammatically, contextually, this is the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation and Jesus has plainly said that it will happen when Christians “Do not think it will.”

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Jesus didn't use allegory.
"Alert," is γρηγορέω (gřā-gō-řě-ō).

MATTHEW 24:45-51 ~

Being ready because we cannot possibly know when. Therefore, we cannot know what our future holds in the short run, but what does that matter if...

That slave has a choice to either diligently do what the master asked, or to reason that there is room for a little me time.

Note that the evil thing was to be self-serving at the expense of others. It is a lack of love for the other slaves (John 13:35).

The reward concept has to do with the position of trust. It means relational unity - mutual trust - between the master and the slave.

MATTHEW 25:1-13 ~

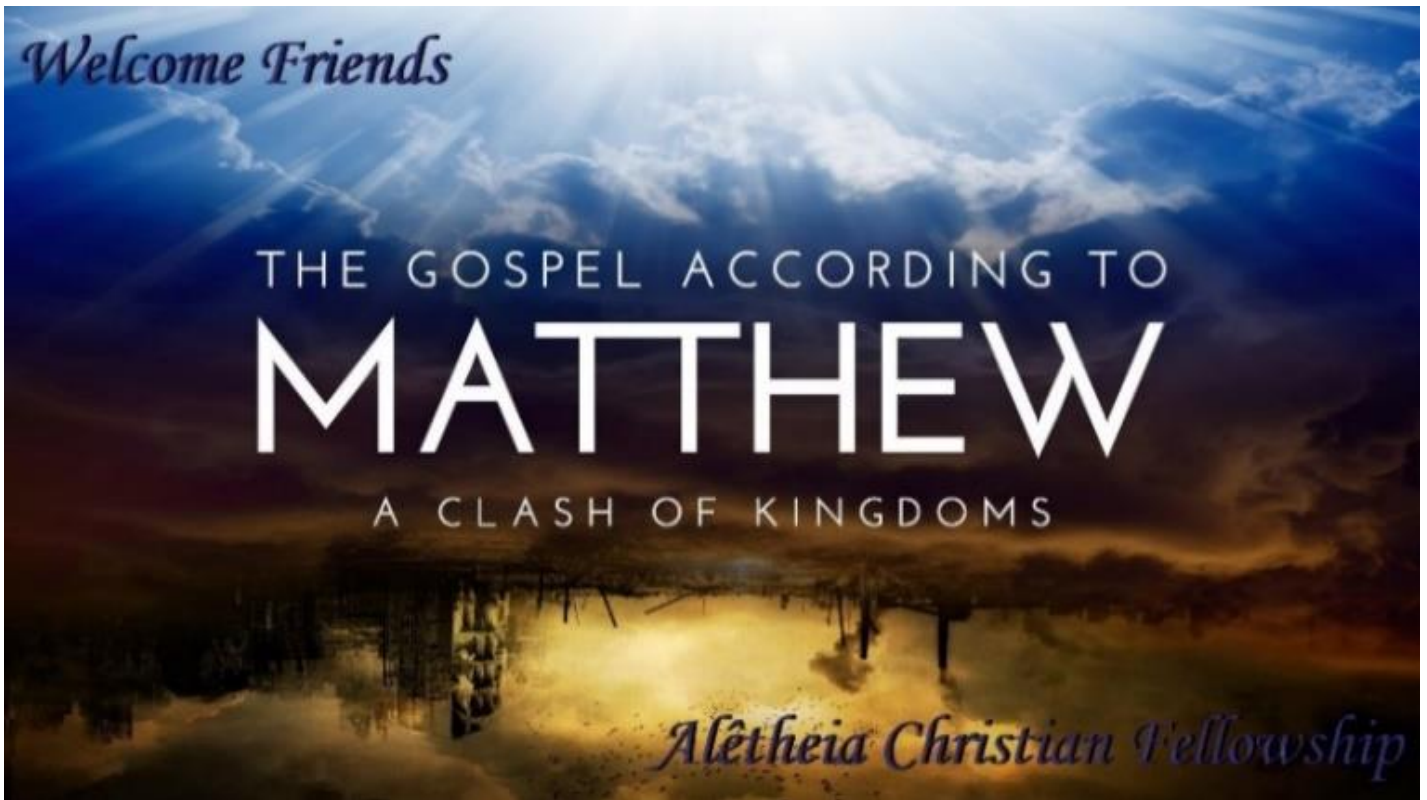
The final verse sums it all up. Notice, all were invited, all assumed that they would go in... Some were ready, some were not (Matthew 7:23).

Will you be ready?

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon/Elder

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____



Just to refocus and recenter us... Jesus gave His thesis statement in verse 36 - that's His main point going forward. It's the Truth He wants His people to be so aware of, so in-tune with, that He went on using plain language, commands, examples, questions and parables to drive it home, for the next 61 verses.

For 61 more verses Jesus never let up. Why does He want His people to know the simple Truth of His statement in verse 36 so well? Because of the implication, which is to say the application... Be ready.



Be ready to keep running the race through an unexpected obstacle and be ready to cross the finish line sooner than expected.



In the Marine Corps we went on group runs. Usually, we would start and end at our barracks. Oftentimes, after 3 or 4 miles we would realize that we were headed back to the barn. In running I would get barn sour fast and when I'd see our destination, our finish line, I would get excited, eager to be done. Our leaders would take us right past the barracks and we'd go for another mile or so and back around. Surely this must be the end! Nope. On we'd run right past the finish line again. I cannot begin to tell you how much harder it is to run the course set out by others when you expect the run to be easy.

You must get your mind right. If you're convinced by the signs you see that the run is almost over, but

instead, it continues... Throughout the Bible God tells us to put Him first, trust Him, and be ready to run the course that He has set out before us wherever it goes, for as long as it goes.

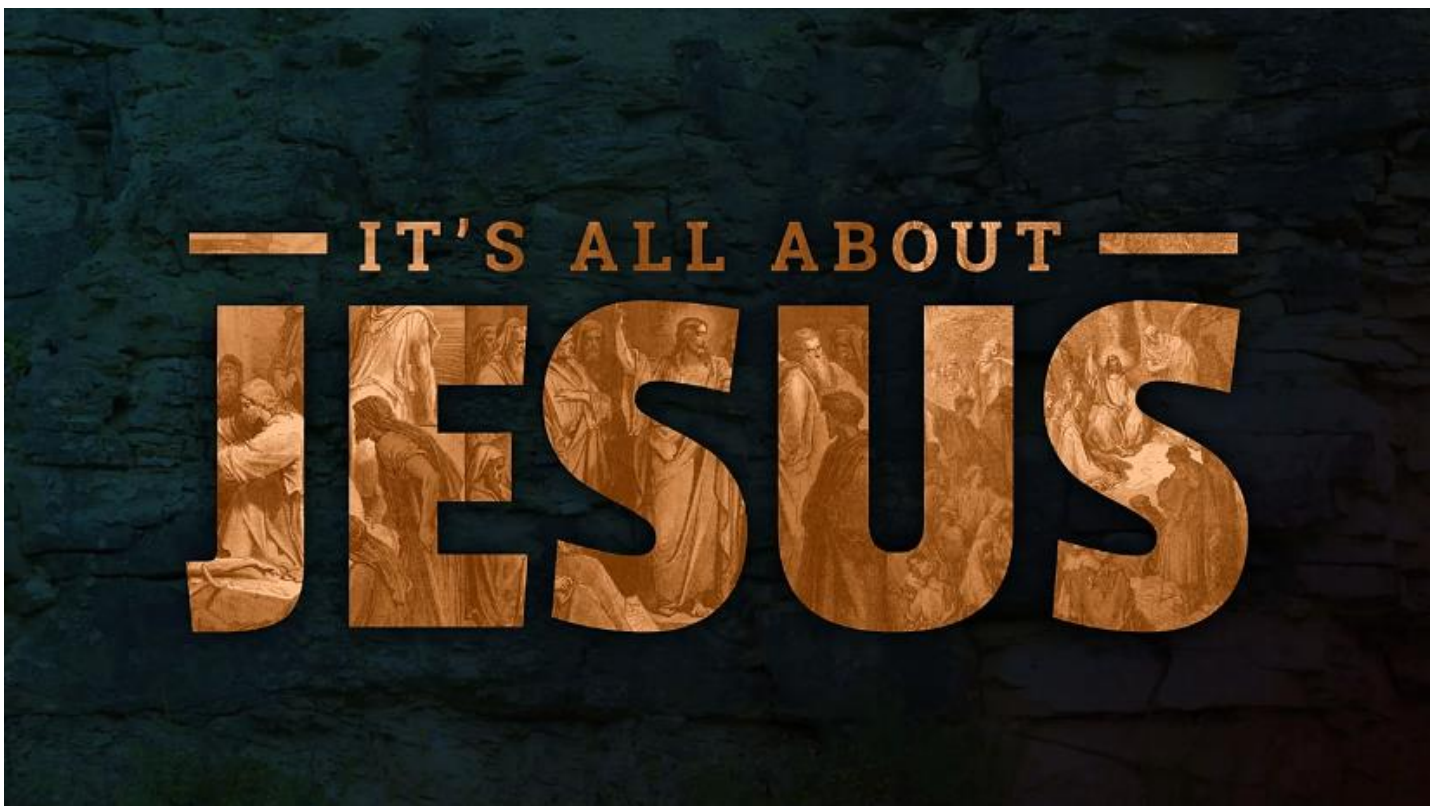
Please note, contrary to modern sensibilities... It is not a course that He has set out for our purposes. Your run is not about you. If you are His, then you run for Him, and that run, my dear friends, is for His purposes.



It isn't a plan for your life where you will be your best you, where you will attain your most happiness, where you will be your most successful self... At least, not in the way the world measures those things. What the Lord has for you is what's in His best interest, what

serves His perfect purposes, which for those wise enough to see it, is also in their best interest. His course for you is definitely not a Prosperity Gospel, be the best you, self-help sort of thing.

It really isn't about you having a better life, job, marriage, whatever. It really isn't about you raising your kids with all the privilege, excess and selfishness you can. It can't be about all of that because it simply isn't about you. Don't worry, it isn't about me either. It is entirely about serving the interests of our Lord.



Will you do what your Lord asks you to do? If the answer is, "It depends on what He asks," you have just

demonstrated your lack of trust in Him. It is a fundamental lack of faith that He will do what is best. What is big picture best - eternal perfection best. A stipulation to your obedience reveals your unbelief that truly “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). The good... is our personal good only so far as we have aligned our purposes to His purposes. The good is His good therefore, only to the degree that we are in Him is it good to us.

God wants our unquestioning obedience and why? Because instant obedience to whatever God has is the proof that you fully trust Him. Fully trusting Him is the proof that you know Him and knowing Him is the proof that you are in Him.

Let's put it into human terms for a moment. Would you all please stand up. Okay, now please sit down again. Ostensibly, I'm the leader here. Most of you trust me, are loyal to me, and obey my direction as was just demonstrated. None of you have signed a blank check in that regard. All of you would distrust, be disloyal, and would disobey me if I went too far. Each one of you has a threshold for how far that is. For some, all I would

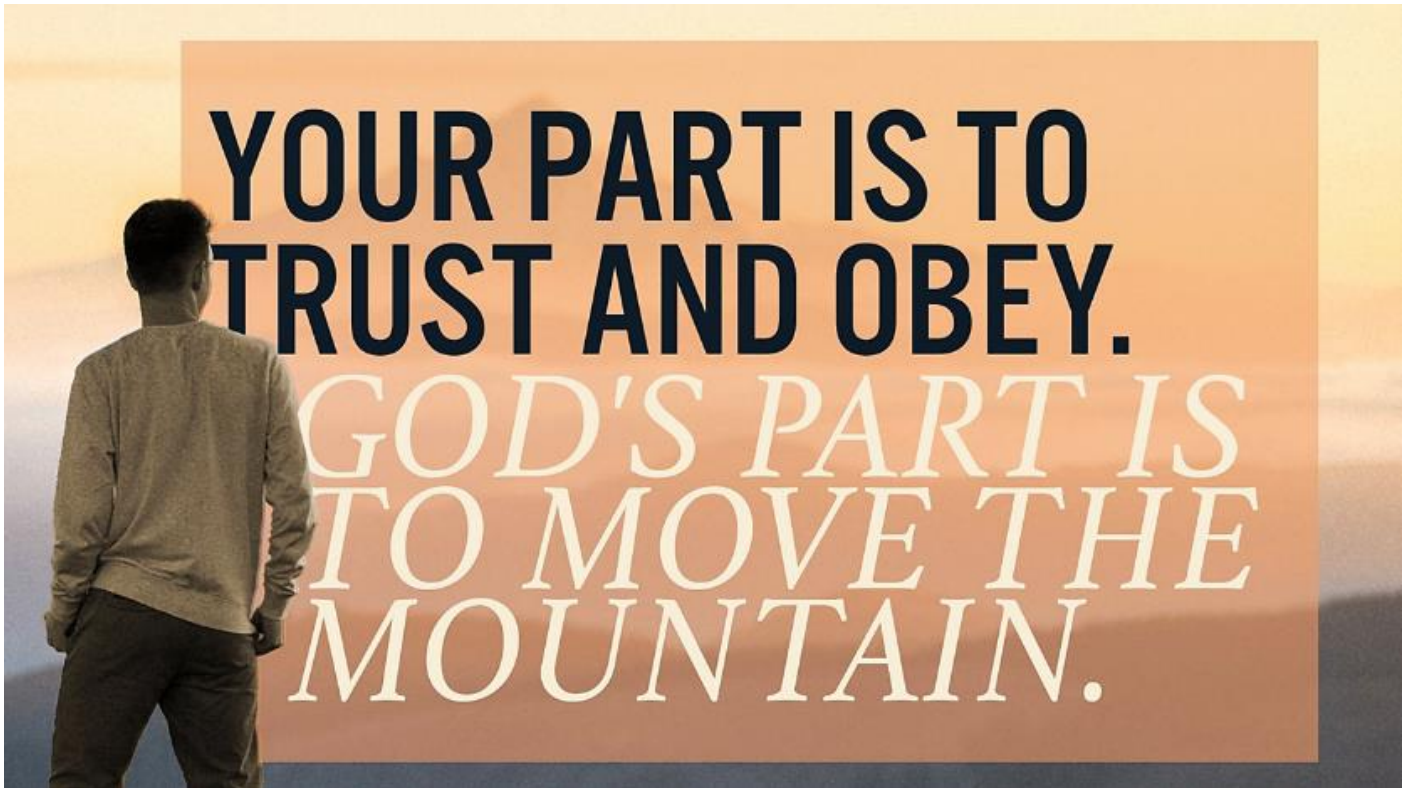
have to do is demand that you wear a mask in this building. For others, I could get fairly outlandish before you'd throw in the towel.

Everyone in this room has given me conditional obedience, which means that none of you are actually obedient to me - you're obedient to yourself. See, you retain control of what you will and will not do and if you call it obedience to me, it's just an illusion.

Now, I'm thrilled that none of you has given me your full allegiance, undying loyalty, and unquestioning obedience, because I'm just a fallible human being. It is good that none of you blindly follow me - that's what they do in a cult. The question I have for you, is God fallible? Can God make a mistake? Is He evil? Is He incapable, unfaithful, unwilling, incompetent?

We are used to trusting people too much and getting burned. We then take that experience into our Christian walk. We want to retain control of our life. We hate to be out of control, we hate to put our entire future in someone else's hands, we hate to be led where we don't want to go. We are full of fear... Aren't we?

VIDEO CLIP - "Trust, Fall"



God is so gracious it is impossible to describe. It has been said that the Holy Spirit is a gentleman. God will never force you obey Him. Never coerce you into trusting Him, never manipulate you into loving Him.

He lets you decide how much you trust and obey. The only correct answer is fully because anything less is you still in charge.

How can you trust Him to that degree? Only by getting to know Him. That is also the way you get ready. It's about an intimate personal relationship where you take scary little steps of faith trusting Him and then seeing His faithfulness and goodness. It is doing that over and

over until you put yourself completely in His hands...
Can you do that... Can you be ready?



I said verse 36 is the thesis statement - the point. I said verses 37-39 function merely as an example to demonstrate that single point. I said verses 40&41 were alluding to the application of the point. Again, the point: No one knows when. The application: Be ready.

Once it suddenly comes it will be too late. Some will be condemned, others rewarded, and none will be in any other category... No Purgatory in the Bible. So, I know we all get it... The point is the timing is unknown and unknowable (unless you want to disagree with Jesus).

The application is, always be ready (unless you want to be taken away to judgment). Is that really the flow? Am I explaining this correctly? Let's listen and see...

Matthew 24:36-42 NIV 36“No one knows about that day or hour. Not even the angels in heaven know. The Son does not know. Only the Father knows.

37“Remember how it was in the days of Noah. It will be the same when the Son of Man comes. 38“In the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking. They were getting married. They were giving their daughters to be married. They did all those things right up to the day Noah entered the ark. 39They knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man comes. 40“Two men will be in the field. One will be taken and the other left. 41Two women will be grinding with a hand mill. One will be taken and the other left. 42“So keep watch. You do not know on what day your Lord will come.” Again, see how easy the Bible flows when we simply take it as it is and don't try shoehorning our manmade ideas into it?



Matthew 24:43&44, 43“But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44“For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

Again, we start with a linking word. What had Jesus just said? Be alert, be ready and so this example is merely driving home that point.



Why must people insist on overcomplicating God's Holy Word? Everything that Jesus wanted us to get out of this example is plainly stated in His summary. "Be ready because you don't know when."

Once again, I'm compelled to state the obvious. The thing that Jesus is repeatedly saying is completely unknown and unknowable, is His Glorious Second Coming in power AFTER the Great Tribulation. It has nothing to do with a Rapture prior to the end of the age. It is not the pretribulation, or mid-tribulation Rapture - it can't be. I know that's obvious, but it bears repeating.

Jesus was talking to His Disciples. He definitely has not returned with His angels, ended the Great Tribulation, and called all His own to Him in the sky. That hasn't happened yet and is still future even for us, so that means that Jesus was talking to His Disciples throughout time... Not just to the guys on the Mount of Olives that day. No one over the last 2,000 years has known when, but all were to be ready. That same command... Yes, command, stands today.

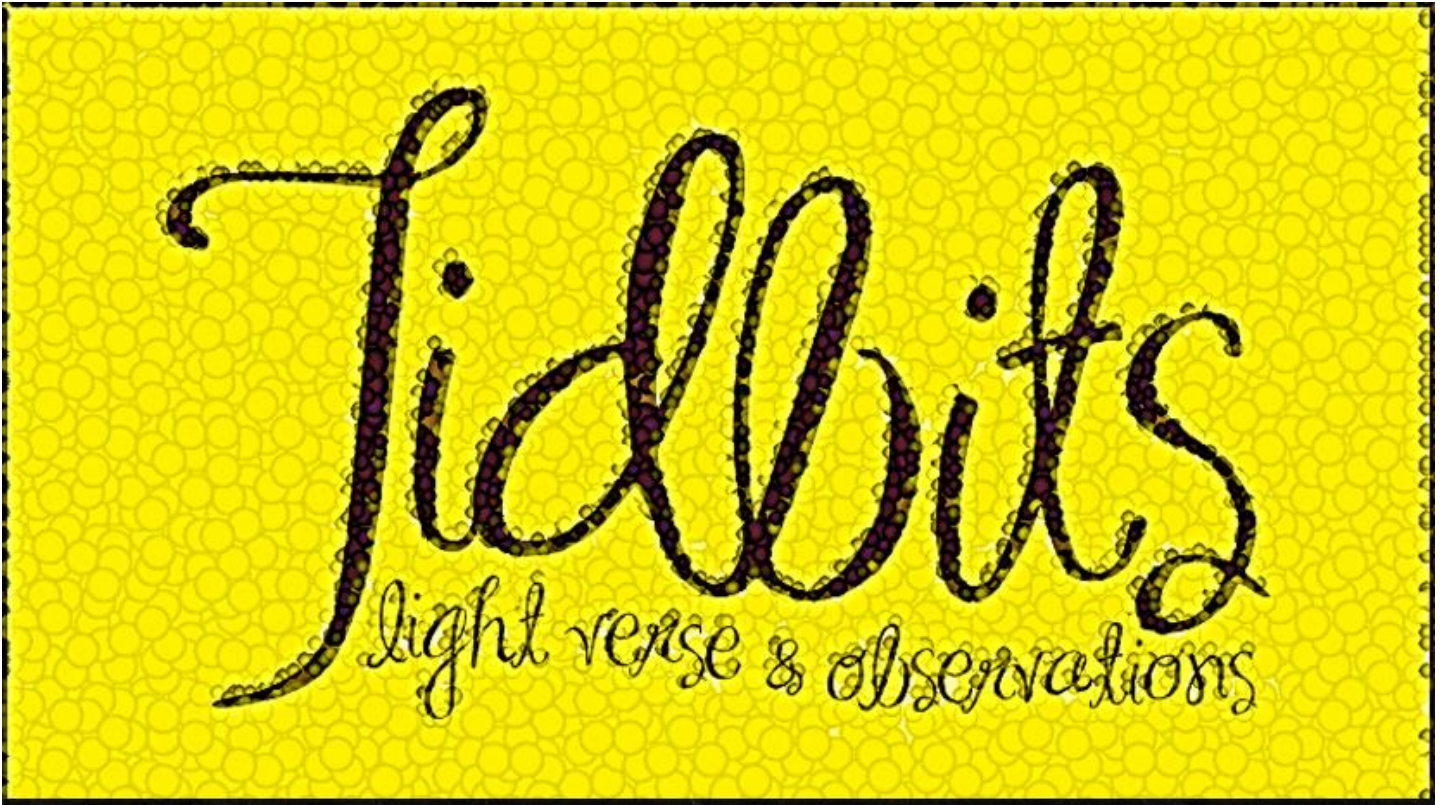
Please think about how a pretribulation Rapture and a Tribulation of 7 literal years, along with the known events that occur during it, can be possible when Jesus plainly said that His people wouldn't know when the Tribulation was over, and He would call them to meet Him in the sky. It's a conundrum.

Jesus speaking to Christians - to us - said, "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."

Again, grammatically, contextually, this is the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation and Jesus has again plainly, as well as metaphorically, told us that it will happen when we Christians "Do not think it will."



I honestly don't know how God could be clearer than that... And yet, people are constantly trying to figure it out, constantly proclaiming this date, declaring this thing is the Mark of the Beast, asserting this person is the Antichrist... It wears me out. I'm sure it wears God out as well.



Before we move on let me point out a couple of tidbits in this passage. Notice that Jesus equates Himself with the thief in the story... Or does He?

This is proof that Jesus did not intend for us to take His examples and parables as allegories. An example, or a parable, are designed to drive home a single point of comparison, whereas an allegory makes many points of comparison by finding a hidden meaning behind several elements in the story. Technically, the modern definition of a parable is a subcategory of allegory that only makes one main point. The difference between a parable and a fable is fables use animals as with the Tortoise and the Hare.



Probably the best-known allegory in America is the “Wonderful Wizard of Oz.” The Book, especially the 1901 stage play, and the 1939 movie represent the political, economic, and social events of America in the 1890s. Dorothy represents the innocent and decent people of the Midwest, the Scarecrow represents the American farmer, the Tin Man represents industrial workers, especially of the steel industry. The Lion was William Jennings Bryan.

The tornado was the chaotic changes taking place at the turn of the 20th century. The Wizard was the Manifest Destiny of the nation, the Wicked Witch of the

West was the actual West, which had to be fought and subdued. Her flying monkeys were the American Indians... It's all quite elaborate and that's the purpose of an allegory. It usually criticizes the establishment without ever explicitly doing so. The book *Animal Farm* is another great example. Some people wrongly see the *Book of Revelation* as an allegory condemning Nero and the Roman Empire.

Jesus didn't use allegory. Here's proof. Jesus never intended us to think of Him as a thief! The single point He was making is that if one were ready, one would be ready and disaster would be averted, but if one were unready... *c'est la vie* - have a nice day.



Just for fun, the word translated as “Alert,” is γρηγορέω (gřā-gǒ-rě-ō). Can you guess what we get from it? Yeah, Gregory. The word basically means, not to sleep, ergo, to watch instead. The job of the sentry, while everyone else sleeps, is to keep them safe by vigilantly staying alert, ready at any instant, to take immediate action. I pity the person that tries to break in and steal that wreath. Jesus used it figuratively for a spiritual alertness. Be ready.



Matthew 24:45-51, 45“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? 46“Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 47“Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48“But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ 49and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; 50the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, 51and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The things Jesus has used thus far are more like short comparisons. Here we have our first full-blown parable on the subject. It will be followed by two more. So, three parables about what? The application the Lord wants us to know, to be established in, to live out constantly... Being ready, because we cannot possibly know when. Therefore, we cannot know what our future holds in the short run, but what does that matter if we are certain about our future in the long run?

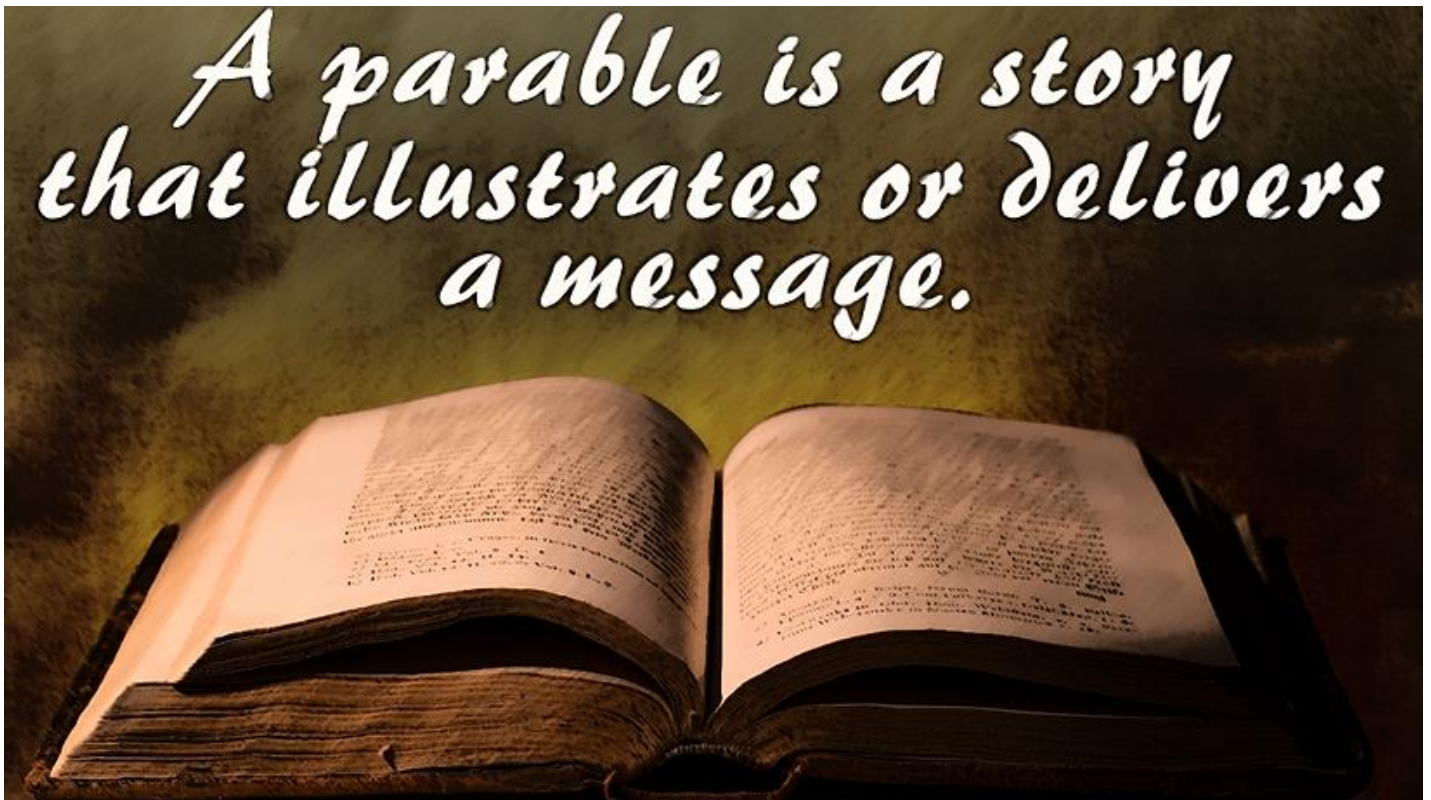
This parable is unusual because Jesus allows for two alternative endings. That's rare in a parable. Even so, like all parables, it is not an allegory. There is still only one main point being made. Again, my friends, we twist Holy Scripture when we push things too far. This parable, like all parables, was never intended to correlate, or compare, or contrast at multiple levels and in multiple ways. It simply means BE READY, which is to say, be busy about the Lord's business, instead of your own.

Jesus sets it up by challenging the listener to identify with the story. Specifically, to identify with the slave that the parable is about. If you're paying attention, there's only one slave, not two. The slave can go one of two

different hypothetical directions. He can choose to be “Faithful and sensible,” or he can choose to be “Evil.”

Framed that way, the listeners would have readily understood that they were to think of themselves as the slave in question and to recognize the choice each of them had and the outcome of the two different choices.

The whole gist is that the master put a slave in charge while he went away. That slave has a choice to either diligently do what the master asked, or to reason that there is room for a little me time.



Jesus can tell a parable like none other! He makes them dramatic and somewhat outlandish. The various elements are extreme, designed to engage His audience and get them emotionally invested, usually with shocking and unexpected features. Jesus wanted the story to be memorable. He wanted them and us to think. Anyone back then would have instantly known that wasn't a real story, but a parable designed to get them to consider the ramifications and to apply the lesson Jesus was teaching to themselves.

The main elements have not changed at all from His previous teaching or examples on the subject... "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." No one knows when Jesus will Return. So, the implication and therefore the application for us is to always be ready. If we are, He will "Put him in charge of all his possessions." That's code for "Well done good and faithful servant." If we are not ready the He "Will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." That's code for eternal condemnation.

The new thing that Jesus has introduced here is a more explicit explanation of what it means to be ready. Being ready, or on the alert, means to be occupied with Kingdom business, rather than your own business. Note that the evil thing was to be self-serving at the expense of others. It is a lack of love for the other slaves.



Jesus said, "All men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). If the slave in charge loves his, or her, fellow slaves, they will diligently serve them, take care of them, even sacrifice for them... And anyone looking in will say, that chief slave is just like His master... He has been well trained and must truly love his master to

love His other slaves so well and to be so ready all the time for his return.

Of course! You can be a good spouse, parent, child, sibling, and friend. Of course, you can make a living and enjoy the world around you. What being engaged in the Lord's business means is that He is never far from your thoughts. In a sense, that everything you do you do with Him, for Him, because of Him, because you love Him and are filled with His love for your fellow slaves... Starting with the ones He has put you closest to.

It isn't a sin to enjoy life, it's just a sin to enjoy it more than you enjoy your relationship with Him and your honoring of others. If your relationship is true and Biblical, it means that you will have a strong desire to please Him.

I must remind you, that we don't please Him to gain His favor, but because we already have it. Because He has given me everything including His love, I want to be found doing what He has given me to do when He calls me to Him... Either at His return, or at my physical demise... I want to be ready.

The reason given in this parable is two-fold. It is to avoid the horrible future, sure, but the part often overlooked, is it is to secure the bright future.

What is the bright future? Here it is a greater trust in you by Almighty God. Think about the implication. You are faithful here in this brief whisp and puff of a life and forevermore, the Lord trusts you.



Because you, through a reliance upon Him, through allowing His love to flow through you, have proven yourself faithful on earth. The reward, really isn't so much about God giving you bigger responsibilities, as it is about Him making you His associate... His friend.

Obviously, not every Christian so rewarded can literally be in charge of all the master's possessions. The concept has to do with the position of trust. Every faithful slave will be completely trusted by the master.

One scholar summed it up this way, "The main point of the parable... Faithful stewardship requires perseverance and consistency, for the end could come at any time." What have we been saying?



Matthew 25:1-13, 1“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2“Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. 3“For when the foolish

took their lamps, they took no oil with them, 4but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. 5“Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. 6“But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ 7“Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. 8“The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9“But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ 10“And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. 11“Later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ 12“But he answered, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ 13“Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

With everything we’ve talked about over the last few weeks, this parable is as simple as can be. The final verse sums it all up, “Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”

That’s the whole deal. We’ve seen it over and over and Jesus isn’t done yet. With all of that, isn’t it amazing

that so many Christians try to say they know when Jesus will return? Isn't it even more amazing that Christians act like the Lord isn't going to return anytime soon?



Notice, all were invited, some were ready, some were not. Will you be ready?