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**Sermon Series: Christ's Return:
Living with the End in Mind**
To be used with Session 5:
Keep Serving Faithfully
Title Possibilities: Stay Faithful
Scripture: Matthew 24:42-51

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study “*Christ’s Return: Living with the End in Mind*,” this sermon explores how Christians may remain faithful in our service to Christ as we anticipate His return. What we do in the meantime matters, and we will give an account for our actions.

Introduction: Many of us can remember times from childhood when our parents would assign us tasks to complete before they returned home. Whether we needed to take food out of the freezer or clean up our bedrooms, our parents’ instructions needed to be heard and obeyed. Sometimes, however, we may have delayed completing our responsibilities and found ourselves dealing with the consequences when our parents returned.

As Jesus continues His discussion about His return, He makes it clear that we should not be careless about our responsibilities. We have work to do, and we do not want to be caught leaving it undone. Even though we do not know exactly when Jesus is coming back, we can be sure that He is coming soon and has His reward with Him (Rev. 22:12).

1. Be on Guard (vv. 42-44)

Jesus instructs His disciples to be on alert since they do not know when He will return. He uses a homeowner as an analogy. If a homeowner would be able to know exactly when a thief would try to break in, surely, he or she would remain alert and prevent it from happening. In the same way, Christ’s followers need to be prepared for Him to return unexpectedly.

Many people spend lots of money on security for their homes, cars, and other possessions. It is much more important to be on guard in anticipation of the Lord’s return. We must not become complacent or overly comfortable because His return has been delayed. This delay is actually because of God’s grace, since it gives us time to prepare ourselves.

2. Be on Task (vv. 45-47)

Jesus asks His disciples to think about a faithful and wise servant given the responsibility of overseeing the master’s household and giving its members what they need at the proper time. When the master finds the servant diligently

taking care of the entrusted responsibilities, he will be pleased and put the servant in charge of all of the master's possessions.

We must strive to be faithful and wise in following the commands that Christ has given us. Doing this involves our hearts and minds being committed to our assignments. Others are often depending on us to be diligent in doing what Christ has commanded us to do. We must take our tasks seriously, knowing that if we seek greater responsibilities, we must show ourselves trustworthy with lesser ones.

3. Be on Notice (vv. 48-51)

While Jesus discusses a faithful and wise servant being rewarded, He also describes what will happen to a wicked servant. This type of servant takes the master's delay in returning as a license to mistreat others and to misbehave. The wicked servant will be caught unaware by the master's return and will suffer punishment for acting wickedly.

We are on notice that there will be consequences for failing to heed the Lord's instructions. Taking advantage of others and the grace that God has given will not be overlooked. Having this warning in advance means we can examine ourselves and consider how we are behaving. When Christ returns it will be too late to change, so we need to use our time wisely today.

Conclusion: Being faithful involves wisely using the time and resources we have been given. While we are waiting for Christ's return, we are not to be idle and "twiddling our thumbs." Waiting as a believer involves watching and working. We can be sure that serving the Lord will pay off after a while.

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