

Sun., May 29 - Memorial Day Weekend

Memory Verse: “Be dressed for service and keep your lamps lit.” -Luke 12:35

Message: Luke 4 Rejected 6: “Live Ready” -Julie Hovey, Lily Betker and Sue LaVigne

Text: Luke 12:37 “Happy are those servants whom the master finds waiting up when he arrives. I assure you that, when he arrives, he will dress himself to serve, seat them at the table as honored guests, and wait on them.”

Scripture: Luke 12:35-59

Blurb: This Sunday we finish our “Rejected” series (and yes, we will have one last panel sharing) but also finish reading through Luke. We may have only made it half way through Luke, but Chapter 12 is a great place to stop, as Jesus is talking about the End Times. In order to be ready for His return, we must watch, take God seriously and remain faithful. This is perhaps the best application for us today to live as disciples of Jesus as Luke taught us!

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

“Be dressed for service and keep your lamps lit.” -Luke 12:35

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Prerecording

Let Your Kingdom Come

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *Act, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

“Be dressed for service and keep your lamps lit.” -Luke 12:35

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Covenant Song

Even So Come

Oh God

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]

LOVE.GROW.SERVE. MOMENT: Grow Groups Sign up Video

PRAYERS: “In Honor of Memorial Day” -Pastor Andrew

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE -Pastor Andrew

MESSAGE: Luke 4 Rejected (Luke 10-12) 6: “Live Ready”

PP#1: Rejected: Live Ready

“Happy are those servants whom the master finds waiting up when he arrives. I assure you that, when he arrives, he will dress himself to serve, seat them at the table as honored guests, and wait on them.” -Luke 12:37

Rejected: Live Ready. Luke 12:37, “Happy are those servants whom the master finds waiting up when he arrives. I assure you that, when he arrives, he will dress himself to serve, seat them at the table as honored guests, and wait on them.

Well, today we come to the end of our Rejected series - not because after Luke 12 Jesus is no longer rejected—actually, it keeps getting worse and worse—but because WE are running out of time! I had hoped to preach through all of Luke with you this year, but now I’m being appointed to Rochester in August. And June and July have all sorts of stuff going on, like camp and our Ireland trip, so I think today we’ll also have to end our reading through Luke together as we end this Rejected series. But I would encourage you to keep reading it through on your own. It’s good stuff, right? And since there are 24 chapters in Luke, we can claim today that we made it exactly half way through!

PP#2: Jesus’ Earthly Life

Luke 1:1-2:40 Birth

Luke 2:41-52 Childhood

Luke 3:1-4:15 1st Year: (Age 30) Year of Inauguration - Galilee

Luke 4:16-8:53 2nd Year: (Age 31) Year of Popularity - Galilee, Samaria, Judea

Luke 9:1-13:9 3rd Year (Age 32) Year of Rejection - Judea):

Luke 13:1-19:27 Last 6 Months (Age 33) Judea

Luke 19:28-23:56 Last week (Age 33) Jerusalem

Luke 24:1-53 The 50 Days: Resurrection appearances and ascension:

And that gives you a clue to how *end-heavy* Luke—and the other three Gospels, too—are. We are only half way through the *chapters* of Luke, but we are already up to just within six months of Jesus’ crucifixion. The last quarter of Luke—and the other Gospels, too—is spent on Jesus’ final week in Jerusalem.

PP#3: *Image for Jesus teaching on the end times*

So, here in Luke 12 Jesus is in His final half year of ministry, and He’s traveling around Judea—that’s the area in the south around Jerusalem. Luke, in chapters 10-12, collects a series of

teachings that Jesus gave over a period of time and at various locations. But as Jesus is coming to the end of His public ministry, we see a growing urgency in Him—in His teachings and how He responds to people—for He knows that soon He will go back to glory. He has stepped up His challenge to call the people to choose God’s way and Kingdom. He calls out the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders—and all the people—in growing intensity. And He issued warnings to those who were not being serious about their faith and instead called them to not hold on to this life too tightly.

And now, in the last half of Luke 12, we come to Jesus’ teachings on the end times. Jesus tells His followers how they need to be watchful and ready during that time between when He returns to glory and the time when He will eventually return back to earth at the end of time.

Now, each of the Gospels includes these end-times teachings of Jesus, but I must say, most pastors—present company included!—do not preach on them much. They are hard teachings to understand and to apply. It is likely that you really haven’t heard much about this section. So, what a place to end, right? But not too bad, actually, as this is our reality: Jesus has gone back to glory and we are waiting for Him to return. How do we do that? Pretty relevant, actually.

PP#4: *Image of a celebrity panel.*

But our poor panel, by luck of the draw, got quite a doozy today! For this Rejected series, we’ve had the joy of having a panel of church people each Sunday sharing their thoughts and insights to each of the last few chapters in Luke. Even the first disciples wrestled with what they saw Jesus do and heard Him say. We’ve joined them—and their conversations—spending time each Sunday talking about and reflecting together on what we’ve heard from Jesus. We’ve been asking, “What does *this* mean for us to live as His disciples?”

So, for this very difficult passage, we call up our courageous panel today. Please, come on up here! Church’s let’s encourage them—they’re going to need it!

[Panel members come up and take seats on the stools.]

PP#5: Today’s Panel: Julie Hovey, Lily Betker, Sue LaVigne

Thank you, panel, for being willing to be our panel today. I’ll confess that when you agreed to serve on the panel, you didn’t know what passage you would get. Had you know...you might not have agreed! But thank you for your boldness. Remember, we are just like those first disciples, who had many of our same reactions!

So, panel, please introduce yourself, and share very briefly about one person you are remembering for this Memorial Day weekend.

Julie: Introduces herself and shares briefly about someone she’s remembering on Memorial Day.

Lily: Introduces herself and shares briefly about someone she’s remembering on Memorial Day.

Sue: Introduces herself and shares briefly about someone she’s remembering on Memorial Day.

Thank you, panel. We look forward to hearing what you do with Jesus’ teaching about the end times. May the Holy Spirit inspire your sharing, and our hearing!

PP#6: Jesus on the End Times: Watch! [*With a fitting image.*]

Having sparred with the Jewish leaders and in some ways telling off the casual listener, Jesus now issues warnings about the upcoming upheavals. Jesus calls His followers to watch and be ready for God to act, for God is preparing for something monumental. It's important to understand that when saying these things, Jesus is referring to *both* His death and resurrection coming in the short term as well as His second coming at the end of time. The two are connected, as in both, God is working His salvation plan.

PP#7-8: Luke 12:35-59 (CEB)

35 “Be dressed for service and keep your lamps lit. 36 Be like people waiting for their master to come home from a wedding celebration, who can immediately open the door for him when he arrives and knocks on the door. 37 Happy are those servants whom the master finds waiting up when he arrives. I assure you that, when he arrives, he will dress himself to serve, seat them at the table as honored guests, and wait on them. 38 Happy are those whom he finds alert, even if he comes at midnight or just before dawn. 39 But know this, if the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he wouldn't have allowed his home to be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at a time when you don't expect Him.”

So, we listen to Jesus now as we go to Luke 12, starting at verse 35, “Be dressed for service and keep your lamps lit. 36 Be like people waiting for their master to come home from a wedding celebration, who can immediately open the door for him when he arrives and knocks on the door. 37 Happy are those servants whom the master finds waiting up when he arrives. I assure you that, when he arrives, he will dress himself to serve, seat them at the table as honored guests, and wait on them. 38 Happy are those whom he finds alert, even if he comes at midnight or just before dawn. 39 But know this, if the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he wouldn't have allowed his home to be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at a time when you don't expect Him.”

Jesus uses the image of employees awaiting their boss' return from a wedding for how His disciples must remain vigilant and ready. Even back then wedding celebrations could run late into the night. Servants had to stay awake, alert and ready, even if the time drags on. Jesus says that if they did, the master would be so grateful that he would turn around and serve them.

So, panel, as you reflected on this passage, what came to mind? What did you see here that helps you live as Jesus' disciple. Lily, as an enlightened student home from college, I'll ask you to go first.

Lily: Jesus sees us as His honored guest, just the way we are, no matter how many sins we've committed. He is honored to have us - He sees us as honored, and waiting on Him. Our desire to serve Him is more important than our perfection in doing so.

Yes, isn't that incredible? Jesus treats us as honored! Wow. Julie, what did you see?

Julie: What spoke to me is that as believers we are dressed in Christ Jesus. Our righteousness is in Him and we stand firm in knowing that He is the only way, the truth and the life. We need this truth in order to be in service for Him in our actions, and through the Holy Spirit we can

keep our lights shining to be a witness for Him in our every day lives. In Ephesians chapter 6 verse 14 the belt of truth is the first piece of our armor to help us to be dressed for service. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus daily and connected to Him through reading the word, and prayer so we will be ready for His return in what ever hour He comes for us to take us home.

So, Jesus' followers must be ready because we will not know when He returns. No matter how much we would like to know, or try to guess, Jesus says we won't know! We just need to be ready each day! Thank you Lily and Julie.

PP#9-10: Luke 12:35-59 (CEB)

“41 Peter said, ‘Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?’

“42 The Lord replied, ‘Who are the faithful and wise managers whom the master will put in charge of his household servants, to give them their food at the proper time? 43 Happy are the servants whom the master finds fulfilling their responsibilities when he comes. 44 I assure you that the master will put them in charge of all his possessions.

Well, Jesus's closest disciples, it seems, were confused about what Jesus was saying. So, Peter speaks up and asks if Jesus is intending this message for just them or for all the gathered crowds. Jesus then expands the image of a boss and employees to include managers/supervisors to speak to those He is calling to be leaders in His Church.

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PP#11-12: Luke 12:35-59 (CEB)

“45 ‘But suppose that these servants should say to themselves, My master is taking his time about coming. And suppose they began to beat the servants, both men and women, and to eat, drink, and get drunk. 46 The master of those servants would come on a day when they weren't expecting him, at a time they couldn't predict. The master will cut them into pieces and assign them a place with the unfaithful. 47 That servant who knew his master's will but didn't prepare for it or act on it will be beaten severely. 48 The one who didn't know the master's will but who did things deserving punishment will be beaten only a little. Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.’”

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As the Spiderman movie so famously quoted the ancient proverb, “With great power comes great responsibility.” Church leaders are held to a higher standard of accountability because they are charged with caring for others. Sue, what do you take away from this passage?

S: Two things. The servant knew what his job was: take care of the master’s household. But because the master didn’t come when he thought he should the servant turned his back on what he knew and decided to do what he wanted instead. If we turn our back on God and decide to pursue the world how much worse it will be for us because we will know in the end what we have lost.

The other thing that struck a cord with me is “Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.” I’ve had a blessed life and I should be a blessing in my life. My life isn’t my own it’s belongs to my master God, and demands that I live accordingly. I teach Bible stories to kids so I need to live my life in such a way that I encourage them and don’t put any stumbling blocks in the way of their young faith by my actions.

Yes, Jesus continues His message of generous living, in money, possessions, and responsibility. Julie, what insights did you hear here?

J: What really spoke to me in this verses is that the faithful and wise managers will have the responsibility to preach and teach Gods word to the church. The food here I believe is the word of God to help us all grow stronger in the Lord. Pastors and teachers have a greater responsibility then we do but also we are all called to be faithful and wise managers as Sunday school teachers, mothers, fathers, grow groups, nursery, youth groups, any kind of leadership role where we are speaking to people and connecting to people. We are to be an example to others and sharing Gods word to one another. Jesus wants us to keep busy and until his return, we do not want to become the lazy and an unfaithful servant.

Yes, we each serve in leadership in some form in the Church, so this applies to us!

PP#13: Luke 12:35-59 (CEB)

49 “I came to cast fire upon the earth. How I wish that it was already ablaze! 50 I have a baptism I must experience. How I am distressed until it’s completed! 51 Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, I have come instead to bring division. 52 From now on, a household of five will be divided—three against two and two against three. 53 Father will square off against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother; and mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

Well, Jesus next uses the image of fire to talk about judgement. Verse 49, ““I came to cast fire upon the earth. How I wish that it was already ablaze! 50 I have a baptism I must experience. How I am distressed until it’s completed! 51 Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, I have come instead to bring division. 52 From now on, a household of five will be divided—three against two and two against three. 53 Father will square off against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother; and mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.””

Jesus comes to offer life, but doing that causes conflict and division when people react to Him differently. Jesus references Micah 7:6 saying that God's Kingdom can even cause division within families when their allegiances are divided.

Lily, do you know anything about this?

Lily: A lot of my friends are non Christians, and I've experienced the "division" among my friends based on our beliefs. They are going to keep going on their paths. I am still open to staying in relationship with them, but they are not really open to me any more. Still, I will be a light to them by how I live. I won't change who I am so they will like me more. But I won't let their choices derail me. I will keep talking to them. We'll see.

Living boldly for Jesus does bring conflict with others around us, for sure. Sue, have you experienced this, too?

Sue: Division, WOW! I've experienced this division in a couple of ways. First, when I was in around 6th grade I would sneak into a church that was close to our house and hide in the stairwell and listen to the confirmation class. The pastor found me and invited me to join the class. He tried to contact my mom to get her permission but she wouldn't return his calls or messages he sent through me. So she never saw me get my Bible with my name on it. I couldn't be confirmed because I hadn't been baptized but that pastor made sure I had a Bible. Also, division with Gary's family because we were "the Christians."

It strikes closer to home than we may want. Jesus' words are true, and we are to remain steadfast and watchful during it all.

PP#14: Luke 12:35-59 (CEB)

"54 Jesus also said to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud forming in the west, you immediately say, 'It's going to rain.' And indeed it does. 55 And when a south wind blows, you say, 'A heat wave is coming.' And it does. 56 Hypocrites! You know how to interpret conditions on earth and in the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret the present time?'"

Well, Jesus now turns to the crowds gathered around and addresses them all again. He criticizes them for stubbornly missing His main message. They can read physical signs, like for the weather, but they are not watching for the spiritual signs of what God is doing in Jesus.

Verse 54, "Jesus also said to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud forming in the west, you immediately say, 'It's going to rain.' And indeed it does. 55 And when a south wind blows, you say, 'A heat wave is coming.' And it does. 56 Hypocrites! You know how to interpret conditions on earth and in the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret the present time?'"

Okay, hard passage! Julie, what should we take away from this teaching?

Julie: Jesus calls them hypocrites because they interpret the sky when it will rain but they will not interpret the Holy Scriptures. Jesus came to fulfill the prophecies in the Scriptures. He is sitting right there in front of them and they are not discerning that Jesus is the messiah and that He came to fulfill the Scriptures.

They only want what they like from Him and not seeing that He is bringing in a new covenant! Lily, might we need to hear this criticism about us, too?

Lily: Hypocrites! I don't like this. I find a lot of churches, and people in churches can be like this. Jesus' challenge against hypocrisy strikes home to people in the church today. We need to hear this as for us, and consider how we are hypocritical, too, and need to change. We need to take God's stuff seriously, and take God seriously!

Wow, thank you, Lily! Yes, we need to use this as a lense for looking inward at ourselves! How can we each become more serious about living for Jesus!

PP#15: Luke 12:35-59 (CEB)

“57 ‘And why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right? 58 As you are going to court with your accuser, make your best effort to reach a settlement along the way. Otherwise, your accuser may bring you before the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. 59 I tell you, you won’t get out of there until you have paid the very last cent.’”

Okay, one more passage. Can you hang in there? Not everything that Jesus says is easy to swallow. Yet it is true, and we need to hear it.

Jesus uses another image about how people know how to read the signs and to change their behaviors: like if a person is brought up on a civil suit, they try hard to settle before going to court. At court, they could lose (even if innocent!) and pay (literally!) heavy consequences. Therefore, be watchful, observant and alert, for sure, but more importantly, act accordingly! Jesus means to accept Him as the Messiah, to chose to follow Him and secure His eternal salvation before it is too late. We need to do this today, to settle our accounts with Jesus, because today Jesus could come back!

Verse 57, “‘And why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right? 58 As you are going to court with your accuser, make your best effort to reach a settlement along the way. Otherwise, your accuser may bring you before the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. 59 I tell you, you won’t get out of there until you have paid the very last cent.’”

Julie, help us understand this better.

Julie: What spoke to me in these verses is if anyone has a quarrel against you, you should settle up with him or her the best you can. You need to fix the problem before it gets worse. And we need to do that spiritually with God too. Jesus came to give us life. Admit you're a sinner and receive eternal life now before it's too late. We don't want to end up in hell and we don't want other people to end up there either.

Yes, so settling up may mean with others and help them find Jesus! Good insight! Sue, you noticed that we're struggling to live this out in the broader United Methodist Church. Explain.

Sue: We are to make our best effort to reach a settlement. Yet, the United Methodist Church can't make their best effort. According to the Religion News, Christian Headlines, and the *Christian Post*, 107 Florida United Methodist churches plan to leave the United Methodist denomination and join the newly formed Global Methodist Church. I've always told my kids

and grandkids “If you don’t stand for something you will fall for anything.” I strongly believe we need to make our best effort while still be gracious and loving.

Yes, we need to stand firm in our commitment to Jesus while not letting division separate us or hinder our witness to others. It’s hard when we find ourselves disagreeing, isn’t it!

PP#16: *Image for changing your life and living for God knowing that Jesus is coming back soon.*

So, Jesus came to bring in God’s Kingdom, and when He started way back then, He caused disagreements and division. Most people missed God’s monumental act of salvation in Jesus’ death and resurrection, even though He was right there with them. And today, we anticipate that God will finish His work of salvation when Jesus comes back to complete everything at the end of time. Jesus’ warning continues for us today: Watch! Be ready! Live like today may be your last. Settle up your account with God before it is too late and live seriously for Him. Jesus’ message cuts down through the ages for our ears today, if we will truly listen.

So, panel, give us a final takeaway to carry with to live out this passage. Lily, what will you carry with you?

Lily: Jesus is trying to urge us to get the most out of Him while we still can, while we are here alive on earth. He wants the most out of us while hear on this earth. We only get so much time to be here, and there will be a time it ends and we won’t have the luxuries of earth. So, we are to live the most now! There are so many learning aspects of life.

Yes! And to live fully now enjoying life, but also enjoying Jesus fully! Thank you! Julie, how about you? What did you learn?

Julie: To take these wise parables of instruction seriously. We all need to live by them while we are watching and waiting for the return of Jesus. Keeping your eyes on Jesus, praying always, trusting by faith. God will help us all to keep walking in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So true! We have the Holy Spirit to help us. We just need to let Him! Great. And Sue, what wisdom should we hold on to?

Sue: If I serve God:

I can expect division

I can expect more will be demanded from me

I can expect my fulfillment will come from the Lord

and I will continue my struggle with standing for what I believe in while loving and not judging my neighbor.

Well, that’s a great place to finish, for today, and for our series going through Luke. This hasn’t been easy, but, panel, you’ve helped us see just how important this is for us today! We live now for Jesus, and that doesn’t mean it will be easy. We must be watchful and faithful, serious and real. Today may be the day Jesus comes back. If it is, we need to be ready. If it isn’t, we still commit to live fully for Him. And that’s words to live by!

Amen!

[*Panel members return to their seats.*]

[*Live Worship Only*] **CLOSING SONG:** *Low He Comes with Clouds Descending* -Sanctify

OFFERING & ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Wednesday, All Church Game Night

Next Sunday: Graduation Sunday. One high school graduate: Jacqueline Wyne

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

“Be dressed for service and keep your lamps lit.” -Luke 12:35

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

POSTLUDE -Sanctify (live)