

Deeper Applications: “Sooner or Later 1: Resolved Obedience”
Looking for Jesus Sermon Series #8
Matthew 24:42-51
Cross Community Church, Savannah, Ga.
September 6, 2026

⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. ⁴⁵ “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- **Main Idea: Daily resolved obedience to Jesus results in eternal blessing.**

Summary:

What does it mean to truly be ready? In this message drawn from Matthew 24:42-51, we are invited to sit with one of the most searching questions a person of faith can ask: if today were the day we stood before the Lord, would we be ready? The parable of the faithful and wise servant cuts straight to the heart of how we live between promise and fulfillment. Jesus makes a striking contrast -- we do not know when he is coming, but we do know that we must be prepared. That tension is not meant to produce anxiety. It is meant to produce resolve. The message calls us toward what might be described as daily resolved obedience -- a settled, intentional commitment to watch, to serve faithfully, and to live each day as good stewards of everything entrusted to us. Just as a musician who has truly prepared has no reason to be nervous when the moment arrives, we who walk closely with the Lord can face that ultimate moment without fear. The

invitation here is not to work harder in our own strength, but to abide more deeply, letting faithfulness flow from love rather than obligation.

Discussion Questions

Jesus says in Matthew 24 that we do not know the day of his return, but we do know we must be ready -- in what practical ways does your daily life reflect genuine readiness to meet him?

The sermon describes Jonathan Edwards resolving every day to act as though it could be his last hour before God -- what would change about how you spent this past week if you had held that same resolution?

The pastor distinguishes between serving God in your own strength versus abiding in Christ and letting him work through you -- how can you tell the difference in your own life between those two modes of service?

The story of Aaron and the golden calf in Exodus 32 illustrates how delay can reveal the true condition of the heart -- what has a season of waiting or unanswered prayer recently revealed about where your trust actually rests?

The sermon teaches that wisdom is not just knowledge but knowledge applied -- where in your life do you know what God requires of you but have not yet put that knowledge into practice?

James 2:18 teaches that faith is demonstrated through works, yet the sermon is careful to say this is not about earning salvation -- how do you personally hold in tension the truth that we are saved by grace alone while also being called to faithful, active obedience?

The pastor describes life as fundamentally about stewardship, encompassing not just money but our bodies, relationships, time, and talents -- which area of your life do you feel least surrendered to God as its true owner?

The sermon contrasts the faithful servant who acts consistently whether the master is present or absent with the wicked servant who changes his

behavior when he thinks no one is watching -- in what areas of your life do you behave differently when you think no one is observing you?

Lamentations 3:22-24, which opens the service, speaks of mercies that are new every morning -- how does the reality of God's daily, renewable faithfulness shape the way you approach your failures and the moments when you have not been a faithful servant?

The closing call to prayer uses Psalm 62:5-7 to invite the congregation to make God their hope, rock, and refuge -- what are the competing foundations or refuges in your life that you are most tempted to run to before you run to God?

Small Group Guide

"Sooner or Later: Resolved Obedience"

Based on Matthew 24:42-51

Overview

In this message, we explored what it means to live as faithful and wise servants of Jesus Christ, knowing that one day -- sooner or later -- we will stand before him and give an account for how we lived. The central idea is this: daily resolved obedience to Jesus results in eternal blessing. This guide is designed to help your group go deeper into that truth together.

Key Takeaways

- We do not know when Jesus will return, but we do know we must be ready. The unknown is the timing; the known is our responsibility.
- Life is fundamentally about stewardship. God has entrusted each of us with time, talent, relationships, and resources, and he will one day ask what we did with them.

- Faithfulness precedes fruitfulness. We cannot bear lasting fruit in our own strength. Abiding in Christ is what makes faithful service possible.
 - How we respond to delay reveals the condition of our hearts. Delay is a test, not a punishment.
 - Wisdom is not just knowledge -- it is knowledge applied. Knowing God's word matters only when we live it out.
 - Only what is done for Christ will last.
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Icebreaker

Growing up, did someone in your life use the phrase "sooner or later" to warn you about something? What did they mean by it, and did it turn out to be true?

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Resolved to Watch

(Matthew 24:42-44)

Jesus tells his followers that while they cannot know the day or hour of his return, they are responsible to stay awake and be ready.

1. In your own words, what does it mean to "watch" for the Lord's return? What does that look like in a practical, everyday sense?
2. The pastor described a time as a new teacher when he knew an evaluation was coming but did not know exactly when. How does that image connect to the way we should live as followers of Jesus?
3. Jonathan Edwards resolved "never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life." How does that kind of daily resolve challenge or encourage you personally?
4. The pastor asked the congregation: "Have you ever had a day where, when it was over, you were glad you did not meet Jesus face to face?" How does that question sit with you? What does your honest answer reveal?

Section 2: Resolved to Faithfully Serve

(Matthew 24:45-47)

Jesus describes a faithful and wise servant who continues doing his master's work regardless of when the master returns.

5. The pastor said, "We don't serve and work to be saved. We serve and work because we are saved." How does understanding that distinction change the motivation behind your service?
6. Consider the phrase "task before title." Have you seen this principle at work in your own life or in someone else's? What did faithfulness in small things eventually lead to?
7. The pastor said that when he finds himself getting tired in ministry, it is usually a sign that he is trying to do things in his own strength. Can you relate to that? What does it look like for you to shift from striving to abiding?
8. Wisdom was defined as knowledge applied. Where in your life right now do you feel like you have the knowledge of what God wants but are struggling to apply it?

Section 3: Resolved for the Rendering

(Matthew 24:48-51)

Jesus contrasts the faithful servant with the wicked servant who, assuming the master's return is far off, begins to live carelessly and selfishly.

9. The pastor said that delay reveals the condition of the heart. He mentioned that delay can reveal distance from God, disobedience, or something that needs to be addressed. Have you experienced a season of waiting or delay that revealed something about your own heart? What did you learn?
10. The story of Aaron and the golden calf in Exodus 32 illustrates how quickly people turn to substitutes when the master seems delayed. What are some modern equivalents -- things we turn to when God seems slow or silent?

11. The pastor described two judgments: the great white throne for those who do not know Christ, and the Bema seat for believers who give an account of how they lived. How does the reality of one day giving an account shape the way you think about your daily choices?
 12. The sermon closed with this statement: "Only what is done for Christ will last." If you honestly evaluated your past week, how much of what you did would fall into that category? What would you want to change?
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Reflection and Application

Take a few minutes individually before sharing with the group.

- What is one area of your life where you sense God calling you to greater faithfulness right now?
 - Is there a task, a relationship, a habit, or a responsibility that you have been treating as if the master is delayed -- something you have been putting off or neglecting?
 - What would it look like this week to live as though Jesus could return today?
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Practical Next Steps

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

1. Schedule a daily prayer time this week. Put it on your calendar or set a phone reminder. Use a journal to write down what you are praying for and note how God responds over time.
2. Begin each morning this week by surrendering the day to God. A simple prayer such as, "Lord, this day is yours. Show me how to steward it faithfully," can reorient your heart before the day begins.
3. Identify one small act of service -- at home, at work, at church, or in your neighborhood -- that you have been overlooking or avoiding. Do it this week as an act of worship, not obligation.
4. Reflect on the resolutions of Jonathan Edwards. Write out one or two of your own personal resolutions that express how you want to live in

light of Christ's return. Share them with a trusted friend or your group for accountability.

5. Read James 1:2-5 and James 2:14-18 this week. Journal what those passages reveal about the connection between faith, wisdom, and faithful action in your own life.

Closing Prayer Focus

Using Psalm 62:5-7 as a guide -- where the psalmist declares that his hope is from God alone, that God is his rock, salvation, and refuge -- close your time together in prayer. Pray through these three themes as a group:

- Hope: Ask God to be the source of your hope this week, not your circumstances, your plans, or your own strength.
- Stability: Pray that no matter what comes, your foundation in Christ would keep you unshaken.
- Refuge: Ask God to be the first place you run when life is hard, not the last.

"Daily resolved obedience to Jesus results in eternal blessing."

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Sooner or Later: Resolved Obedience

Day 1: The Faithfulness That Never Fails Reading: Lamentations 3:22-24 Devotional: God's mercies are not rationed. They do not run dry at the end of a hard week or a hard year. Every morning you wake up, you are met with fresh compassion from a God who does not change. This is not a promise for the spiritually strong alone. It is the anchor for every weary soul who wonders if God has forgotten them. His faithfulness is not contingent on yours. When you rise tomorrow, before the demands of the day press in, pause and receive what he has already prepared. Great is his faithfulness. Receive it.

Day 2: Watchfulness as an Act of Love Reading: Matthew 24:42-44 Devotional: Jesus did not command watchfulness to produce anxiety. He commanded it to produce readiness. There is a profound difference between the two. A soldier on watch is not paralyzed by fear. He is alert, purposeful, and oriented toward what he knows is coming. Jesus told his followers plainly that no one knows the hour of his return, but that fact is not a reason for passivity. It is a reason for daily intentionality. Ask yourself today whether your choices reflect someone who expects to see Jesus. Live this day as though it is your best opportunity to be found faithful.

Day 3: Faithful in the Little Reading: Luke 16:10-13 Devotional: Jesus makes a direct connection between faithfulness in small things and trustworthiness in greater ones. This principle dismantles the temptation to wait for a more significant assignment before giving your full effort. The task in front of you today, however ordinary it appears, is your stewardship. It is your proving ground. God is not looking for impressive performance. He is looking for consistent, humble faithfulness. The servant who arrives early, serves quietly, and leaves without recognition is practicing something eternal. Whatever you have been given today, whether much or little, steward it as though the Master is watching. Because he is.

Day 4: Resolved Against Delay Reading: James 1:2-5 Devotional: Delay is one of the most revealing tests of the human heart. When God seems slow, when answers do not come, when circumstances do not resolve on our preferred timeline, what rises to the surface tells us something true about where our trust actually lives. James writes that the testing of faith produces steadfastness. This means delay is not a malfunction in God's plan. It is part of it. Rather than turning to lesser things when God seems distant, ask him for wisdom. He gives it generously and without reproach. The waiting is not wasted. It is where character is formed and faith is deepened.

Day 5: Built on the Rock Reading: Psalm 62:5-8 Devotional: The psalmist does not simply describe God as a refuge. He commands his own soul to wait in silence for God alone. This is a discipline, not a feeling. There are seasons when hope must be chosen before it is felt, when trust must be declared before it is experienced. On God rests salvation and glory. Not on circumstances. Not on outcomes. Not on the resolution of every difficulty. When the world presses in and everything feels uncertain, the soul that has built its life on the Lord will not be shaken. Return to him today. Pour out your heart before him. He is your refuge.