

**LESSONS FROM HEAVEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH- The Parables - Pt 1**  
**Sunday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 6:30 p.m. - Teaching # 2116**  
**Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON**

**HOW TO WAIT FOR THE COMING OF JESUS - Matthew 25:1-13**

**Matthew 25:1-13** - “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. [2] Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. [3] For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, [4] but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. [5] As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. [6] But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' [7] Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. [8] And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' [9] But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' [10] And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. [11] Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' [12] But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' [13] Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

To pick up the very beginning of this informal teaching session with Jesus you would have to go back to the beginning of **chapter 24**. While giving this teaching about the 10 bridesmaids, Jesus is still sitting on the mountain side with His disciples. This is the very last day of his public ministry. He’s sharing insights very close to His heart.

Many of the teachings and parables Matthew records in chapters 24 and 25 center around events still in the future. In chapter 24 Jesus begins with some teaching on the events that will give ***advanced warning*** about the winding down of this whole church age. Then, as the teaching progresses, He works His way to events that will ***immediately precede*** His coming.

Finally, in the last part of chapter 24, and right through chapter 25, He gives parables - simple stories - that will put the main themes of His detailed teaching into an easy to grasp framework.

As you will see, each parable ***picks up one element*** of the detailed teaching and highlights its importance. None of the parables is intended to teach ***everything*** Jesus said about the Second Coming. Each one shines the spotlight on ***one theme*** and gives it ***emphasis*** and ***urgency***.

Today, we're going to study the familiar parable of the ten virgins awaiting the bridegroom. The theme of this particular parable is the ***need for readiness at all times*** for the coming of Jesus. This parable in chapter 25 gives vivid imagery to the words Jesus spoke in **Matthew 24:42-44** -  
“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.”

To put these truths about the Second Coming and the need for **preparation** and **readiness** into a context that would be easily grasped by the people, Jesus likens these end-time events to the preparation of the bridesmaids for the late night celebration of a Jewish wedding.

1) **THESE TEN BRIDESMAIDS WERE ALL GIVEN A GRACIOUS INVITATION TO THE COMING OF THE BRIDEGROOM**

This is not a story about five genuine bridesmaids and five who had no business being there. **All ten** were invited to the wedding. None of them **earned** the right to be there. None was more **deserving** than the others. All ten bridesmaids had **responded** to the invitation. All ten had said “**yes**” to the bride and groom’s desire that they be at the wedding celebrations.

This is very important. The point we’re meant to see is **Jesus is telling a story that relates to those who have already made a choice to acknowledge Him**. He’s not comparing the differing states of readiness between the church and the world - the saved and the lost.

Nor is this a story of **salvation by works**. None in this story had **earned** her way into this celebration. It's a story of a group - a **representative** group of people - who **want** to meet the bridegroom. They have **responded to a gracious invitation**. That's **why** they have come. That's **who** they are waiting for. That's why they have their lamps burning brightly - all ten of them.

Again, this is the most important point to grasp by way of introduction to this parable. This is the one truth that makes the rest of the story hold such impact. This community of ten represents those who **hear** the gospel, **make** profession of Christ, and **claim** to love and long for His appearing. **This is their opinion of themselves** and it is the opinion of their neighbors.

2) **IT'S ONE THING TO ACCEPT AN INVITATION - IT'S ANOTHER THING TO PREPARE FOR THE EVENT**

You have to do something with the hard details of this parable. Ten bridesmaids were obviously glad and honored to be invited to meet the bride and bridegroom. Ten bridesmaids took the time to dress and get their lamps lit. They went out to meet the wedding procession.

Yet, only five out of ten actually end up at the wedding celebrations.

**Fifty percent** are shut out. And this isn't the first time Jesus gave this point a sharp emphasis in His teaching. He actually told a very similar story in another parable:

**Matthew 22:11-14 - "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. [12] And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. [13] Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' [14] For many are called, but few are chosen."**

Notice, this man wasn't thrown out of the wedding feast because he wasn't **invited**. No one questioned his invitation. He was thrown out for not being **prepared**. That's the point of the story. **There's a difference between accepting an invitation and being prepared.**

This parable sets the context for those oft quoted and frequently abused words in **verse 14**. Jesus said the difference between being **invited** and being **prepared** is the difference between being **called** and being **chosen**.

That is the very same point being made by our Lord in this parable of the ten virgins. Ten were invited. Ten accepted the invitation. But only five **prepared** for the event. And only five **entered into** the celebrations.

This is the point that is so striking in each of these three **judgement parables** in Matthew 25. Each parable has the same **Christian ambience** to it. They are all stories of **division** and **separation** - not out there in the **world**, but in here, in the **sanctuary**.

In the first parable we find the **bridesmaids who failed to prepare**. In the second, we find the **servant, who didn't invest and work**. And finally, in the third, we find **believers who didn't love and serve**. And in each case, those who were sure they were shoe-ins for the kingdom, are cast into outer darkness.

It's not that these parables teach salvation by works or merit. It is not that they offer some other way into the kingdom of God - some harder, more legalistic kind of Gospel. That's not it at all. There is no contradiction in these parables with the clear teaching of the **free gift** of God's redemption received through faith alone.

***The purpose of these three parables in Matthew 25 is to teach what genuine faith looks like.*** Of course we are saved only by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, when He died on the cross and rose from the dead to deliver us from sin and death. That doctrine is not threatened in any of the parables of Jesus in Matthew chapter 25. What Jesus is teaching in these three parables of judgement is in ***agreement*** with the teaching of the rest of the Scriptures on justification by faith.

What Jesus is doing in Matthew 25 is ***defining real faith***. He's saying many professing Christians are fooling themselves about what faith in Him is all about. Faith that doesn't ***prepare*** isn't faith at all. It will be shut out like those five foolish virgins. Faith that doesn't ***sacrifice and obey*** isn't faith at all. It will be cast into outer darkness like the lazy servant. Faith that doesn't ***love and reach out*** isn't faith. It will be eternally lost like those who ignored their brothers and sisters in need.

So these three parables don't contradict the message of salvation by grace received by faith. They simply ***define what saving faith looks like when it is truly possessed***.

That's what these three parables are shouting to today's church. And this first parable in Matthew 25, the parable of the ten bridesmaids, teaches me that if all I have done is accept an invitation, if all I've done is come to Jesus to escape punishment for my past sins, then I don't understand, and probably haven't exercised genuine, saving, life transforming faith in Jesus Christ.

3) **WHILE ALL TEN BRIDESMAIDS *BEGAN* WITH BRIGHT BURNING LAMPS, ONLY FIVE WERE CAREFUL ABOUT *TENDING THEIR LAMPS ADEQUATELY TO BE READY FOR THE WEDDING PARTY***

The whole parable turns on this pivotal point. This is what divides the wise from the foolish. Five are fools because ***they acted as though the job was done when their lamps were first lit.*** They thought this fulfilled their obligations. It never dawned on them that there was need for anything more.

Jesus is ***urging*** understanding at this point. He's saying life in the kingdom is harder to ***maintain*** than it is to ***begin***. The ***rest*** of your Christian life is the biggest part, no matter how long since you first professed Christ. ***It's the rest of your Christian life that determines everything about your future.***

Like the five foolish virgins, we can so easily get everything backwards. Our testimonies are all about when we **got** saved and how we **got** saved. And **getting** saved is important. It's very important. **But it's not enough.** What you do **next** counts as much as what you did **before.**

4) **THERE IS SOMETHING IN OUR CHRISTIAN WALK THAT NEEDS CONSTANT REPLENISHMENT**

The **foolish** bridesmaids carried **lamps**. The **wise** bridesmaids carried **lamps and flasks of oil**. The wise virgins thought something through that the foolish virgins ignored. Lamps must be lit to give off light. **Light requires the releasing of energy.** That energy requires the using up of fuel. **Something gets consumed every hour the lamp burns.**

It's easy for **busy** people to be **foolish** people. These five foolish bridesmaids had a dozen places where they could have purchased more oil while it was still day. They probably were **distracted with other pursuits.**

But the five **wise** virgins were **watchful**. This is the quality of character that Jesus said was so outstanding. They **took the time to think of what might happen in the future. They planned to make sure they couldn't possibly miss the event that was the reason for having their lamps lit in the first place. They thought through future situations. They assessed what needs might arise. They took steps in advance not to fail.**

Above all, this was the height of their wisdom: **They knew they couldn't coast along on the light of their lamps without, sooner or later, coming to terms with the need for more oil.**

You just can't **exist** spiritually. You can't **coast**. That **lamp of burning experience** needs the **flask of daily discipline and consecration**.

**Luke 9:23-25 - "And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. [24] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. [25] For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"**

We so often hear those closing words about gaining the world and losing the soul as a warning to those who never decide to come to Jesus. But really, that's **not** the crowd Jesus is addressing in those words.

***How does a person forfeit or lose what he never really possessed?*** Jesus is talking about someone who ***forfeits(25)*** - who literally ***gives up*** on the Lord out of love for this present world. Then Jesus goes on to describe ***how*** this tragic sell out takes place. This person doesn't burn his Bible. He may not even quit going to church. Then ***how*** does this person lose out spiritually?

Jesus tells us. This person failed to do ***daily*** what he perhaps did ***once*** when he first professed Jesus Christ. This person failed to realize that there is a sense in which you ***start out again with Jesus every time you get out of bed in the morning.*** He didn't realize that spiritual life is much like ***good nutrition.*** You have to eat well ***every day*** if you want to maintain good health. ***The food you ate last year is no longer able to carry the physical demands of your body.***

The five virgins were wise because they ***prepared in advance for what was going to need replenishing if they were to be ready when the wedding party came.***

5) **YOU CAN'T BORROW WHAT IS NEEDED TO BE READY WHEN JESUS COMES AGAIN**

Jesus makes this point very clearly:

**Matthew 25:8-9 - “And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' [9] But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.'”**

It almost seems that the story shouldn't end like this. In other parables Jesus praised the generosity and kindness of those who gave of their abundance to those in need. In this very chapter Jesus will sing the eternal praises of those who gave to the sick and the needy:

**Matthew 25:37-40 - “Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? [38] And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? [39] And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' [40] And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'”**

It's so very important that we do all we can to show love and care to those whom we can help. But the message of these two parables shouldn't be confused. In the last parable in this chapter Jesus is talking about the need to do all we can ***in this present age*** to demonstrate our love for those who need His love.

In the parable of the ten virgins Jesus is talking about people who want to compensate for **not** being ready when Jesus comes again **at the end of this age**. And He's saying **nobody else will be able to turn back the clock. Nobody will be able to turn to anybody else for help.**

There comes a time when the Christian life is **terrifyingly individual**. Everyone ultimately faces Jesus alone with whatever life he has lived or whatever commitment he has failed to live up to. There are no stand ins. No substitutes.

## 6) YOU CAN BE TOO LATE

**Matthew 25:10-13 - "And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. [11] Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' [12] But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' [13] Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."**

Jesus doesn't even labor the obvious point that there is no place to buy oil in the middle of the night. What would have been an easy task a few hours ago was now impossible. **And that's the point.**

***All the bridesmaids wanted to be ready when the wedding party arrived.*** But you can't ***get*** ready then. You have to ***be*** ready then.

Whatever view you have of the Second Coming of Jesus - whatever you may be thinking about sorting things out and coming in under the wire, ***Jesus offers no hope for such plans.***

If I'm not ready ***now***, it's not likely I will be ready ***then***. That's what ***Jesus*** said about this real event that is still to come. Let's take His words to heart and ***be ready always***. Nothing else compares in importance to this.