



THE PARABLES OF JESUS

SESSION 7

Parable of the Ten Virgins: *Leaders Guide*

ICE BREAKER

Start off with an ice breaker to get everyone warmed up.

WELCOME

The parable we are studying this week is the Parable of the Talents. The parable Jesus tells first – the Parable of the Ten Virgins – we will discuss next week. Both of these parables are meant to teach us to live out our lives with a sense of **urgency** at His imminent return.

Both parables [this week's and next week] instruct Christian's to have an internal preparedness. Based on this we should ask ourselves two questions:

- Is our **heart/ soul** ready to see Jesus?
- And, is there any **urgency** and **joy** in the way we live our lives for God?

The Parable of the Ten Virgins reminds us that not all who profess faith in Jesus truly know who He is. For Christian's, we must listen to this teaching – listen to this warning – and be prepared to meet Him when He returns or calls us Home.

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Matthew 25:1-4**

Matthew 25 begins with this parable – the 2nd one - that continues to teach this same idea, and He uses the background of a Jewish wedding.

All who listened would have been very familiar with all that was involved with the wedding. There were three stages to a Jewish wedding in that day.

- **The first was engagement.** This would have included a formal agreement made by the fathers – think of an arranged marriage.
- **The second was betrothal.** This is the “legal” part of the Jewish marriage process, which creates the legal relationship without the mutual obligations. In Hebrew it is called: *kuddushin* which means “sanctification.”
- **The third was marriage.** This happened about one year after the betrothal. On this day, the groom would arrive unexpected for his bride. So, the bride and her party had to always be ready for this day.

In this parable, there were 10 virgins [also referred to as bridesmaids] who were in the bride's party. The bride had personally **invited** them to stand beside her and to serve her wedding day. They were invited to be a part of her inner circle, and they held an **honored** position. They also had **responsibility** in that they would help prepare the bride for her marriage – which meant they had to be **trustworthy** and **available** since the groom would arrive unexpectedly.

In our parable, Jesus goes on to describe that there were 5 bridesmaids/ virgins who were wise, and there were 5 bridesmaids/ virgins who were foolish. Now, why would Jesus describe these women with these terms? What was the qualifier for wisdom and foolishness? It was their **preparedness** – they either had or had no oil for their lamps. As part of the bridal party, they knew this day was coming. They were invited to be a part of this happy day and would have been aware of its future arrival. They had only two jobs: to attend and to have oil.

And immediately, we should see that some of these bridesmaids belong ANNNND some of them obviously do not belong. The ones who do not belong are the foolish ones. They may have been happy to play the part of honored guest, but they were not prepared. They are very similar to those who are surprised that they are not welcome into the kingdom of God in **Matthew 7:21-23 & Matthew 25:41-46**. The foolish bridesmaids represent professing Christians who think they are a part of the church BUT ultimately do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior – and He does not **KNOW** them.

QUESTIONS

Why do you think Jesus used the background of a wedding to describe what the kingdom of heaven is like?

We were told what the virgins/ bridesmaids represent, but who do you think the groom represents? [Jesus]

What made the bridesmaids foolish? [no oil for their lampstand]

- After reading **Matthew 7:21-23 & Matthew 25:41-46**, what do you think the reaction of these foolish bridesmaids could have been?

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Matthew 25:5-9**

Ok, early we said that the bridegroom could be delayed for approximately a year, and that he could arrive at any time – **unannounced**. And this is exactly what Jesus is telling us in verses 5-6. The bridegroom was delayed and that ALL of the bridal party [including the bride and the wise bridesmaids] “became drowsy and slept.” So, in this parable, both the wise and foolish bridesmaids fell asleep. They were all snoring, all were sawing logs and all were sound asleep.

And just when everyone is asleep – just when they are in their deep REM sleep – at midnight there was a cry! The bridegroom had **arrived** and everyone was commanded to come out to meet him!

The wedding party is getting **ready** – grabbing their lamps. For the wise bridesmaids, this was easy because they were prepared to act immediately when the cry came. BUT, the foolish bridesmaids – not so much – because they were not prepared.

And so, a simple request occurred – the foolish bridesmaids **wanted** some of the oil from the wise virgins. And the wise girls simply replied – no. But they did have some sympathy when they told the foolish girls to “go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.” Because – you know – I’m sure there are a lot of 24-hour oil dealers opened at midnight in Palestine in the first century!! So, the foolish girls head off to find oil.

QUESTIONS

What do you think the oil represents in this parable? [*Righteousness – some have it and some don't.*]

- How does having a full supply of this “oil” help Christians to wait patiently for Jesus’s arrival?
- In what ways can a person’s lack of “oil” be the reason that they are not ready to meet Jesus?

What happened when the foolish girls needed oil for their lamps?

- How did that work out for them?
- Why didn't the wise virgins share their oil with the foolish virgins?
- Do you think that individuals look to the salvation of another Christian to “save them”?

What is the most important planning and preparing we can do while waiting for Christ’s return?

- How can we help people be prepared for one of the most important day’s they will ever face?

Some of the virgins/ bridesmaids were not prepared to wait the length of time it required for the groom to arrive. On that note, Jesus has not returned for His church as quickly as some Christians would have hoped.

- What are some of the advantages of this present waiting period for the church?
- What challenges or dangers does this waiting period give for Christians?

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Matthew 25:7-13**

So, the context is set. The unwise bridesmaids are gone to find oil. While they are gone, **“those who were ready,”** went into the marriage feast with the bridegroom. And, then we read some very chilling words – **“the door was shut.”** It was final. They had opportunities. They knew this day was coming. They knew their responsibility. This day was not a surprise to them.

The foolish girls ran back, and they found the door shut. And they did the only thing they knew to do, they cried out to the groom **“Lord, Lord!”** It was a desperate attempt to still enter the feast, and they knew that the bride could no longer save them. They had to cry out to the groom – to have mercy on them and to open the closed door.

What follows is a simple reply, **“Truly...I do not know you.”**

In commenting on this phrase, Charles Spurgeon says this:

When that door is once shut, it will never be opened. There are some who dote and dream about an opening of that door, after death, for those who have died impenitent; but there is nothing in the Scriptures to warrant such an expectation. Any ‘larger hope’ than that revealed in the Word of God is a delusion and a snare.

In finalizing this parable, Jesus’s Words ring true as a reminder to other “bridesmaids” who may not have the oil for their lampstand – **“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”** Church, watch – for we do not know the day or the hour when Jesus is coming back!

QUESTION

What does this parable teach us about God?

- What does this parable teach us about man?

When did the bridegroom arrived and the wedding banquet begin?

What did the foolish bridesmaids discover AND do when they returned?

How did the bridegroom respond when some virgins wanted to come to the wedding late?

What is the consequence of being unprepared for Christ's return?

- What will be the reward for being prepared to greet Christ when He does return?

What do you think about Jesus's statement in [verse 11](#), that there will be some to cry out "Lord, Lord!," and they will be turned away because He does not know them?

- What are some biblical ways that you can know whether you have saving faith?

In [verse 13](#), what was the warning that Jesus concluded this parable with? Why?

- What is the purpose of Advent [*4-week period of time before Christmas*]? [*to celebrate Christ's first advent/ arrival and to eagerly anticipate His second advent/ arrival in the clouds*]

CONCLUSION

In the larger context of [Matthew 25](#), the main point of this parable is clear: our readiness for Jesus' return is determined by our stewardship of the resources that He has given us. Some think that readiness for Jesus' return is a very spiritual and abstract thing. It really isn't — it is a matter of being about our business for the Lord. In light of this parable, we must ask ourselves: What have we done with

- Our knowledge?
- Our time?
- Our money?
- Our abilities?

The sins of omission [what we don't do] may ultimately be more dangerous than the sins of commission [what we do].

The last parable we will be discussing this spring is:

- ***The Parable of the Good Samaritan - Luke 10:25-37***