

## CORE SEMINAR

Spring 2024

The Parables of Jesus

Course 7: The Parable of the Ten Virgins | Matthew 25:1-13

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### ICE BREAKER

Choose an ice breaker from the *Spring Community Group Guide* or go to [www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers](http://www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers) to select an ice breaker to ask your group.

- Spend about 5 minutes discussing the question – this is a great way to “warm up” your group.

### INTRODUCTION

The parable we are studying this week is the **Parable of the Ten Virgins**. Just like our parable last week, the Parable of the Ten Virgins is meant to instruct us on the importance of living our lives with a sense of **urgency** – looking for Jesus’s imminent return.

Our parable this week also instructs believers on how to have an internal preparedness. It would be comforting to think that all who profess faith in Jesus Christ will one day share in His victory. Sadly, Scripture reveals that this is not the case [**Matthew 7:21-23**].

Based on this we should ask ourselves two questions:

1. Is our **heart/soul** ready to see Jesus?
2. 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 Christians, we must listen to this teaching – listen to this warning – and be prepared to meet Him when He returns or calls us Home.

Everyone ready? Ok, let’s pray and we will get started...

**QUOTE:** *Our great duty is to watch, to attend to the business of our souls with the utmost diligence and circumspection. Be awake, and be wakeful. It is a good reason for our watching, that the time of our Lord’s coming is very uncertain; we know neither the day nor the hour. Therefore every day and every hour we*

***must be ready, and not off our watch any day in the year, or any hour in the day. Be thou in the fear of the Lord every day and all the day long. – Matthew Henry***

**Have someone in your group read Matthew 25:1-4**

**“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup> but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.**

If you remember from last week [*from Matthew 24*], Jesus was on the Mount of Olives. He had entered into Jerusalem, and this was the last week He would minister before heading to do His work on the cross. So, Matthew records this time – during His final week – where He is on the Mount of Olives teaching His disciples.

It’s in this context that the disciples came to Jesus privately and asked this question, **“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”** To respond, Jesus gave them many signs and ultimately taught 3 parables that were meant to emphasize the idea of being **ready** for Jesus’s future arrival. **Matthew 25** begins with this parable – the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 **etrothal**.** 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 ANND 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?**

**Have someone in your group read Matthew 25:5-9**

**<sup>5</sup> As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup> But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' <sup>7</sup> Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' <sup>9</sup> 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.'**

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!

Can you imagine the scene? I imagine it's chaos – maybe like a family trying to get ready for church on a Sunday morning?!? I'm certain there is no yelling and screaming at each other as everyone is running into one another - jumping out of their slumber and wiping the “sleepy” from their eyes.

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 days 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?

Have someone in your group read Matthew 25:7-13

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' <sup>12</sup> But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' <sup>13</sup> Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

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. This is very similar to the action we read about in **2 Chronicles 36:15-16:**

*The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy.*

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!

**QUESTIONS: What does this parable teach us about God?**

- **What does this parable teach us about man?**

**When did the bridegroom arrive 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].

**PRAYER**