

The Ten Virgins

Introduction:

- I. In Matthew 25, Jesus teaches us how important it is to be ready when He comes back. In the first 13 verses of the chapter, He does this by way of the parable of the ten virgins. If you have your Bibles, turn with me to that passage and let's read together the text.

- II. The main lesson of this parable is clear, isn't it? We must be ready for the coming of Christ. The fact that Jesus is coming back is foregone conclusion. Jesus Himself said that He will someday come back (**Jn. 14:1-3**). This should fill every Christian with a sense of comfort and joy and give us the ability to endure any obstacles in life. Listen: life is sometimes unpredictable. We don't always know what is going to come next in our lives. It may be something profitable and pleasant or it may be something disturbing and devastating, the truth is we just don't know. One thing we do know is that we live in a world of sin that is in many ways antagonistic towards the righteous ways of God and those who cling to those ways. That means that we going to have some trouble in life just because we are Christians (**2 Tim. 3:12**). But there is something else that is sure—we are just pilgrims in this life and one of these days Jesus is going to come back, not to live on earth with us, but to take us home with Him to live in heaven. "*Where I am*" Jesus said, "*there ye may be also.*" The question is when Jesus comes, whether it's today, tomorrow or sometime in the far future, will you be ready for that day. We better be ready! This is what this parable of the ten virgins is all about. Now let's look at some practical lessons from this parable.

Lesson:

I. **Be Sure That You Are Ready!**

I want you to notice something important here. All ten virgins thought that they were ready. The text doesn't say that five went out to meet the bridegroom, verse one says that ten went out to meet him. Why did all ten go to meet the bridegroom? Because all ten thought they ready to do so. The truth, however, was that only five were in reality ready.

Now listen to me: there are a whole lot of people who think they are ready, but in reality they are not. When a person stands before the judgment seat of Christ, it won't be good enough to say "Lord, I thought I was ready." Either we are ready or we are not. There is no in between. It's not good enough to be almost ready. It's not good enough to being close to ready. If we want to enter the marriage feast of the Lamb, we must *sure* that we are ready.

Someone says, "I know I'm ready because I'm a member of a mainstream religious denomination." No, being a member of a denominational church doesn't make you ready. That might make you religious, but it doesn't make you ready. You see someone can be very religious and still not be ready (**Acts 26:4-5; Gal. 1:13-14**). There is something that people need to understand. In the first century, there were no denominational churches, there was just the church of Christ. Jesus never built a denomination. Jesus never authorized a denomination. And the apostles of Jesus never spoke of a denomination. But Paul did make reference to the concept of denominationalism, and he condemned it (**1 Cor. 1:10**).

Someone says, "Wait a minute, I know I'm ready because I'm a good person." That alone doesn't make you ready either. Now let me point out that being good is important. In fact you can't be ready without being good. But goodness alone isn't enough (**Acts 10:1-6; 11:11-14**).

If you want to be ready, you must obey the gospel of Christ (**Rom. 1:16**). You must, not only believe in Jesus, you must repent of your sins, confess the Lord Jesus with your mouth and be buried in the waters of baptism (**Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:27**).

Someone says, I know I'm ready because I'm a member of the church of Christ. Well, if your talking about having your name in the roll book of a local church, that doesn't mean that your ready either. Now listen to me: one must be a member of the Lord's church in order to be ready. You see, Jesus is coming back to get His church and deliver it up to the Father. The church is called the kingdom in 1 Cor. 15:24 and listen to what Paul says about it (**1 Cor. 15:24**). Now if you are not a citizen in this kingdom, you won't be delivered up to the God. Paul said in another place that Jesus is the Savior of the body (**Eph. 5:23**). So, if you are not a part of the body of Christ, which is the church (**Col. 1:18**), you are not and will not be saved. So clearly, one must be a member of the church in order to be saved.

But I'm saying to you that just because you are a member of the Lord's church, doesn't make you ready (e.g., Ananias and Sapphira, Simon, Hymenaeus and Philetus, Diotrephes). Let's remember about the ten virgins that they all accepted the invitation to the marriage feast, but only five got in. You may have accepted the invitation by obeying the gospel of Christ, but now you must remain faithful.

Illus – A boy named Jeff was to take his girlfriend Jill on a date one night. Jill was expecting Jeff to show up at 7:00. She was dressed up and waiting patiently. However, by 8:00 she figured she had been stood up. So, she took off her makeup, put on her pajamas, popped a bowl of popcorn and sat down to watch

TV with the dog. Then at about 9:00 the door bell rang. She looked through the peek hole and it was Jeff. She opened to the door and was about to give Jeff a piece of her mind, but when she opened the door, Jeff stared at her with a look of utter amazement and said, “Jill, I can’t believe it. I’m two hours late you’re still not ready.”

You want to be ready when Jesus comes back, you must not only get ready; you must stay ready (**Rev. 2:10**).

II. Do All You Can To Be Ready.

Now, before we go any further, let me emphasize that I do not believe in what some call “works salvation.” That’s the phrase used by those who believe in “faith only salvation” to describe any doctrine that includes action on the part of man in order to secure salvation. “Works salvation” refers to a legalistic attempt at earning salvation. I do not believe that one can earn his way into heaven. That we are saved by grace is a foregone conclusion in scripture, and the fact of the matter is, if we were left to earn our way into heaven, we would be lost because the only way that can be done is by perfect living. But here’s the point that our denominational friends must realize—saying that we are saved by grace does not eradicate the necessity of obedience.

I once read something from a denominational preacher in which he emphasized that we are saved by faith only, but in describing the faith that saves, he taught the same thing I and faithful gospel preachers have taught for years. Listen to his comments on the parable that we are studying.

“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 give 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 nor argued with in any of the parables of Jesus in Matthew chapter 25. What Jesus is teaching in these three parables of judgment 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 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."

Now, the only thing that I take exception with in this man's description of faith here, is his constant reference to "faith only." And the only reason he keeps mentioning faith only is because his denomination has taught him to do so, but he really doesn't believe it (faith only advocates really believe in works; they just don't believe in baptism). This man said in his discourse that true saving faith involves sacrifice and obedience; it involves, he says, loving and reaching out, in other words it involves WORKS! And if you take the works away, what you have is something less than saving faith. Well, that's not only what I have taught over the years, more importantly, it is what the Bible clearly teaches (**Jas. 2:17-20**).

So again, I don't believe that one can earn his way to heaven. But that works of obedience play a part in salvation is an easily discernible fact. Make no mistake about it: obeying God is a part of being ready for the second coming of Christ (**Heb. 5:8-9; Phil. 2:12**).

Knowing that you have to do something in order to be ready, what we learn from this parable is that we should do all we can to assure our readiness. In other words, we shouldn't just try to get by. That's what the 5 foolish virgins did. They had just enough oil, they thought, to get by. They didn't bring any extra like the wise virgins did. This is the significance of verses 3 and 4. Now, the foolishness of these five virgins who didn't have enough oil rest in the fact that they couldn't be sure when the bridegroom was going to come. They probably would have been alright if he would have shown up on time, but the text says that he was delayed (**ver. 5**). Since the virgins had absolutely no way of knowing whether the bridegroom would be on time or not, and since it was more often the case than not that he was late, the wise thing to do would have been to make provision. They should have done all they could to be ready.

Now let's make application of this point in the parable. If you are just trying to get by in your attempts to please God and be ready for the second coming of Christ, you are thinking like the five foolish virgins. Why not remove all chance from the equation and do all that you can to be ready. Paul had this kind of mentality (**1 Cor. 15:9-11; 9:16-23**). The brethren of Macedonia had this same kind of mind (**2 Cor. 8:1-5**). Let's not just try to get by. Let's do all that God expects of us and even a little more.

- Attend extra classes (personal work classes, home bible studies, etc.)
- Read your Bible and pray everyday).
- Attend area gospel meetings
- Visit sick and shut-ins

Let's bring a little extra oil just in case the bridegroom tarries. Let's do all that we can to be ready for the second coming of Christ.

III. **There Are Some Things You Can't Borrow!**

The foolish virgins of our text didn't take time to prepare for the coming of the bridegroom so they thought that they could live off the good planning of the wise virgins. But they found out very quickly that they could not do that. They would have to go and buy their own oil so that they could fill up their lamps and have light (**vers. 7-9**). Now commentators argue over exactly what this oil represents, but the truth of the matter is, it represents whatever is needed to be ready.

Listen to me: in order to be ready for the second coming of our Lord, you have to have personal faith in Him.

John 3:36

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.

So the question is, do you have personal faith in Jesus? I'm not asking you if your parents have faith—do you have faith? That's the question. "oh but my parents are good Christians and they took me to church all the time when I was growing up." So what! You can't borrow the faith of your parents. They only have enough for themselves. You must get your own. Someone says, "yes but my brother is a deacon or my grandfather is an elder in the church." So what! You'd better get your own faith because faith is not something that you can borrow.

And let me tell you in this sinful world, you'll going to need it. You are going to need faith when an unexpected tragedy happens in your life. You are going to need faith when your health begins to fail and life becomes a struggle. You're going to need faith when brethren let you down and find out that a well respected Christian who you are close to and who has helped you spiritual through the years has been living a hypocritical life. Listen to me young people: you're going to need faith when you find yourself in the world, surrounded by those who know not God who are trying to get you to do things you know are wrong. When your friends offer you drugs or a drink or just want you to take a puff of a cigarette,

you're going to need faith to resist. When your boyfriend or girlfriend wants you to commit fornication, you're going to need some faith to say no. Listen to me young adults: when a coworker of the opposite sex makes an advance on you, you need faith to say "I won't sin against my God or cheat on my spouse." Listen to me everybody: next time you have a long day and you feel kind of tired so you are thinking about forsaking the assembly of the saints, you're going to need some faith to win the battle against the devil. It's no wonder that John said, "...and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."

You're going to need faith when you are under peer pressure. You're going to need faith when you are under financial pressure. You're going to need faith when you are under family pressure. What I'm I saying to you? I'm saying that when the devil begins to press upon us with some sort of temptation and when he begins to hurl his fiery darts at us, we are going to need faith in order to survive. And our faith must be our own. We can't borrow it from our mothers. We can't borrow it from our fathers. We can't borrow it from our brothers or sisters in Christ. You see, ladies and gentlemen, there are some things you just can't borrow and personal faith is one of those things. But there are other things too.

We can't borrow someone else's conduct because we are all going to be judged according to our own **(2 Cor. 5:10)**. We can't borrow someone else's righteous. We can't borrow someone else's character. We must all fill up our own lamps because there are some things that we just cannot borrow.

IV. Time Is Running Out!

The final word of exhortation is simply this: when it comes to getting ready for the second coming of our Lord, don't procrastinate! Don't procrastinate! Listen to me: don't procrastinate. As it has often been said, "procrastination is the thief of time," and once time is stolen, it can't be returned. Do you not know that time is running out? At one point the 5 foolish virgins had time to buy more oil, but time ran out **(ver. 10-12)**.

The shut door indicates that you no longer have a choice. Oh I know that if the five foolish virgins could have done it all over again, they would have brought extra oil with their lamps, but now it's too late. The door is shut and it's too late to make that choice. Make no mistake about it, right now you can make a choice, but the time will come when it's too late to choose.

Listen: we have already seen what it takes to get ready. Right here, right now you have an opportunity to make a choice to serve God and honor His Son by accepting Him as your personal Savior. Right now you can

choose to accept the invitation and obey the gospel of Christ. If you are a child of God, and you have not been living right, right now you can choose to repent and begin walking in the light once again. No matter who you are, if you can hear the sound of my voice you can make a choice. You can choose God over Satan. You can choose heaven over hell. You can choose righteousness over unrighteousness. But pay attention to me: you better make that choice before the door shuts because once the door shuts, you no longer have a choice.

The shut door indicates that you can no longer change. We all make mistakes. Sometimes we make mistakes in an instant and then correct them right away, and sometimes people make the mistake of living in some kind of sin that seems to go on and on, but as long as you have breath in your lungs and God holds back the time of the second coming, you can change. You might be in an unscriptural marriage, but you can change. You might be fooling around with drugs, but you can change. You might be shacking up with someone who you're not married to, but you can change. You might be giving God 50% instead of your all, but you can change. This is what repentance is all about. To repent is to have a change of heart that leads to a reformation of life and the Bible is full of exhortations to do this (**Acts 3:19**).

You can change! I don't care how bad your sin is or how long you have been buried under the muck, mire and misery of your transgressions, you can change. The Jews who crucified Jesus changed on the day of Pentecost. The Gentiles at Thessalonica who served dumb idols changed and began to serve the living and true God. The Corinthians who were guilty of everything from drunkenness to homosexuality changed. Yes you have the ability to change, but don't wait too long because once that door shuts, it will be too late to change.

The shut door indicates the finality of things. Hear me carefully before we close. Once the doors shuts, it can't be opened again. It's final. There will be no second chances. The five foolish virgins tried to buy oil in the middle of the night but it was too late. Once the cry was made, "the bridegroom cometh," the opportunity to get ready was past. If you plan on getting ready when Christ comes back, you are going to be disappointed. You can't get ready then. You have to be ready then. If you don't get ready in the time we call now, you won't be ready when Jesus returns (**2 Cor. 6:1-2**).

Conclusion:

Don't be like the five foolish virgins. Be like the five wise virgins and get ready now while you still can and then stay ready until the bridegroom comes (**ver. 13**).