

Ready & Waiting

- *Matthew 25:1-13*

- **Another month has come & gone & it seems as though this year is quickly passing us by. We have so much this year that we hope to accomplish not only for this ministry, but for the Kingdom of God in general.**
 - Over the last 2 weeks, we have had 3 funerals and at least 6 people associated with our church have been in the hospital. It has been a busy couple of weeks, but as we face death & the funerals associated with them, I am forced to be reminded that this time that we have here on this earth is extremely precious & we must take advantage of every opportunity that God gives to us.
- **With the business of life, the passing of time & the reality of death, I have been reminded over the past few weeks of the reality of our Lord's Return & how urgent it is that we prepare for that day.**
- **There is a parable in the Bible that encourages us to be prepared for the Lord's Return, for truly it could come at any moment. The question today is are you prepared?**
 - Now most people think of the Lord's Return as some event that will happen thousands of years from now, but the reality is it could happen at any moment.
- **READ SCRIPTURE**
- **The parable we will be discussing this morning is the ten virgins who went to meet the bridegroom.**
 - The Bible tells us that 5 were wise & took enough oil for their lamps, but 5 were foolish & were unprepared to meet the bridegroom & they were shut out of the wedding celebration.
- **There are several things I want to discuss this morning as we prepare for the Lord's Return.**

I. The Celebration For The Lamps (vv.1-5)

- **The issue at hand was the preparation that these 10 women for the wedding that they knew was coming. This parable also reminds us of some important issues to consider as we prepare for His Return.**
 - a. **The Practices Of A Wedding**
 - i. In Bible times a wedding would take place when the bridegroom would go to the home of the bride to bring her to his home as his wife. Taking the bride to the home of the bridegroom was generally a formal occasion involving a grand procession in which various people would join the procession at different stations along the route of the procession.
 - ii. When the procession reached the bridegroom's home, all those in the procession would go into the house and celebrate with a grand feast. When all the guests were in the house, the door would be shut so no one else could get in to participate in the wedding feast. The closing of the door was final and kept out those who had not been invited or had not fulfilled the requirements of meeting the procession.
 - b. **The Participants In The Wedding**
 - i. The 10 virgins mentioned in this passage were more than likely close friends of the bride & they had come to meet the bridegroom in a particular place where he was sure to come.
 - ii. Because of the late hour of the wedding festivities, it was urgent that they bring their lamps so as to light their way & help give them direction so that they might find the bridegroom.
 - 1. But it was these very lights that would point out the difference between 2 groups amidst these 10; 5 were prepared, but the other 5 were completely unprepared for what was to come, and the Bible calls them foolish.

- iii. But please pay close attention to v.5. Though the Bible calls 5 of them wise & 5 of them foolish, as they waited for the bridegroom, they ALL went to sleep.
 - 1. Now let me take just a few minutes here to say this. Just b/c you are saved & perhaps are even sitting inside the 4 walls of this church this morning, does NOT mean that you are necessarily prepared for the Lord to return today.
 - 2. Let me ask you something. If I could guarantee you that the Lord would come back today, would there be anything in your life that you needed to clean up before He returned?
 - a. You don't have to answer, I know the answer b/c it is the same answer for me. There are some things that I would want right before I come face to face with God.
 - b. Yet we become comfortable with our lives, even with our sin, and if we are not careful we will wind up just like the 5 wise virgins & be caught unprepared for His return.
- iv. You say, "But Pastor, at least I am saved, at least I have the oil for my lamp." Yes, but I not only want to give God my best, I want Him to find me faithful & waiting when He returns.

II. The Crisis For The Lamps (vv.6-9)

- As the ten virgins were waiting for the bridegroom, darkness came about & surrounded them.
 - a. **The Darkness**
 - i. Now this darkness was a physical darkness & it made it extremely difficult for them to see, thus the importance of the lamps & the oil.
 - ii. But folks, there is also a spiritual darkness that has come upon our world that the Bible warned would take place as the coming of Christ nears.
 - 1. People will turn the backs on the principles of God's Word.
 - 2. "Many will say, 'Lord, Lord'"
 - b. **The Cry**
 - i. The Bible tells us that there was a cry made amongst the people to go & meet the bridegroom.
 - 1. Now though they had come to meet the bridegroom, the cry was a shocking surprise to all of them b/c they were asleep.
 - 2. You know, I truly believe that there will be many (even in the church) that when the trumpet sounds on that glorious day, many will be surprised & will be found unprepared b/c of their slumber.
 - a. Luke 21:34 – "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."
 - c. **The Tragedy (vv.7-8)**
 - i. When they all arose from their sleep, the Bible says that the 5 foolish virgin's lamps had burned out of oil & they asked the 5 wise virgins for their oil.
 - ii. But there was a problem. The 5 wise only had enough for themselves, they could not give what they had to the others.
 - iii. The 5 foolish virgins found themselves unprepared to meet the bridegroom & now it was too late to do anything about it.
 - 1. They were encouraged to go & buy some, but it was the middle of the night & the announcement had already been made. It was too late.
 - iv. Listen to me this morning. When it comes to your faith in Jesus Christ, you can borrow from NO ONE! You must have made your own preparations for the Lord's Return.
 - 1. Mom & Dad's faith won't get it done for you.
 - 2. Grandparents faithfulness to God will not buy your way into Heaven.

3. The Bible says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” – Romans 10:13
- v. We are not promised tomorrow & we are not always given the opportunity to prepare. Take advantage of the opportunity that God has given you today!

III. The Closing for the Lamps (vv.10-13)

- One of the most sobering parts of not only this parable, but also our world one day, is that there will come a day when the door will shut for eternity.
 - a. **The Door Was Closed (v.10)**
 - i. Once the door was closed, it was final, not to be opened again. This was done to keep distractions from the celebration and to keep the unworthy out.
 - ii. Though the 5 foolish went hurriedly to get more oil, they lost out on the opportunity to enter the celebration.
 1. This is the danger with waiting to accept our Savior’s free gift of salvation.
 - a. “I’ll accept God later on in my life.” You might not be given that opportunity.
 - b. “I’ll do it next week.” What if the Lord decides to return? What if you are caught unprepared? What if He doesn’t speak?
 - b. **Our Opportunities Will Be Over (v.11)**
 - i. No doubt about it, their cry was earnest & heartfelt, yet their requests was too late.
 - ii. They knew the bridegroom was coming, they believed in him, yet b/c of their lack of preparation, they missed their only opportunity.
 - iii. Folks, one day it’s going to be too late.
 1. Philippians 2:10-11
 - iv. vv.11-12 – “Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.”
 1. They were not in the procession, so he did not meet them to know who they were. The virgins were generally friends of the bride and would have to be introduced to the bridegroom in the procession. If you are not known to the Lord through salvation, if you don’t have the blood of Jesus Christ applied to your life, you will be rejected from entering into Heaven.

IV. The Final Warning Given (v.13)

- a. **Watch!**
- b. **Be Ready!**