

Be Ready: The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Matthew 25:1–13 (NET)

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of the virgins were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish ones took their lamps, they did not take extra olive oil with them. But the wise ones took flasks of olive oil with their lamps. When the bridegroom was delayed a long time, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look, the bridegroom is here! Come out to meet him.’ Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.’ ‘No,’ they replied. ‘There won’t be enough for you and for us. Go instead to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ But while they had gone to buy it, the bridegroom arrived, and those who were ready went inside with him to the wedding banquet. Then the door was shut. Later, the other virgins came too, saying, ‘Lord, lord! Let us in!’ But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I do not know you!’ Therefore stay alert, because you do not know the day or the hour.

1. The Urgent Call to Readiness

- Jesus’s command is simple: **“Be Ready!”**
- The surprise is not *if* He will return, but **when**.

The Tension of Waiting (The Analogy)

The tension of this parable is not so much the waiting, but maintaining a state of **active readiness** so that when the call comes, you don't miss the moment. You're ready to move.

2. The Wedding as a Living Parable

The Three Phases of Unwavering Commitment

- To grasp the parable's power, we must recall the first-century wedding process:
 - **The Promise (The Contract):** A **binding, legal covenant** showing seriousness.
 - **The Betrothal (The Engagement):** A status so serious the couple was **legally married**, representing an unbreakable bond.
 - **The Wedding Feast (The Consummation):** The final celebration

Our Call: Spiritual Purity and Commitment

- We are the betrothed of Christ, called to **remain pure, faithful, and committed** to Him alone while we wait. This is an urgent call for the Church.

3. The Central Tension: Readiness vs. Appearance

- **All ten looked the same** and **all ten fell asleep**. The difference was the **extra oil**—the substance of readiness.
- The crisis wasn't the darkness; it was the **unexpected delay** of the Groom, which exposed the foolishness and lack of preparation of the five unprepared Bridesmaids.

Preparation is for the Journey, Not Just the Start

- The wise were prepared for the long, winding parade through the village—the **delay** that *might* happen.
- The foolish were ready for a short wait, but not for the possibility that the announcement of the Kingdom's feast would take time, reaching to the ends of the earth.

Do Not Be Distracted by False Claims

- The Scripture is **crystal clear: No one knows the time**.

Matthew 24:36 (ESV)

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

- Jesus’s silence on the hour is a command to live with **urgent faithfulness**.
- Therefore, we must **plan for the future** as if He will not return in our lifetime, and simultaneously **live today** as if He will return at any moment.

4. The Final Verdict: Personal Responsibility

It’s All About the Bridegroom!

- The entire event is about **Christ, nothing more, nothing less**.
- Our sole task as the wedding party is to be **ready** to announce and celebrate Him when He appears.

You Can’t Borrow Preparation

- The oil represents a **personal relationship** with Christ.
- The wise Bridesmaids refusal ("There will not be enough for us and for you") highlights **personal accountability**. You cannot rely on your spouse's faith or your parent's involvement.

The Consequence: The End of Mercy

- The Groom's reply — "**I do not know you!**" — is the most terrifying consequence.
- Our culture's demand for "**unending mercy**" (the attitude of "no consequences") stands in radical opposition to the King's judgment. Unending, unlimited mercy is no mercy at all.

Luke 16:29–31 (NET)

But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they must respond to them.' Then the rich man said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' He replied to him, 'If they do not respond to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'

- The parable warns that **God's patience is not limitless**; the door will be shut, resulting in eternal separation (Hell) for the unprepared. The time to prepare is **now**.

5. Keep the Lamps Burning: Three Practical Actions

Focus on Essentials, Not Eschatology

- **The Problem:** Giving priority to endless debates about the end times.
- **The Solution:** Focus on the **core Gospel message**—knowing and trusting Christ—and sharing His grace.

Embrace Engagement, Not Escapism

- **The Problem:** **Escapism theology** that runs from present-day issues.
- **The Solution:** **Engage the world** and fulfill the mission. The Kingdom of God is **now**, and we are called to work for the redemption of souls and creation.

Honor the Lord with Your Time, Talents, and Treasure

- **The Problem:** Storing resources solely for personal comfort while ignoring the **Kingdom of God's needs**. Where your treasure is reveals your heart.

- **The Solution:** Be **Kingdom-minded**. Treat every moment and every dollar as an opportunity to bring **glory to God**—that is the meaning of active, present-day faithfulness.