

## Stories of Grace and Truth

Matthew 25.1-13

April 7, 2024

Well, we're back at it again! We've taken a brief Easter break, but hopefully we still have ears to hear what our Lord has to teach us through his timeless parables. Starting this week, we're going to look at some of the parables that are focused on the future, the end. Jesus went out of his way to refer to the end times, and for very good reasons. Some of those reasons will become evident this week as we are instructed to be ready and watchful.

Pastor Eric

Opening Up:

*Have weddings changed much since you first started attending them? In what ways?*

Begin by reading through Matthew 25.1-13 and just pay attention to how this wedding seems to progress. What is it that appears to have taken place during a wedding in Jesus' day? For now, it's most important to know that weddings typically took place at the groom's home from which he left to get his bride and bring her back to his home. The wedding party then waited at his home for their arrival, although some ventured out to meet the couple along the way.

Who are the characters in this parable? We learn that half of these virgins (very young women, girls) are described as wise and the others, foolish. What do they all do that is the same? What do the foolish *fail* to do? What kinds of words would you use to describe the foolish girls? What about the wise? What happens in the end of the story? What is it that the groom says to the foolish virgins who try to get into the banquet?

Verse 1 constitutes an overall introduction to the story. What does it tell you about the timeframe this parable applies to? What do you understand "kingdom of heaven" to refer to? Since this is about the kingdom of the *future*, what event seems to inaugurate this future kingdom? Although we can't press the details and demand that each item referred to corresponds to something out there in the spiritual realm, it's clear that the bridegroom represents Jesus (see Matt. 9.15). So our lesson is obviously with the girls. What do the wise girls do right? What is the lesson Jesus is trying to convey in verse 13?

"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Acts 1.11

Can you think of other references in the Bible that relate the idea that Jesus is going to return some day?

In short, what does the Bible say about our ability to predict the return of Jesus? How does it say we should live in light of the return of Jesus? If the wise virgins were ready for the return of the groom, certainly we are supposed to be ready for the return of Jesus. As we look through this parable, we can see that being ready is equated with being watchful in the last verse. How does watchfulness help you understand what it means to be ready for Jesus' return? What's the difference between the wise virgins' and the foolish virgins' relationship with the groom?

What does this parable teach you about how the return of Jesus should impact your *present* life?

"We must love someone very much to stay awake and long for his coming."

AW Tozer

*Born After Midnight*