

Five Wise, Five Foolish

Matthew 25:1-13



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FOCAL Read Responsively Matthew 25:1-13 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. {2} **And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.** {3} **They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:** {4} **But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.** {5} While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. {6} And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. {7} Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. {8} And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. {9} **But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.** {10} **And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.** {11} **Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.** {12} **But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.** {13} **Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.**

Maybe I'm wrong, but I think the Boy Scout motto is "Be Prepared". That's a good policy to live by. To be unprepared may bring great embarrassment and inconvenience. I remember going to a local grocery store to do my weekly shopping. I stood in line and, after what seemed like an eternity, finally reached the cashier. She scanned each item, bagged them, and then gave me the total that I owed. I reached for my wallet and grabbed only air. I'd left my wallet at home.

Be prepared. I remember going down a long and lonely Tennessee road when I heard a sound every driver hates to hear – the flopping of a flat tire. I wasn't worried because I had a spare. I pulled over, and crawled underneath the van to release my spare when I discovered that there was no air in that tire. That adventure ended some 4 hours later when a smiling tow truck driver pulled up to take myself and my car to the tire store.

Have you never had your battery go “dead” and find yourself without jumper cables – along with the rest of the drivers in the parking lot? Be prepared. The United States was woefully unprepared when we were attacked at Pearl Harbor in World War II. We were unprepared when two terrorist controlled aircraft slammed into the Twin Towers of New York. Many died on an unsinkable cruise ship called the “Titanic” because, the engineers reasoned, if it's unsinkable, it won't need very many life boats. Be prepared.

Are you prepared for eternity? Jesus' parable of the Ten Virgins is all about being prepared. Jesus spoke of **ten virgins** because, according to the Pharisees of that day, ten was the minimum number of people that could form a Church or a Synagogue. The ten are called **virgins** because they were moral people. They all went to Church. They all professed to know the Bridegroom. They all said they were Christians. But only five of these virgins entered Heaven, whereas five were locked out. Why? Because the Bridegroom – Jesus Christ – never knew them. Dear friends, you may profess to be a Christian. You may partake of the rituals of the Lord's

Table (also called Communion), of Baptism, and may attend Church regularly. You may tithe and give a portion of your income to your local Church for missions. Your pastor may know you and think you're a fine person. But if Jesus Christ doesn't know you, if you don't have a relationship by faith in Him, then you are not saved. Jesus told the five foolish virgins “**I know you not**”. Does Jesus Christ know you? Have you called on Him, believing, for salvation? Do you have a relationship with Him. If so you're prepared for eternity. If not, you're unprepared.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.

1. Five Were Not Known By The Bridegroom

FOCAL Matthew 25:1-2, 11-12 **Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. {2} And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. {11} Lord, Lord, open to us. {12} But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.**

Why were five of these virgins excluded from the **Kingdom of Heaven**? Was it because one group had training or knowledge, and the other group did not? Note our text. First of all the parable concerns **ten virgins**.

All ten are called “**virgins**”. These people all had a knowledge of morality.

ILLUSTRATE A virgin is someone who has kept his or herself sexually pure – something that was highly prized in the ancient world. When Joseph discovered that his wife Mary was with child the Bible says that he,

Matthew 1:19 ... being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.^{HCSB}

According to Jewish Law Mary could have been killed – stoned with stones following a publicly disgraceful trial – if it was found that she violated the wedding contract. Joseph was not willing to shame Mary. And, as our context tells us, an angel of God hastened to tell Joseph that “**that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost**” (Matthew 1:20). Mary had done nothing wrong, but God was using her to enter His own creation.

Virginity is used in Scripture – not only for those who maintain their sexual purity – but also for those who worship the One and Only True God.

When Israel entered the Promised Land of Canaan the Lord warned them:

Exodus 34:14-15 Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. {15} "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite

you and you will eat their sacrifices.^{NIV}

God often equated spiritual unfaithfulness to *sexual infidelity*. So when the Lord describes these ten as **virgins** the spiritual intent is that these are all **worshippers of the same True God**. They all profess to know Jesus Christ as Savior. They all go to the local Church. They all have the same shared knowledge. They know the Scripture, they know the rituals – and have all done the same thing. It is not that five are “Christian” and five are “Buddhist” or “Mormon” or “Jehovah's Witnesses” or “Islamic”. All ten have knowledge and subscribe to Christ with their lips. These ten **all know the same rituals**. Look at our text:

FOCAL Matthew 25:1 **Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.**

Not only were all ten called **virgins**, but they **took their lamps**. They all had **Biblical truth** – and headed to prayer meeting at the same time. Now you might look at that and say “Brother David, how did you make the leap to where these **lamps** are **Biblical truth**? The Scripture says so. When God made covenant with Abraham God's Word became a lamp that passed through the cut of the covenant:

Genesis 15:17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

God is called **the Lamp Who will lighten the darkness (2 Samuel 22:29)**. The Psalmist said:

What does the *lamp* signify in the parable?

Psalms 119:105 Thy word {o God} is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

These virgins all had the **Word of God, the truths of the Scripture**. They knew to go to Church on regular basis. They came to Church and supported their Pastor. They sang hymns and praises. They sat down at the Lord's Table, and broke bread *together* as the Lord commanded. They all had Bible truth. But there was a difference. Five believed on that Bible truth and put it into action because they had a relationship with Jesus Christ. Of the other five Jesus said::

FOCAL Matthew 25:12 ...Verily I say unto you, I know¹ you not.

ILLUSTRATE “I do not know you. You are a stranger to Me”. The Apostle Peter uses the *exact same Greek phrase* when Jesus is taken prisoner prior to His crucifixion. One of the crowd cries out when he sees Peter, “**This man was with Jesus of Nazareth**” whereas

1 Perfect Active Indicative of G1492, εἶδω, eidō, i'-do, A primary verb; used only in certain past tenses, the others being borrowed from the equivalent, G3700 and G3708; properly to *see* (literally or figuratively); by implication (in the perfect only) to *know*: - be aware, behold, X can (+ not tell), consider, (have) known (-ledge), look (on), perceive, see, be sure, tell, understand, wist, wot.

Peter, poor and frightened Peter, blurts out “**I do not know the man**”. Peter lied when he said he didn't know Jesus, but the Bridegroom did not lie when He told the five virgins “**I do not know you now, nor have I ever known you**”. The virgins had doctrinal knowledge of the Bridegroom, but the Bridegroom had *no knowledge of them*. **I do not know you.**

Dear friends, Christianity is more than following ritual and tradition. Christianity is about having a living relationship with Jesus.

There are many who are *sincere* in their actions, just as the foolish virgins were sincere. There are many who follow every outward ritual of our faith. There are many who do good deeds, help the poor, and even – according to Jesus – cast out demons in His Name. But Beloved, you *must* have a relationship by faith in Jesus. The Lord has told us:

Matthew 7:21-23 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. {22} Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? {23} And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

It is not that you *know about* Christ as Savior, you need to **know Him on a personal level**.

We who are Christians do not rest in our *knowledge* of holy things, nor do we *rest* in our good works. We *rest* in a fixed relationship by faith with Jesus Christ.

The Scottish preacher **Robert Murray McCheyne** said:

“God's children do not rest in knowledge. Hypocrites always rest in their knowledge. You can never tell them anything new. They say: I know that. Tell them of sin, of Christ, of judgment to come, they think they shall be saved because they have knowledge, although this knowledge has never led them to rest on Christ, to pray, to leave their sins. You that are Christ's ... do the things He says”.

In short, you *have a relationship with Jesus*. You know Him, and He knows you. You do not merely call Him **Lord, Lord**, but you have **done the will of the Father which is in Heaven**. What is the will of the Father? What did Jesus say?

John 6:40 And **this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.**

ILLUSTRATE It is a relationship. You who are saved have **seen the Son**. God has opened your eyes to Him. You have seen Him, and seen yourselves as sinners in need of the Savior. But you didn't stop there. The five foolish virgins *saw* the Bridegroom, but they failed to

believe on Him. Belief is more than an affirmation, but it is a trust in Him, a calling upon Him. Recently the magazine *Christianity Today* ran a poll on their website asking **“Do you have a specific memory of your conversion?”**, that is, “Do you remember the moment you began to have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ”? Of *960 people polled*, **30% said no, I do not.**

Dear friends, I do not remember the exact day of the week that I asked my dear wife to marry me. I do not remember the *exact calendar moment* when we first met. But I clearly remember – for it is etched in my memory – the circumstances that led to our first date. I specifically remember asking her to marry me, and I remember where I was when I did it. I remember her answer, and remember our wedding day. In short, I remember when the relationship began.

The five foolish virgins in the parable did all the right things but the *most important thing*: they **did not have a relationship with the Bridegroom**. Unlike the five wise virgins, the Lord was able to say to them **“I never knew you”**. They may have **prophesied in His Name**. They may have **cast out devils**. They may have **done many wonderful works**. But the Lord can only say to them, **“depart from Me, ye that work iniquity – I never knew you”**. How sad that is!

Pastor John McArthur said²:

“Exposure to and familiarity with the true gospel doesn't guarantee true conversion. Knowing the facts

2 In a letter from *Grace to You* dated January 18, 2008

of the gospel and having it penetrate the heart are two different things. Scripture is clear on the matter: it's possible to have a perfect knowledge of the gospel and the Bible, and still not be saved”.

Look further at our focal text.

2. Five Were Not Spiritually Equipped For Heaven

FOCAL Matthew 25:3-5 **They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: {4} But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. {5} While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.**

The five foolish virgins had lamps – Biblical truth – just as the five wise virgins did. All the virgins – both wise and foolish – all **went forth to meet the Bridegroom**. All of the virgins erred, for while they waited **they all slumbered and slept**. But there was one big difference between the wise and the foolish virgins: the **foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them**. What does that mean?

We see oil first used in Scripture by the prophet Jacob who, when he saw a ladder from earth to Heaven in a dream he had in a place called Bethel, he anointed the rock he slept on (**Genesis 28:18**) saying **This is none other but the house of God and gate into Heaven”**. Oil marked the rock, and became among the Jews a means by which they *set things apart for the use of God*. When the Old Testament priests and kings were recognized as set apart for God's use they were anointed with oil

(**Exodus 30:31-32**). When King David was anointed with oil the Spirit of God came on him (**1 Samuel 16:13**). The Lord, in His New Testament, shows us that oil is symbolic of God the Holy Spirit coming on a person (**Acts 10:38; Hebrews 1:9; 1 John 2:20, 27**).

What does *oil* symbolize in the parable?

If you have been saved by faith in Christ, then you are no longer people without a relationship with God. You have a relationship with Jesus. **You did not resist the Holy Spirit** when He called you to salvation (**Acts 7:51**), but you came to Christ, believing on Him. At that point God the Holy Spirit entered the framework of your life. Listen Beloved, the Holy Spirit of God dwells in all those who come to Christ. This is what the oil in the lamps represents – the indwelling Spirit of God.

Jesus Christ made this plain when He said:

John 7:37-39 ... If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. {38} He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. {39} (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

ILLUSTRATE If you have been born again by faith in the Savior, *God indwells you*. He lives in the framework of your life. The **Spirit of God is the seal** that God places on every believer's life:

Ephesians 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,

ILLUSTRATE Notice the progression of salvation shown in this text: **After you heard the word of truth, the Gospel preached, after you believed, you were then sealed with the Spirit of promise.** In ancient times when an important letter was sent out, it was placed in an envelop and **sealed**. Wax was melted over the closure, and a *family seal* was pressed into the wax. The believer in Christ has had his heart melted by the preaching of the Gospel – and the Spirit of God is pressed onto the heart. God is placed in the hearts and minds of His people by the action of new birth. How can you tell a Christian from a non-Christian? The Christian's heart has been melted, and the Spirit of God – Who is love – is impressed on the heart. The Spirit Who indwells the believer teaches us to love:

1 Thessalonians 4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

You who are saved **have been taught of God to love one another.** The Seal of God has made this impression on you. You have oil in your lamps.

The Spirit of God also *communicates* with those who are His Children. The Bible tells us:

Romans 8:15-16 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. {16} The Spirit ... beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

You who are saved know that you are saved. You have oil in your lamps, power in your lives because of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer is like Heaven on earth. You have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit continually places in the true believer's heart a *know so* salvation – for He speaks with our human spirit telling us **we are the children of God.** Oh that all would have this assurance of salvation. Oh that all knew – beyond a doubt – that they were in the grip of Grace. What a difference the Church could make in this world if all who professed Christ were known of Christ!

FOCAL Matthew 25:3, 8 - 10 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: {8} And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. {9} But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. {10} And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

Do not tarry, dear one, if God the Holy Spirit convicts you of your lost condition this very day. **God is not willing that any should perish, but that all come to**

repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

The foolish virgins confused the tarrying of the Bridegroom with an overabundance of time. Many put off till tomorrow what they should do today.

They say, “I will give my life to Jesus, but tomorrow – tomorrow – there's always tomorrow!” These foolish virgins slept alongside of the wise virgins, and when the Bridegroom prepared to come they were not equipped for glory. You must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for yourself. You must trust Him for the indwelling Spirit for yourself. Another person cannot supply you oil for your lamp. You cannot use another person's oil, nor can you excuse yourself based on the activity or inactivity of another person. The foolish said “**give us of your oil**”, but Beloved, note that the wise could give no oil away. Their response was “**go and buy for yourselves**”.

Dear lost friend, Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for your sin and for mine. The difference between us is this: when the Spirit called and offered salvation this old boy said “yes, Lord, yes. I need the Savior – I cast my sins upon you”. Every believer who has ever lived has become convinced of his sinful estate, convinced that there is nothing that he can do to save himself. Every believer has, at one time in his life, confessed himself to the Lord, calling upon the Name of Jesus – and so has been saved.

The believer in Christ has a personal, ongoing and

ever growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

3. The Bridegroom Tarrys – But He Is Coming!

FOCAL Matthew 25:10-13 ... they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. {11} Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. {12} But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. {13} Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

And the door was shut. Though God wants all to be saved, He will not wait indefinitely for you to call on Him for salvation. The Lord allowed Noah to preach for 120 years before He closed the doors of the Ark. But once the doors of the Ark were closed they were sealed – and the judgment of God fell. Jesus says:

John 10:9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

He is the Door, and He is open to receive the lost this very day. The Lord said “**I come to seek and to save that which was lost**” (Luke 19:10).

I have said it before and say it again, *only that which is of value can be lost*. No one has ever looked for a lost candy wrapper, or a broken tool, or a torn garment.

May God touch your heart with His Word.

When these things are gone they are not *lost* for they are valueless. The lost soul has value with God. It is so valuable that Jesus **came to seek and save that which was lost**. The Lord says:

Ezekiel 33:11 ... I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Turn from sin and toward the call of the Savior. Turn from self and toward Him Who will make you more than you are. **Strive, dear sinner friend, to enter in the narrow door that is Jesus**. The Lord is coming again to receive His own unto Himself. When the Master of the House rises up and closes the door none may enter in (**Luke 13:24-27**). The Lord is coming back for His people – will you be one of them? Jesus said:

FOCAL Matthew 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Jesus Christ is coming. **For in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh (Matthew 24:44)**. Be prepared, dear friends, be prepared. When He comes to receive us unto Himself – at that time the Door shall be closed. There are no second chances following death, no purgatory, nothing. Now is the time to turn unto Jesus. Now is the time to **make your robes white in the Blood of Jesus (Revelation 7:14)**.