

## Matthew 25

- This chapter contains three parables that address the question of – What are we to do as we wait for Christ’s return?
- They address three challenges: 1) The temptation to not prepare to endure and wait. 2) The temptation to be paralyzed with fear. 3) The temptation to ignore the needs of the least as we wait for the greatest.

### **Ten virgins (responsible to conserve)**

“<sup>1</sup> Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent.

<sup>3</sup> For when **the foolish** took their lamps, they took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup> but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. <sup>6</sup> But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' <sup>7</sup> Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> And the foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

<sup>9</sup> But **the prudent** answered, saying, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.'

<sup>10</sup> And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and **those who were ready** went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup> And later **the other virgins** also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' <sup>12</sup> But he answered and said, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.'

**<sup>13</sup> Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.**

- The parable is based on a custom where a night procession of bride’s maids (the Greek word means “young maiden” and is used here to emphasize their close relationship with the bride) escort the bride to the home of the groom for a feast. The groom arrives later to make a dramatic entrance. In this case the foolish maids are refused entrance because they were not seen as a part of the bride’s company.
- In the previous parable we had “faithful and unfaithful” servants, now we have “foolish and prudent” virgins. The issue here has nothing to do with productivity. It has to do with preparation.
- The virgins are alike in all aspects but one – their preparedness.
- The question is – Where is Jesus represented here? Is He the bride or the groom? A case can be made for God the Father as the groom and Jesus as the bride. In this case the maids are those associated (disciples) of the bride. The foolish are ultimately not recognized by the Father as they did not come with the bride. The oil in the lamps has been identified with many things – good works, Holy Spirit, faith, grace, etc.

- This parable is designed to make one important point – True disciples will be prepared to endure a prolonged period of time as they look for Christ's second coming. Foolish followers will show themselves to have inauthentic faith by their lack of endurance. Compare the parable of the soils (13:5-6,20-21) where you have some seeds that sprout but wither in the heat.
- Jesus' audience would have been expected to take this principle to heart in their attitude and response to Jesus the Messiah. Were they prepared to receive him or were they going to miss him as he was in their presence?
- The same principle could be applied to our lives. When God is moving in our lives or among us in our age or culture, are we in danger of missing him? Are we unprepared to move when and where he is moving in our lives or environment? As with many of Jesus' parables, there are foundational principles that can have many levels of application.

## ***The talents (responsible to create)***

14 For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. 15 And to one he gave **five** talents, to another, **two**, and to another, **one**, each **according to his own ability**; and he went on his journey. 16 Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17 In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18 But he who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master's money.

19 Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20 And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, **I have gained five more talents.**' 21 His master said to him, '**Well done, good and faithful slave**; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.' 22 The one also who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, **I have gained two more talents.**' 23 His master said to him, '**Well done, good and faithful slave**; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

24 And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25 And **I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground**; see, you have what is yours.' 26 But his master answered and said to him, '**You wicked, lazy slave**, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no seed. 27 Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28 Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.'

**29 For to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.** 30 And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- A talent = about \$2500
- This parable has many interesting ramifications: 1) Not everyone is equal and the expectations are matched to the abilities. 2) Everyone is given freedom to creatively produce a profit for the Master. 3) Fear can paralyze us. 4) As we exercise our abilities in bearing fruit we are given more opportunity and responsibility. In Luke 16:10-12 we are told that the “more” or “greater things” are spiritual responsibilities.
- The issue of “fear” is powerful in this parable. The way the servant sees the Master determines how he responds. The way we see God will shape our response as well.
- The Master is quick to point out that the response of the servant says more about the servant than the Master. Even if the Master is hard to live with, there were better options than shrinking back in fear.
- The question of discerning God’s will is addressed indirectly in this parable. The Parable suggests that we are free to creatively use our resources and abilities to bear fruit knowing the will or objective of the Master.
- The Master does not give detailed instructions as to what to do or how to do it. He just leaves His possessions with them understanding that they are to be good

stewards and produce a profit with what they have been given. So we should not expect God to lead us in all details but rather use our common sense wisdom to find the way.

### ***The sheep and goats (responsible to care)***

<sup>31</sup> But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; <sup>33</sup> and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

<sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to **those on His right**, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; <sup>36</sup> naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? <sup>38</sup> And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? <sup>39</sup> And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer and say to them, **'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'**

<sup>41</sup> Then He will also say to **those on His left**, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; <sup>42</sup> for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' <sup>44</sup> Then they themselves also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' <sup>45</sup> Then He will answer them, saying, **'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'**

<sup>46</sup> And these will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the righteous into **eternal life.**"

- While each of these parables has a judgment theme the last becomes very specific in it focus on the last judgment.
- Two parallel passages – Exek.34:17-19 and Rev.20:11-15.
- Who are “these brothers of mine”? The majority of interpreters throughout the history of the church have recognized that in Matthew, this terminology always referred to “disciples” (10:42, 18:6,10,14, 5:19, 11:11). Elsewhere in the NT “brothers” when applied in a spiritual sense always refers to “believers”.
- While it is true that we are all linked as “brothers” in the human race (bearers of God’s image), this is not the way the Bible uses the term “brothers.” We are to love all people because they are made in God’s image but that is not what is in view here even though it has tempted many modern preachers to treat this passage as applicable to a universal social ethic.
- If “brothers” refers to “believers” then it would suggest that Jesus is so closely identified with His followers that their experience in life is His. This seems to be consistent with other things that we know about Christ (the head) and the church (the body).
- One lesson that must come from this parable is the strong association that true believers have with the church. If someone says they have faith in Christ but do not serve His people, they are lying. True faith will be seen in how we relate to God’s family.

- The fact that eternal life and eternal punishment are parallel suggests that annihilation at death is not an optional view.