

WHAT JESUS SAID – THEN AND NOW

About Being Ready

TEXT: Mt. 25:1-13

INTRODUCTION: The story Jesus told in the beginning of Matthew, Chapter 25 is set in one of the happiest of occasions, yet it is hard to find words of the Master that conclude with greater sorrow than the ones we will read today.

Before we even read the words that Jesus said, I want to explain to you the setting, because we westerners are totally unfamiliar with the background of the message Jesus puts before us.

I. THE SETTING IS A WEDDING

A. A Jewish Marriage

1. **Engagement** –often arranged by fathers

2. **Betrothal**

- a. There was a small marriage ceremony among family and friends.
- b. Bride and Groom exchanged vows.
- c. Considered legally married. To break apart at this point required divorce. If the groom died the next day, the bride was considered a widow.
- d. When the ceremony was concluded, the groom left. There was no honeymoon. The marriage was not consummated, and the couple did not begin to live together.
- e. Instead, the bridegroom would go away for several months, sometimes for a year to establish himself in a business or a trade and to prepare a place for the two to live together as husband and wife. (By the way, this is where things were between Mary and Joseph when she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit.)

3. **Wedding Feast**

- a. Through the wedding feast and its accompanying festivities, the whole community celebrated the marriage.
- b. Sometimes it lasted a whole week.
- c. The wedding feast celebration began with the groom and groomsmen coming through the streets, often at night, to the bride's house, where she and the bridesmaids were waiting, knowing that he could come at any time, but not knowing exactly when.

- d. On arrival, the bridegroom would take his bride by the hand and together they and their attendants would begin a parade through the streets heading toward the wedding feast, their way lit by the torches carried by the groomsmen and bridesmaids.
- e. Everywhere they went people would join in the parade and the celebration. People left their jobs, their labor in the home to join the festivities. The rabbis even declared that a man could leave his study of the torah temporarily to join in the procession and the wedding feast.
- f. At the end of the feast, all of the guests would follow the bride and groom to the entrance of their new home, where they are left alone for the first time to begin their lives together.

From this background, which was common knowledge to all of His hearers, Jesus told this story:

II. THE STORY

Matthew 25:1–13 1 “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. 3 Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. 6 “And at midnight a cry was *heard*: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ 7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9 But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ 12 But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ 13 “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

A. Understand the story.

1. Ten virgin bridesmaids waited with the bride because they had been told he was coming soon.
2. But when it was late, and later than they had expected, all ten of the bridesmaids went to sleep.
3. The bridegroom’s arrival was announced by a loud voice, awakening all. They each reached for their torch (a better translation than lamp) and cut away the charred cloth, because one of the chief duties of the bridesmaids was to hold the torches to provide the light as the wedding party made its way through the dark streets to the wedding feast.
4. Five of the bridesmaids had with them a jar of oil, for it was the oil in the cloth that burned giving light. The cloth itself was not the fuel but merely the holder of the oil as a wick is in a lantern or a candle.

5. But five of the bridesmaids had no oil. Though they were dressed for the occasion and had their torches, they had no oil.
6. They tried to borrow some from the five who had oil but were turned away because the five had none to spare.
7. The five without oil immediately went in search of a vendor or someone who could give or loan them oil for their torches.
8. However, when the bridegroom arrived, as was the custom, the door was shut and locked. The foolish bridesmaids returned empty handed from their search and begged the bridegroom to let them in for the wedding feast.
9. The bridegroom simply said, "I do not know you."

B. Understand the message:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom returning for His own. **John 14:2–3 ... I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.**
2. The bridesmaids are those people expecting to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb, the people expecting to go to heaven.
3. Oil in the Scriptures consistently represents the Holy Spirit.

Some of those expecting to go to heaven have the Holy Spirit living inside of them. They are saved, because the Scripture says,

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

John 14:17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

However, **tragically, some of those expecting to go to heaven do not have the Spirit.**

They are lost.

- **They go the same places as the saved.**
- **They look the same in dress and style.**
- **Outwardly they appear to be saved.**

BUT THEY ARE NOT!

- **The Holy Spirit does not live within them.**

- **There is an outward form of religion, but there is no spiritual life within.**
 - **They have not been transformed which is evidence that they have not been redeemed.**
4. **When the Lord Jesus comes they scramble to get the Spirit, scramble to get salvation from friends and family who have been genuinely born again.**
5. **But they cannot!**
- **It is not that those who are saved would not gladly give it if they could.**
 - **It is not that they are unwilling or hard-hearted.**
 - **They themselves only received salvation and the Spirit as a gift from God through faith in Christ.**
 - **They can tell you where to get it.**
 - **They can tell you how to receive it from Him.**
 - **But they cannot take a portion of the grace God has granted them and share it with you.** The Apostle Paul told the Romans that even he could not do that!
6. **But my friend, let me tell you, every one of you who will not rise to meet the Lord in the air because you call yourself a Christian, but you really are not. There is no fruit in your life. You're the same old sinner all dressed up, but you know in the depth of your soul you have never surrendered your life to Christ and received Him as your Lord, when all the truly saved loved ones around you suddenly disappear, you are going to cry out.**

The toughest among you is going to cry out, "Give it to me! I want to be saved. I don't want to be left behind."

- **Some of you men that ridiculed your wife and gave her a hard time for her faith will fall on your face begging to have some of her faith in your rock-hard soul.**
- **Some of you that think you are so smart, smarter than the Christian's God, will trade all the journals of skepticism and philosophy you have ever read for one person to recite to you John 3:16 and give you a chance to believe.**
- **Some of you teenagers that hang around with teens that are truly born again and really try to live it, but you yourself want no part of this God and righteousness stuff,**

Some of you that call your parents old fashioned and some names I would never say, and who think you are so cool in your rebellion and unbelief,

When suddenly your believing parents are gone; they have risen with other believers to go and live with the Lord and you have been left, you are going to grieve that you don't have your father's faith, that you don't have your mother's godliness.

CONCLUSION: And let me tell you that this morning I would not bring consolation to you.

I wish you would grieve.

- Grieve over your sin that nailed the Savior to the cross.
- Mourn over your rebellion that has caused your loved ones to cry and heaven to weep.
- May your heart be broken over your unbelief and pride-filled skepticism that blinded you from seeing the clearly revealed truth of God.
- And may your soul be devastated to know that what Jesus said happened to these five foolish girls is what is going to happen to you!

You are the one who is going to be calling out, "Lord, Lord, open to me!"

And Jesus will say, "I do not know you."

My friend, only the words of Jesus Himself can help you where you are.

Luke 13:3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

Mark 1:15 ... "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."