



53: **Getting Ready** (Mt 25:1-30)

Are you ready for the return of Jesus? Join us as we explore 2 powerful parables revealing the urgency of being spiritually prepared and the importance of putting our God-given gifts to work until the day that He returns.

beourguest

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teachingnotes

Matthew 25:1 (NIV) At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

The term **heaven** is often a stand-in term for God; **the kingdom of heaven** is referring to *the kingdom of God*.

The **10 virgins** represent those who claim to be a part of the **kingdom** - some prepared for Jesus to return while others are not.

The bridegroom is imagery for Jesus returning.

The **virgins** are young unmarried girls who likely are bridesmaids at the bride's home, awaiting the bridegroom and his friends.

This is where the marriage would take place. The wedding party and attenders would typically go to the home of the bridegroom, where a wedding banquet was held. This was often done at night where the lamps would have made a beautiful display as the bridal party & guests made their way down the streets.

Matthew 25:2-6 (NIV) Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. "At midnight the cry rang out: **'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'**

This extra oil was there in case **the bridegroom** didn't show up quickly and the lamp burn out for lack of fuel. In Jesus' story, the bridegroom doesn't arrive as quickly as they expected; this delay leads to them falling asleep. When the wake-up call is sounded, some of them are ready, but others aren't.

Matthew 25:7-9 (NIV) Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' " 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

They **trimmed their lamps**, a necessary task to ensure the lamp provided consistent light. It involved cutting off the burnt ends, adjusting the wick to the correct length for an even burn, & maintaining the oil level to keep the lamp burning.

Why wouldn't they SHARE with the other ladies? The point of the story is not to tell followers of Jesus to share what we have with others who are in need. Instead, the point of the story is to be READY for the return of Jesus.

✓ You *don't* enter the KINGdom because someone else is ready, but because YOU are.

5 of the young ladies are excited as they were prepared after the extended wait, but the other 5 young ladies were afraid because they were not prepared for their lamps to be lit after all this time.

Matthew 25:10-12 (NIV) But while they were on their way to buy the oil, **the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him** to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. "Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!' "But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, **I don't know you.**'

This story is about much more than a wedding banquet; this is about **the Kingdom of Heaven** - those who enter in and those who don't.

❖ Jesus warns that there will be those who will be shut out from the Kingdom...forever - with no chance of getting in.

Upon your death, or upon Jesus' return - **your forever home will be set.**

Matthew 25:13 (NIV) Therefore **keep watch**, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Are we keeping watch? Are we living like He's Returning?

BIG QUESTION: Are YOU Getting Ready for His Return?

Matthew 25:14-18 (NIV) Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

Again, the point of the story is about **the Kingdom of Heaven**. The **man going on a journey** represents Jesus, as He would eventually leave and later return - expecting **his servants** to have done something to grow the investment of **gold** he left with them.

The 1st two servants understood that the master gave the men the money tasked to *grow* what they had been *given*. But the 3rd man cared more about *security* than *growth*. While the other 2 men were working to *grow* what the master had given them - expecting His return & expecting to face His judgment - this man did what was easiest and put it in a hole - no work involved and no real expectation of his master returning to hold him accountable for what he had been given.

Matthew 25:19-23 (NIV) After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. "Master," he said, "you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more." His master replied, "**Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!**" The man with two bags of gold also came. "Master," he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.' His master replied, "**Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!**"

Will there be *ANYTHING BETTER* than hearing something "**Well done, good and faithful servant!**"!?

Jim Elliot, a young missionary is forever known in his death because of his passion to take Jesus to an unreached group of Auca tribe in Ecuador - a group of people that killed him and 4 other young missionaries. Ultimately, this people group came to follow Jesus because of their faithfulness & the faithfulness of their families carrying the Gospel message to them.

☀ In his journal, Jim Elliot wrote this often quoted phrase:

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

Matthew 25:24-27 (NIV)

Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. "Master," he said, "I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you."

His master replied, "**You wicked, lazy servant!** So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest."

The **Master** sees that the servant wasn't really his **servant** at all. He didn't take the master's expectation seriously. The servant even blames the master for being a **hard man**. The servant wasn't living like the master was returning. The 'servant' wasn't interested in *growing* what he had been *given*. He was more concerned with his own *safety & security*.

Just because we call Jesus our master doesn't make it so. Those who CLAIM Jesus but don't OBEY Jesus, aren't really his servants, and they can expect to hear something like this...

Matthew 25:28-30 (NIV) "So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And **throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**"

People aren't saved because of their good works, but **saved people do good works** - it's in our spiritual DNA. We are followers of Jesus and **followers of Jesus...FOLLOW JESUS!**

This 'servant' is **thrown outside** - thrown outside the kingdom - where there is **darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth** - language Jesus used of HELL (see Mt 8:12, 13:42, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51). Jesus DOES send people to hell...forever, and ever, and ever.

BIG QUESTION #2: What are you DOING with what you've been GIVEN?

Are you living like Jesus is returning? What are you doing to further His Kingdom? How are you using what he's given you to invest in what is *ETERNAL* and not just what is *EARTHLY*?

2 Peter 3:3-4 (NIV) Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. **They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised?** Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

2 Peter 3:9-12a (NIV)

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead **he is patient** with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? **You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God** and speed its coming.

2 Peter 3:14-15a (NIV)

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make **every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him**. Bear in mind that **our Lord's patience** means **salvation...**

❓ **Are YOU Getting Ready for His Return?**

❓ **What are you DOING with what you've been GIVEN?**

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!

* Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Steve & Debbie Bass** (850-673-7952), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Tim & Joni Hughey** (850-464-1156), **Rob & Rebecca Leatherberry** (229-232-1087), or **Mark & Dot Mancil** (850-253-5405).

discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. What stood out to you from today's teaching - answering questions or stirring up questions for you?
2. **Read Matthew 25:1-11.** Why are some of the women described as "foolish" and others described as "wise"?
3. How can we encourage others to be prepared without assuming responsibility for their preparedness?
4. What are some modern examples of spiritual unpreparedness that we might encounter in our daily lives?
5. Why weren't the 5 virgins allowed into the wedding banquet? **Reread verse 1.** What is the story really about and what does this tell us about the possibility of having a 2nd chance of coming into the Kingdom after death or after Jesus returns?
6. **Based on verse 13**, what's the point of the story Jesus is telling? How can you change your attitude or actions this week to reflect your belief that Jesus could return at any moment?
7. **Read Matthew 25:12-30.** What did the master call the 1st two servants? Why? What did the master call the 3rd 'servant'? Why?
8. How does the parable of the talents illustrate the relationship between *faith* and *works*?
9. What talents, abilities, health, or resources has God given you that you should use to further His kingdom and what are some practical ways you can do this?
10. How can we maintain a sense of urgency and anticipation of Jesus' Return without becoming anxious or fearful?
11. How can we as a faith community support one another in staying prepared and vigilant? What role does accountability play in our spiritual preparedness?
12. How can we pray for/care for one another this week? (Pray for one another.)