

Deeper Applications: “Sooner or Later 2: Revealing Wisdom”
Looking for Jesus Sermon Series #9
Matthew 25:1-13
Cross Community Church, Savannah, Ga.
September 13, 2026

- Looking for Jesus #1 “The Great Why” Matt. 24:1-6/Daniel
9:20-27 July 12, 2026
- Looking for Jesus #2 “Now and Not Yet” Matt. 24:1-14
July 19, 2026
- Looking for Jesus #3 “Peace Has an Enemy” Matt. 24:15-22
July 26, 2026
- Looking for Jesus #4 “Seen by Some; Seen by All” Matt. 24:23-28
August 2, 2026
- Looking for Jesus #5 “Signs of the Time” Matt. 24:29-31
August 9, 2026
- Looking for Jesus #6 “Signs of the Seasons” Matt. 24:32-35
August 16, 2026
- Looking for Jesus #7 “Live: Looking” Matt. 24:36-42
August 30, 2026
- Looking for Jesus #8 “Sooner or Later 1: Resolved Obedience” Matt. 24:42-51
September 6, 2026
- Looking for Jesus #9 “Sooner or Later 2: Revealing Wisdom” Matt. 25:1-13
September 13, 2026
- Looking for Jesus #10 “Sooner or Later 3: Rewarded Faithfulness” Matt. 25:14-30
September 20, 2026

Matthew 25 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶ But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷ Then all those virgins rose 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, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was

shut. ¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹² But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

- **Main Idea: The parable of the ten virgins compares genuine disciples to wise wedding attendants.**

Summary:

What does it mean to be truly ready? In this powerful exploration of Matthew 25:1-13, we are drawn into the parable of the ten virgins and confronted with one of the most searching questions our faith can ask us. The parable unfolds against the backdrop of a Jewish wedding tradition, where ten young women are invited to join a processional to meet the bridegroom. All ten received the same invitation. All ten waited. All ten even fell asleep. Yet when the midnight cry rang out, only five were prepared for the journey. The distinction was not dramatic or visible from the outside. It came down to one simple thing: oil. This is a story about spiritual preparation that is deeply personal. No one can carry it for us. We cannot borrow someone else's faith, someone else's relationship with Christ, or someone else's readiness to meet him. The parable reminds us that wisdom is not merely knowing the truth but applying it. Knowledge applied is wisdom revealed. And the wisdom this passage calls us toward is the wisdom of living each day as people who are genuinely ready, not because we have earned our way, but because we have surrendered to the one who paid the bride price for us on the cross. The urgency here is real. The door does not stay open forever. But the good news woven throughout this message is that today, right now, it is still open.

Discussion Questions

The sermon describes how all ten virgins received the same invitation and experienced the same waiting, yet only five were prepared — in what ways might people today assume they are spiritually ready without having made genuine personal preparation?

The pastor emphasizes that spiritual preparation is personal and cannot be borrowed or transferred from someone else's faith — how does this

challenge the tendency to rely on the faith of family members or a church community as a substitute for one's own relationship with Christ?

Psalm 19 and Romans 1 are referenced to argue that God reveals himself to all people without exception — how does this shape your understanding of personal accountability before God, and how does it motivate you to share the gospel with others?

The pastor describes wisdom as 'knowledge applied' — in what specific areas of your spiritual life do you sense a gap between what you know to be true and how you are actually living?

The image of the shut door in the parable is a sobering picture of finality — how does the reality that grace will not always be available change the urgency with which you approach your own faith and your conversations with those who do not yet know Christ?

The sermon draws a parallel between the uncertainty of the bridegroom's return and the unpredictability of our own lives, as illustrated by the story of the young man at Hunter Army Airfield — how does the fragility of life practically shape the way you prioritize what matters most each day?

The pastor suggests that every day a person delays surrendering to Christ is effectively a day of rejecting him — how does this reframe the common idea of waiting until life is more 'in order' before turning to God?

Tennyson's poem 'Late, Late, So Late' is used to reinforce the theme of irreversible missed opportunity — what emotions does this imagery stir in you, and how does it affect your sense of responsibility toward people in your life who have not yet responded to the gospel?

The sermon connects the Jewish wedding tradition to the return of Christ, noting that the bride price has been paid and the groom will return only at the father's consent — how does understanding this cultural backdrop deepen your appreciation of what Christ has done and what his return will mean?

The pastor closes with the image of God's goodness running after us even when we were running away — how does reflecting on moments in your own life when God pursued you through his grace shape the way you now wait, watch, and remain ready for his return?

Small Group Guide

"Sooner or Later: Revealing Wisdom"

Based on Matthew 25:1-13

Overview

This week's sermon drew from the Parable of the Ten Virgins to explore what it means to be genuinely prepared for Christ's return. Using the backdrop of Jewish wedding tradition, Pastor Kevin examined how wisdom is not simply knowing the right things but applying that knowledge through faithful, personal preparation. The central challenge of the message was this: are you ready to meet Jesus today?

Key Takeaways

- All ten virgins received the same invitation, heard the same cry, and waited through the same delay. The difference between them was not opportunity but preparation.
 - Wisdom is knowledge applied. Knowing that Christ will return is not enough. Living in light of that reality is what reveals true wisdom.
 - Spiritual preparation is personal. No one can borrow another person's faith, oil, or readiness before God.
 - No one knows the hour of Christ's return, which means the wise response is to be prepared for every possible scenario: sooner than expected, later than expected, or completely unexpected.
 - There is coming a day when the door of grace will be shut. Today is not that day, but today's choices shape tomorrow's readiness.
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Opening Question

Take a few minutes to get the conversation started before diving into the text.

- Can you think of a time when you were forced to wait on something and later realized the waiting was actually wise or even protective? What did that experience teach you?
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Read Together

Have someone in the group read Matthew 25:1-13 aloud. Remind the group that this passage is part of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus's extended teaching to his disciples on the Mount of Olives just days before his crucifixion.

Discussion Questions

On the Invitation

1. All ten virgins were invited to the processional. They all had lamps. They all fell asleep waiting. On the surface, they looked the same. What does this tell us about the danger of assuming that outward religious participation equals genuine readiness before God?
2. Pastor Kevin referenced Matthew 7, where Jesus describes people who called him Lord and did mighty works in his name but heard the words "I never knew you." How does that passage connect to this parable? Does it challenge or comfort you, and why?
3. Pastor Kevin made the point that God reveals himself to everyone in some way, referencing Romans 1 and Psalm 19. How does that reality shape the way you think about sharing the gospel with people around you?

On Preparation

4. Pastor Kevin said, "Knowledge applied is wisdom revealed." In your own life, is there a gap between what you know to be true about Jesus and how you are actually living? What does that gap look like?
5. The five foolish virgins had lamps but not enough oil. They had a form of readiness without the substance of it. Where in your spiritual life might you have the form of faith without the fuel to sustain it through a long delay?
6. Pastor Kevin pointed out that spiritual preparation is personal. You cannot borrow someone else's faith, and you cannot loan yours out. How does this challenge the tendency to lean on the faith of a parent, a spouse, or a church community rather than cultivating your own?
7. Pastor Kevin said, "Every day you say, Lord, I will get right tomorrow, you have rejected him for that day." That is a strong statement. How do you respond to it? Do you think it is fair? What does it reveal about the nature of daily surrender?

On Watching and Perseverance

8. Jesus closes the parable in verse 13 with the command to watch, because no one knows the day or the hour. What does it look like practically to watch and stay ready in your daily life? What habits or rhythms help you stay alert spiritually?
 9. Pastor Kevin mentioned that the wise servant does not have to be alarmed or led astray if they are truly alert and aware. How does being grounded in the truth of Christ's return actually bring peace rather than anxiety?
 10. The sermon ended with the image of God's goodness running after us. How does the grace of God that has pursued you motivate you toward preparation rather than presumption?
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Reflection and Personal Application

Take a few quiet moments before discussing these as a group.

- On a scale of one to ten, how prepared do you feel to meet Jesus today, not in terms of moral perfection, but in terms of your relationship with him? What would it take to move that number higher?
 - Is there something specific you have been putting off in your walk with God? A conversation you need to have, a confession you need to make, a habit you need to build or break?
 - Who in your life needs to hear the message of this parable? How might you share it with them this week?
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Practical Applications for the Week

- Begin each morning this week by asking God to help you live that day as if it could be your last and as if Christ could return at any moment. Notice how that simple prayer shapes your decisions throughout the day.
 - Identify one area of your spiritual life where you have knowledge without application. Choose one concrete step this week to close that gap.
 - Reach out to one person in your life who may be spiritually unprepared. You do not have to preach a sermon. Simply check in, share a meal, and let the Holy Spirit open a door for a meaningful conversation.
 - Spend time this week in Matthew 7:21-27, the passage Pastor Kevin referenced about those who called Jesus Lord but were not known by him. Sit with it honestly and let it prompt genuine self-examination.
 - If you have never formally surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, do not let this week pass without talking to your group leader or Pastor Kevin about what that step looks like.
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Closing Prayer

Close your time together by praying as a group. You may choose to pray out loud together, as the congregation did during the service, or have one person lead. Ask God for the wisdom to be prepared, the courage to surrender whatever is holding you back, and the compassion to help others find readiness in Christ before the door closes.

Memory Verse for the Week

Matthew 25:13 -- Jesus's closing command in the parable, calling his followers to watch because no one knows the day or the hour of his return. Write it down, carry it with you, and let it serve as a daily reminder to stay ready.

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Based on the Sermon Series: Sooner or Later -- Revealing Wisdom

Day 1: The Invitation Is Open -- But Not Forever

Reading: Matthew 25:1-5

Devotional: Every person receives an invitation to know God. The ten virgins in Jesus' parable were all invited to the processional -- no one was excluded at the start. God does not hide himself from anyone. As Psalm 19 reminds us, creation itself declares his glory to every corner of the earth. But an open invitation does not guarantee an open door forever. The bridegroom came, the door shut, and late arrivals found no entry. Today, the door of grace stands open. The question is not whether you have been invited. The question is whether you have responded. Do not presume upon tomorrow what is freely available today.

Reflection: Have you genuinely responded to God's invitation, or have you been assuming the door will always be open?

Application: Write down the names of two or three people in your life who have heard the gospel but have not yet responded. Pray specifically for them today by name.

Day 2: Wisdom Is Knowledge Applied

Reading: Matthew 25:6-9; James 1:22-25

James 1:22-25 warns that hearing God's word without acting on it is like glancing in a mirror and immediately forgetting what you look like -- self-deception dressed up as religion.

Devotional: The five foolish virgins knew the bridegroom was coming. They had their lamps. They showed up. But knowing was not enough. They failed to apply what they knew to what they did. The pastor in this sermon made it plain: wisdom is not simply knowledge -- it is knowledge applied. You may know every major doctrine of the Christian faith. You may be able to recite Scripture from memory. But if that knowledge does not shape how you live, prepare, and watch, it is not yet wisdom. Wisdom is revealed in the practical, daily decisions of a life oriented toward the return of Christ.

Reflection: Where in your life do you know the right thing but consistently fail to do it?

Application: Identify one area where knowledge has not yet become obedience. Take one concrete step today to close that gap.

Day 3: Preparation Is Personal -- No One Can Lend You Oil

Reading: Matthew 25:8-12; Romans 10:9-10

Romans 10:9-10 makes clear that salvation is a personal confession and personal belief -- it cannot be inherited, borrowed, or transferred from one person to another.

Devotional: The five wise virgins could not share their oil. It was not selfishness that kept them from giving it away -- it was the simple reality that some things cannot be transferred. Your mother's faith cannot save you. Your grandfather's decades of faithful service cannot cover you. Your church attendance does not substitute for personal surrender. God catches his fish first, then he cleans them up. If you have been waiting to get your life in order before coming to Christ, consider that strategy carefully. He already knows every piece of baggage you carry. He died for you in full knowledge of it. Preparation is personal. It begins with you, today.

Reflection: Are you relying on anyone else's spiritual preparation as a substitute for your own?

Application: Spend time today in honest prayer, speaking directly to God about any area of your life you have been holding back from him.

Day 4: Watch Therefore -- Perseverance Is the Proof

Reading: Matthew 25:13; Hebrews 12:1-3

Hebrews 12:1-3 calls believers to run with endurance the race set before them, fixing their eyes on Jesus, who endured the cross and is now seated at the right hand of God.

Devotional: Jesus closes the parable of the ten virgins with two words that carry enormous weight: watch therefore. This is not passive waiting. It is active, alert, daily readiness. The return of Christ will come either sooner than expected, later than expected, or completely without warning. The only wise response to all three possibilities is the same -- be ready now, and stay ready. Perseverance is not simply surviving the long delay. It is continuing to watch, continuing to trust, continuing to walk faithfully even when the bridegroom seems to tarry. Those who endure to the end demonstrate that their faith was genuine from the beginning.

Reflection: Would you describe your current spiritual life as watchful and alert, or have you drifted into a kind of comfortable drowsiness?

Application: Set a daily reminder on your phone with a simple prompt: "Am I ready today?" Let it serve as a call to brief prayer and self-examination each morning this week.

Day 5: The Goodness of God Is Still Running After You

Reading: Psalm 23:6; Luke 15:11-24

Psalm 23:6 declares that goodness and mercy will follow -- literally pursue -- the believer all the days of their life. Luke 15:11-24 pictures a father who sees his returning son while he is still a long way off and runs to meet him.

Devotional: One of the songs sung during this worship service carried a powerful truth: God's goodness is running after us. Not walking. Running. The parable of the ten virgins warns us that a day is coming when the door will close. But today is not that day. Today, the Father is still running toward prodigals. Today, grace is still being extended. Today, the invitation remains open. Whatever your week has looked like -- whatever you said that you wish you had not, whatever you looked at that you should not have, whatever you neglected -- his mercies are new this morning. Great is his faithfulness. Run toward the one who has been running after you.

Reflection: In what area of your life do you most need to receive God's pursuing grace today?

Application: Confess specifically and receive fully. Then reach out to one person today and tell them that God's goodness is still running after them too.

This reading plan is rooted in the conviction that one day it will be too late -- but today is not that day. Be prepared. Stay ready. And tell someone.