

Matthew 25:1-13

Announcements:

- Shade structures reminder (sign up!) and facility portables funds & permits (pray and give)

Open to **Matthew Chapter 25** (Need a Bible? Raise your hand...) **Mt. Of Olives sermon details!**

- Last time: **Four illustrations** (flood, workers, thief, servants) - all make the same points:
 - Christ is returning... The World will be caught off guard... We are to be watchful...
- This Time: A **Parable of a Wedding** that illustrates the exact same things!

Message Title: The Midnight Cry

- Wedding Approaching (verses 1-5)
- Last Minute Scramble (verses 6-9)
- Guest List Confirmed (verses 10-13)

Wedding vibes: Long Time Anticipation. Last Minute Craziess. Groom is delayed. Guest List Issues.

- **Beautiful & Stressful!**

Wedding Approaching (verses 1-5)

PRAY

V. 1 - Then...

- Time stamp ("then" or "at that time"). **Connects to chapter 24** (a continuation of thought...)

V. 1 - The kingdom of heaven shall be likened to...

- **Be likened to** = A comparison or illustration (essentially a parable)
 - **Be careful** - Hyper-allegorist? Devotionalist? Major vs minor? **Simple reading is best...**
- **Kingdom of heaven** (Matthew's favorite) = **synonymous w/ God's Kingdom** (**fully realized!**)
- The **illustration is a wedding**, but the point has to do with **God's Kingdom** (who's in vs. out)

V. 1 - Ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

- **Ten virgins** - Significance to ten? (10 commandments, 10 plagues, 10 for minyan, Tithe - **Idea of Completeness!?**) **Not big enough ideas** to overly focus to affect the passage interpretation.
- **Virgins** = **Parthenos**: Virgin (male or female), young woman, or marriageable daughter.
 - In context, likely meaning to reference the idea of a **bridesmaid**. **No bride mentioned?**
 - 2 Cor. 11:2 - "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."
 - **Ephesians 5** also speaks of the Church as the spotless Bride of Christ.
 - Safe to say we're dealing with the **"church"** as **a picture of the bridesmaids**
- They went out to **"meet the bridegroom (groom)"**
- **In the OT** - God pictures Himself as a husband of Israel (Isaiah 54, 62; Hosea 2)
- **In the NT** - A handful of references to Christ as the bridegroom (Matt. 9, John 3, Mark 2)
- It's clear we're dealing with a wedding **between Christ & His bride, the church!**
 - Hebrew weddings had a few components (familiar!) and were **glorious celebrations!**
 - **Mishnah Kiddushin** (section of **"talmud"** dealing with marriages & betrothals)

- (1) **Bethrothal (Kiddushin)**
- (2) **Ceremony (Nissu'in)**
- (3) **Feast (Mishteh / Se'udah)**
- Let's look at these components...
- (1) **Betrothal (Kiddushin)** - This was a ceremonial exchange to confirm the marriage.
 - **Kesef** - groom pays **bride price** (traditionally, a ring) - *Gen 24 - Abraham's servant gifts for Isaac's wife, and family consented...*
 - **Shetar** - groom gives **document of intent**, **she must consent!**
 - Two witnesses were required (*fascinating study for another day...*)
 - It is customary to drink a cup together...
 - **Ketubah** - means that a **covenant has been established**. Legally & spiritually binding (*must divorce to exit*)
 - Other Hebrew traditions say that then...
 - The Groom goes to build a home (prepare a place)
 - The wife is now protected/set apart and must keep herself pure/adorned.
- **Beautiful picture of Christ and His Church!**
 - **Christ paid the bride price** - with His life on the cross - **paid in full**
 - **The bride consents in faith** - committing to this betrothal.
 - **All drink the cup** signifying of the betrothal covenant (**communion**)
 - Christ goes to **prepare a place** for His bride (**John 14:2-3**)
 - The bride **remains ready & pure** for the marriage (**2 Cor. 11, Eph. 5**)
- (2) **Ceremony (Nissu'in)** (*means "lift up or carry"*) Bride is escorted to her new home!
 - But the key is that this could happen many months after the betrothal, even years. (delay - she doesn't know the timing). **That's the point Jesus is making!**
 - **The final stage is yet to come...**
- (3) **Feast (Mishteh / Se'udah)** - This was the final consummation of the marriage.
 - A banquet / feast / celebration! **The culmination of an epic journey!**
 - Often held at the groom's home. He comes to get the bride from her home and then consummates & celebrates in his home. **That's our story too!**
- **You see all this example for us in the OT as well.**
 - **Laban and Jacob**, betrothal terms were already agreed upon, **Gen. 29:21-22** - *"Then Jacob said to Laban, 'Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her.' And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and **made a feast!**" (mish-teh')*
 - Hebrew tradition also includes **Sheva Brachot** (*seven blessings*) = seven days of feasting. **Judges 14:10-12, NIV** - *"Samson held a feast, as was customary for young men... **seven days of the feast**"*
 - Some see a reference to the **pre-trib rapture** here, and it's certainly a possibility, but it's not the main point of the passage if so...
- **The point? An epic and elaborate affair!!!**
 - A major social event that everyone hoped to get invited to and attend.
 - Jesus' first miracle was at the **wedding in Cana (John 2)** as a foreshadowing of the good vintage to come! **Jewish eschatology: feast is the culmination = final banquet!**
 - In **Matthew 22**, Jesus already gave a parable of the wedding feast - **Invite everyone! God's heart!** Sadly, some rejected the invitation, and others were cast out...

V. 2 - **Five of them were wise, and five were foolish.**

- So far we don't know why one group would be different from the other?
- **All ten** bridesmaids **"Took their lamps"** (v.1) - better translated **"torches"** (garden style)
- But, it's clear half were foolish and half, wise (which shows it's not a one off "isolated" issue)
 - **Wise** = prudent / intelligent
 - **Foolish** = **Moros (Moron)** = stupid. godless
 - Some were smart, some were stupid. That's what it says in the original Greek.
 - BTW - The bible makes these **distinctions on repeat:**
 - **Psalm 1 - Trees vs chaff...**
 - **Prov. 14 - Way of life vs death...**
 - **Matthew 7 - Broad vs Narrow...**
 - **Matthew 7 - Rock vs sand...**
 - **Matthew 13 - Wheat vs tares...**
 - **Matthew 25 - Sheep vs goats...**
 - **Thess/Eph 5 - Children of light vs darkness...**
 - **Consistent theme** - you live in **one of two realities...** (main point of this sermon!)

Vv. 3-4 - Took / no took **oil**

- **This is the big difference.** Regarding the **oil**.
- So, the question is: does the symbolism of the "oil" matter in this parable? **Parable, tricky!**
- **Oil** in the scriptures (over 200 times) means many things and is used in many ways: medicine for healing, anointing at feasts/ceremonies, consecrating priests/kings, simple food item, tabernacle services, The Holy Spirit, etc...
 - Many theologians gravitate to **the Holy Spirit** usage in this text. Either the *indwelling, walking, or the filling of the Spirit*. It's true - no one can be **a true Christian without the indwelling Holy Spirit**. **Romans 8:9**: - *"Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."* - *Without the Spirit, the light of the lamp is not there to be lit...*
 - Other trusted scholars would say we're not to look too far into the oil as a deep allegory, but that oil is just a simple part of the simple parable Jesus is using. The issue is not the symbolism of the oil itself, but **that of preparedness**
 - I think this fits the context best. A true Christian is prepared - plenty of oil!

V. 3 - Those who were **foolish** took their lamps and took no oil with them

- The text says they took **NO oil**, which could in fact mean they are **not converted**.
- **But the context** of the next verse clarifies that it wasn't that they had NO oil, as much as it was that they didn't have **"enough" oil (NLT)**

V. 4 - But **the wise** took oil in their **vessels** with their lamps.

- **The smarty pants, the wise ones** - took **extra "vessels" (flasks)** for the journey...
 - Why need the torches and oil anyways?
 - It was **part of a Hebrew wedding procession** from the bride's house to the groom's house. The ceremony would be **illuminated the whole way to the feast!**
 - **Beautiful! To light the way and honor the couple!**
 - **To not participate would be a major breach of etiquette** and would mean you could not share your part in the joyous celebration, or have your role as a signified bridesmaid.

V. 5 - But while **the bridegroom was delayed**, they **all slumbered and slept**.

- Imagine waiting for your wedding and the groom hasn't shown up yet! **(getting nervous? Losing hope? Giving up?)** Not minutes, hours, days, but years... **2,000 yrs and ticking!**
- Delayed from **our perspective, not God's...** **(a day is like 1,000 yrs to the Lord - 2 Pet. 3)**
- Applying this parable **to the Second Coming**, the point is that there is **an unknown period of time** until Jesus returns **(that's the point of our final verse today when we get there)**.
- **The other point?** All bridesmaids **seem the same** so far... **(outwardly appear similar)**
 - All **ten** had lamps...
 - All **ten** had oil...
 - All **ten** were waiting for the groom to arrive... **(real life delays are normal!)**
 - All **ten** slept... **A picture of normality** - **eating, drinking, working, serving, sleeping...**
 - But now that it was **near midnight**... **(who gets married after midnight anyways?)**
- And so, only **the five wise** had **extra vessels of oil** **(the others didn't expect Him to return)**
 - Only the **wise** bridesmaids **were prepared** **(the others were caught off guard...)**
- But, now it's **WAKE UP** time!

Last Minute Scramble (verses 6-9)

Have any of you ever been to an event or a wedding where everything was falling apart at the last minute? Was that your wedding? There's definitely **"scramble vibes"** leading up to big events...

V. 6 - **At midnight a cry was heard**

- An **unexpected time** for a wedding! **That's the point!** **(Ex 12 - at MIDNIGHT: firstborn struck...)**
- The point: **it will catch people off guard**, when they're **not ready**... **It startles the sleepers!**

V. 6 - Behold, **the bridegroom is coming (here comes the groom)**; go out to meet him!

- **Exciting!** - **The day the bride has been waiting for has FINALLY come!**

V. 7 - Then **all** those virgins **arose and trimmed their lamps**.

- **All** were **awakened and scrambled** to get ready to go... **Critical moment!**
- **Trimmed their lamps (torches)** - in need of **a fresh re-soaking (rag-topped w oil)**
- We know from **a passage in Luke's account** that there is a call for the Christian to **be ready**:
- **Luke 12:35-36, ESV** - **"Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks."**
- **Stay dressed for action** = **let your loins be continually girded** **(Robe tucked into belt)**. Alert and **sanctified**. Clean and ready.

V. 8 - The foolish said to the wise, **'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out'**

- They **didn't have enough oil** to make it to the feast. They were **not prepared ahead of time**.
- **Our lamps are gone out**. May no hearer of this message **ever have to utter this brutal lament**
- Scrambling, they **asked to borrow** some oil **(at the last minute)** from those who were prepared.

V. 9 - The wise answered, No, lest there should **not be enough for us and you**

- **Nah bro, get your own oil...**
- **That doesn't sound very Christian**. It sounds **selfish**. **Don't you want to help them?**

- But, that's **the point of this parable**. It is **too late to help** at that moment of the *midnight cry*
- **Oil** - whether it represents *(the Holy Spirit's indwelling, true faith, or preparedness for Christ's return...)* is **non-transferable**
 - This is a **true reality**. **No one can give another person salvation**.
 - *You can't "borrow" another person's faith...*
 - *You can't "get into heaven" by living close to a saved person...*
 - *In this way, it does not matter if your **grandma is a godly woman**, or **dad is a pastor**, or you **attended a bible college**, or you **went to a church** where other Christians are...*
 - **You have to decide, as an individual**. **One day you will stand before the Lord...**
- *Ezekiel 18:20 - "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."*

V. 9 - But go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.

- The **wise** ones said, *"you have to go figure this out for yourselves, it's too late for us to help."*
- BTW - This verse is **a clear indicator** we're *not to over spiritualize* the **"oil"** as being **an allegory for the Holy Spirit**, as we know for sure that **the Spirit is NOT something you can "go and purchase."**
- *Acts 8:18-20 - "When Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' But Peter said to him, 'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!'"*
- The Spirit is given as **a gift of Grace**, not purchase.
- *Isaiah 55:1 - "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost..."*

This is **not meant to be a comforting passage**, but **a warning to the "professing" church**. To those who **"think they will make it"** at the midnight cry... **Take this message seriously...**

Guest List Confirmed (verses 10-13)

When Christ returns, **the guest list will be finalized**. Only those with **"genuine faith"** will enter the **kingdom of heaven**..

V. 10 - While they went to buy, the bridegroom came

- The moment came, and **it was too late for them**. **No striving or scrambling would help...**

V. 10 - And those who were ready went in with him to the wedding (feast / banquet)

- **Those who are ready** went in with Him. A clear reference to the **true followers of Christ**.
- **The Wedding Banquet** symbolizes **entrance into the kingdom of heaven (eternal fellowship)**
- This is the **blessed hope of the believer**. You & I, as Christ followers, have this blessed hope!
- *Rev. 19:7-9 - "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, 'Write: **Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!**'"*

- If you have a **hard time picturing heaven** and picture *babies with diapers on clouds...* let this parable cause you to **imagine it differently**. The *kingdom of heaven* is **a feast! A wedding banquet! A party! With... festive dancing, good music, delicious food, good vintage, and joyful fellowship!** - **this is our blessed hope!**

****But not everyone will enter this joyous celebration...*

V. 10 - And the door was shut

- There's an **awful finality** to those words - **the door was shut...**
- **Ever locked yourself out of the house? I have, and it was hot outside in Texas!**
- **Ever missed a flight? Watch it pull away... (Tulsa Oklahoma - calling my name!)**
- In Biblical imagery, this **almost always signals irrevocable exclusion** from God's kingdom (*Matt 22, Luke 13*).
- The *foolish* virgins *don't just get* a **smaller reward** or a **back-row seat**, they are **shut out from the event entirely**. This is a picture of *eternal condemnation...* **Clearly dealing with salvation**.
- This calls back to the **same imagery of the flood from Genesis 7:16 - doors were shut**

English evangelist George Whitefield (1714-1770) once preached a sermon on this portion of the text, **"... and the door was shut" (Mt. 25:10)**. One man in the audience was overheard saying, **"So what? Another door will open."** But as Whitefield continued preaching, he said, "There may be someone here who is careless and self-satisfied, and who thinks, 'What does it matter if the door is shut? Another will open.' Yes, it will—the door to the bottomless pit, the door to hell!" When time runs out, and God shuts the door of salvation, the door to doom, darkness, and despair will open. But today, if you trust in Jesus Christ, you enter the still wide-open door into eternal life.

Vv. 11-12 - Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

- **Afterward** = the **point of no return**. For some: **return of Christ**. For others: **death (Luke 16)**
- There will be **great regret** and nothing they can do about it...
- **Esau experienced a little taste** of this... *Heb 12:16-17 - "...Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, but he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears."*
- The language **Lord, Lord** is meant to *call back to our minds* other things *Jesus already taught*:
- *Matthew 7:21-23, ESV - "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" (Luke 13 has a similar parable as well)*
- In our text, people are **crying out after the final moment has passed**, and Jesus is saying, **"I do not know you."** - **May we not lessen the impact or water that down in any way... that should be terrifying to hear...**
 - Jesus even says **assuredly (amen)** for added emphasis...
 - **But there is hope of course!** In another place, *Jesus also says amen up front*:
 - *John 3:3 - "Truly Truly (Amen Amen), I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God..." - to be born again, is to be known by God...*
 - *Psalms 1:6 - "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish..."*

- John 10:27 - "My sheep hear My voice, and I **know** them, and they follow Me."
- 2 Tim 2:19 - "The Lord **knows** those who are His..."

It's clear - to be **shut out** & **not known** - is to be **eternally banished from God's kingdom**. Conversely, to be **known** & **welcomed to the wedding banquet** is to **eternally feast in His heavenly kingdom**.

- So, what's the call to action? I'm glad you asked...

V. 13 - **Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour**

- **Watch** = **Gregoreo** (any "Gregs" in here?) - means **take heed. Give strict attention**.
- **Take this message and your submission to Christ seriously**. Give strict attention to it.
- And **don't wait or delay to do it**. **Why not?** Because **you know neither the day nor the hour (which is a reference to Christ's return)**. **None of us know how long we have**. (even as I write this passage - *on the phone with my wife on Wednesday* - **sirens** - couldn't tell if through her phone or real on my end - **turned out to be both!**) **Decide now, don't delay**.

CLOSING

Let me ask a question from this **story of a wedding that went haywire** (for some) - **could you pick out the differences between the bridesmaids (on the surface)?** Maybe? Probably not...

- Number 3 looks tired. Number 4 looks beat up by life, number 9 there's no way she's a virgin...
- We start **judging here and now**. But **we don't know ultimately** who's going to be welcomed into the wedding banquet. This is where the message gets **soberingly individual (not your neighbor)** - **YOU - are you ready to stand before Jesus?**
 - If not, **repent now and turn to him**. **In the kingdom of heaven there is a door**. And it's **been held open by the bloody cross of Christ for the last 2,000 years** for **whosoever will cometh**, but **it will not always remain open**...
 - You will face it someday. Either **by death** or **by His return**. That door will **not remain open forever**. There **comes a day when it is shut**. (*some folks act as if they're going to live forever and never face this day*). No longer say, "someday" - that's **the warning of this parable**. **Decide now**. (*don't wait for the midnight cry*)
 - **If you are a follower of Christ**, live **holy and pure** with oil in your lamps! **2 Cor. 11:2 - "... that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."** - **live well for him and look forward to the blessed banquet that awaits you!**

Altar Calls? Plead with the souls of men...

PRAY