

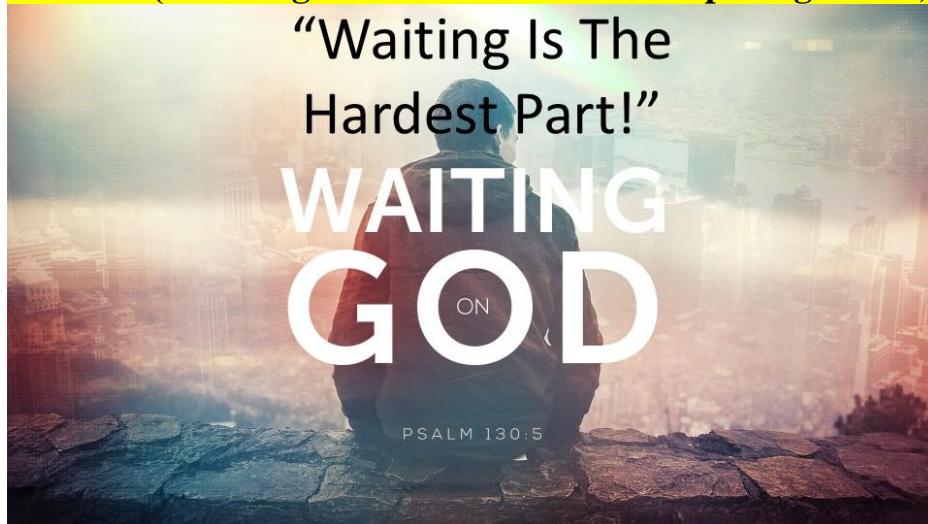
Sunday 03/02/25 – Panama Methodist Church

Sermon Title: “Waiting Is The Hardest Part!” *Psalm 130:5, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 25:1-13*

(Slides 1-17 will be listed in order throughout this sermon 😊!)

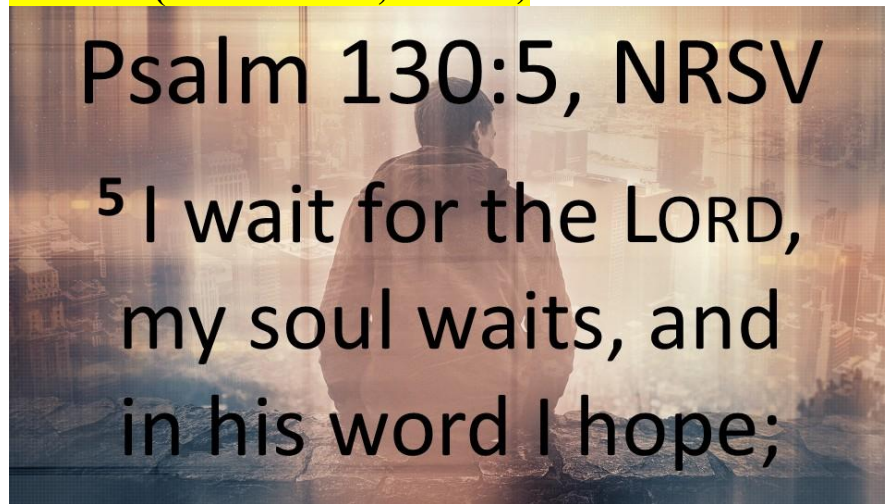
Brothers and sisters, we are in the month of March! Next Sunday we “Spring Forward” and we are getting ever close to the Season of Spring. This Wednesday we will start the Forty-Day Season of Lent, on Ash Wednesday, and will be in that season, until Easter Sunday, when we start the Season of Easter, or “Eastertide” as some churches call it. So, this morning we are not yet in the 40-day Season of Lent, and we are not yet in the Season of Spring. This morning, we are in that in-between time. In-between time can happen when we are waiting in line, in the waiting room for a doctor’s appointment, driving a long distance to see people we love, and or waiting for God to move or to respond clearly to our prayers. For some of us we are good in the process of waiting, and for some of us “Waiting Is The Hardest Part,” which is also a song by the late singer Tom Petty, written in 1981. This morning then, as we are in this in-between time, and maybe you are in your own in-between time in your life. Wherever you are at this morning, we are going to talk about trusting God always, and especially through those in-between times. Here is our opening picture for this morning’s message:

Slide 1 – (“Waiting Is The Hardest Part – Opening Slide”)



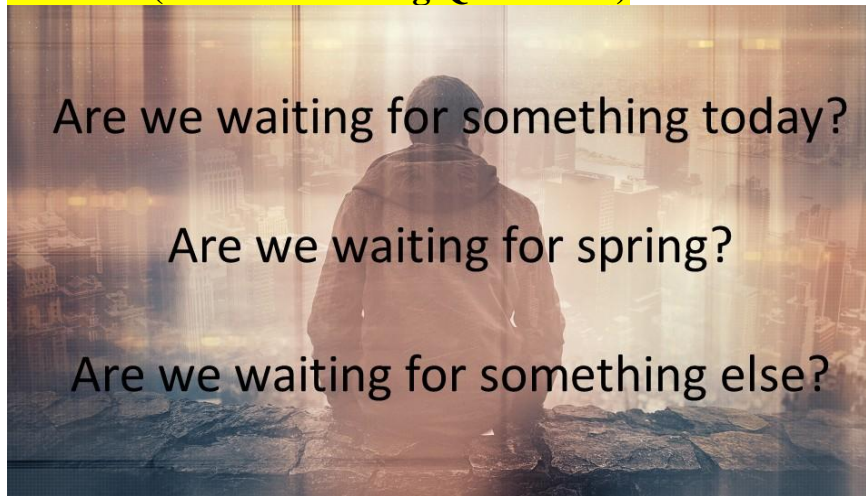
In this picture of this power point presentation, a man is sitting and waiting on God. What is the man waiting on God for? Who knows. Maybe the man is asking God to tell him what he should do with his life. Maybe the man is waiting to meet who will be wife one day. Maybe the man has a health problem, and he is waiting for healing. We do not really know. Since this power point presentation included Psalm 130:5 though, I added this scripture to my sermon for this morning. I have a couple of verses, then a main preaching scripture from the gospel of Matthew for this morning. Turn in your bibles to Psalm 130:5, or your bible apps. This one verse in Psalm 130:5 says so much. This is what it says:

Slide 2 – (“Psalm 130:5, NRSV”)



So, this guy in this picture, who looks like a young guy is waiting for the Lord, waiting for God. This man's soul waits, but in God's word, the bible, he has hope. As I said, we are not yet in the 40-day season of Lent that leads up to Easter Sunday, and we are not yet in spring. Are we waiting on the Lord, are we waiting on God this morning? What are we waiting for, and how is our soul in this time of waiting? Are we restless? Are we struggling? Are we fully at peace? Or are we fully trusting in God as we are waiting? Just to see this visually, here are a few of these questions again:

Slide 3 – (Part 4: “Waiting Questions”)



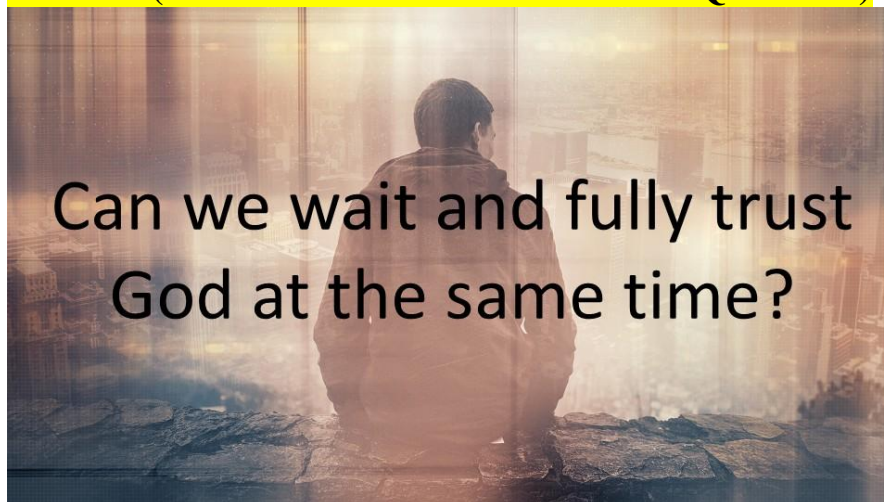
Are we waiting for something today?

Are we waiting for spring?

Are we waiting for something else?

Here is the other question that we have been considering so far this morning about waiting and trusting God at the same time:

Slide 4 – (Part 4: “Can We Wait and Trust Question?”)



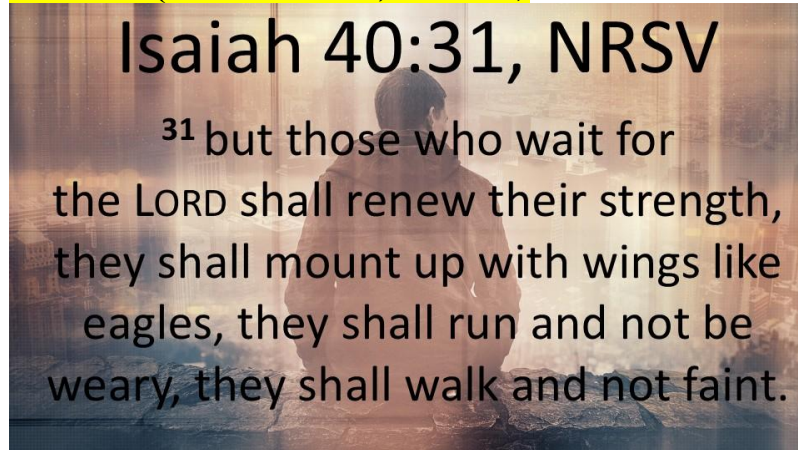
Can we wait and fully trust
God at the same time?

Waiting, being in that in-between. Do we fully trust God in those times, or do we sometimes struggle to do so? It can be for all of us sometimes.

Another great verse of scripture before getting into my preaching scripture for the gospel of Matthew 25:1-13 for this morning is Isaiah 40:31. My guess is, many you know this verse well, and we have a least one hymn that has been

written connected to this verse of scripture. I invite you turn in the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible or your bible app to Book of Isaiah 40:31. This is what it says:

Slide 5 – (“Isaiah 40:31, NRSV”)



So, waiting on God, and sometimes “Waiting Is The Hardest Part,” for some of us. Yet we are called in all times to wait on God. Sometimes the wait can long, sometimes the wait can be very short, but God hears us. In the song or hymn “On Eagles’ Wings” one the verses says, “And He will raise you up on eagle’s wings.” If we are an in-between this morning, keep praying, keep trusting, because God has not brought us all this far to just drop us. The God of the Universe love you, and guess what, the God of the Universe does not make any junk, and he did not start with us. Here is a good picture of Isaiah 40:31 with a picture of an eagle:

Slide 6 – (“Isaiah 40:31 – Picture”)



You see my brothers and sisters, the seasons change, hardship can come and go, but Jesus Christ is eternal. Through Jesus Christ, we have an eternal promise of salvation and eternity in heaven with Him. If we know Jesus Christ, no matter what this world throws at us, it can never separate from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

With this said, our main preaching scripture for this morning is from the gospel of Matthew 25:1-13. Feel free to in your bible or bible apps to the gospel of Matthew 25:1-13, where we find the story or “parable” of the “Ten Bridesmaids,” or in some bible translations the “Ten Virgins”. Let us look at Matthew 25:1-13 together to understand how this story or parable from Jesus Christ our Lord connects to waiting on God. Here is what the gospel says:

Slide 7 – (“Matthew 25:1-2”)

Matthew 25:1-13, NRSV

The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids

¹ 25 ‘Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.

Slide 8 – (“Matthew 25:3-5”)

Matthew 25:1-13, NRSV

³ 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, all of them became drowsy and slept.

Slide 9 – (“Matthew 25:6-7”)

Matthew 25:1-13, NRSV

⁶ But at midnight there was a shout, “Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.” ⁷ Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps.

Slide 10 – (“Matthew 25:8-9”)

Matthew 25:1-13, NRSV

⁸ The foolish said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.” ⁹ But the wise replied, “No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.”

Slide 11 – (“Matthew 25:10-11”)

Matthew 25:1-13, NRSV

¹⁰ And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. ¹¹ Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, “Lord, lord, open to us.”

Slide 12 – (“Matthew 25:12-13”)

Matthew 25:1-13, NRSV

¹² But he replied, “Truly I tell you, I do not know you.” ¹³ Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

So, number one, ten bridesmaids! That is a lot! I think that the most bridesmaids I have had for a wedding that I have officiated was six, so ten is a lot! In this story or parable from Jesus, Jesus says “the kingdom of heaven will be like this.” This kingdom of heaven statement that Jesus uses in various places in the gospels is general pointing to not only the fullness of Christ’s kingdom on earth, but how that will look when Christ comes in His second coming or return to earth. Some also refer to “the kingdom of heaven will be like this,” in reference to the “reign of God,” which is generally the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth when he returns in glory.

Continuing on, in this scripture these ten bridesmaids or virgins, depending on the translation, are preparing to meet the bridegroom. A “bridegroom,” by the way, is the man who is about to become the husband. In this story or parable, Jesus tells us that these ten bridesmaids took their lamps to meet the bridegroom. These would be ancient clay lamps that would be filled with oil and lit with some sort of wick or rope material. Of the ten bridesmaids though, five of them were foolish, and five of them were wise. This is because the five foolish bridesmaids took no oil to burn in their lamps, meaning in the darkness they would not be able to see. The five wise bridesmaids of the ten though, took flasks or containers of oil with them, so when the time was right, they would be able to burn the oil in their lamps and see in the darkness. In this story or parable, the bridegroom (who is Jesus) was

delayed, and as a result all ten of the bridesmaids became drowsy and fell asleep. I am sure we have all been to weddings before when someone was running late.

Suddenly though, at midnight someone shouted, “Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him” (Mt. 25:6b, NRSV). Now remember the five foolish bridesmaids took no oil for their lamps, but the five wise bridesmaids did. Since it was midnight, the bridesmaids would certainly need light to see to get to the bridegroom and the wedding banquet. All ten of the bridesmaids, the five foolish and the five wise bridesmaids trimmed their lamps with a wick or rope material for burning in the oil. Unfortunately, though, as we said, only the five wise bridesmaids brought flasks or containers of oil with them. The five foolish bridesmaids who were probably panicking at this point told the five wise bridesmaids to have them give them some of the oil that they brought. The five wise bridesmaids who brought oil with them though, said “No!” because they only had enough lamp oil for themselves. The five wise bridesmaids told the five foolish bridesmaids to go and find to go find lamp oil dealers and buy some from them. Oh, and by the way it is midnight, so that will not be an easy task! While the five foolish bridesmaids went to the oil dealers to buy oil for their lamps, the five wise bridesmaids went with the bridegroom (Jesus), into the wedding banquet.

When the five wise bridesmaids went into the wedding banquet though, the door was shut behind them. Then the five foolish bridesmaids arrived at the

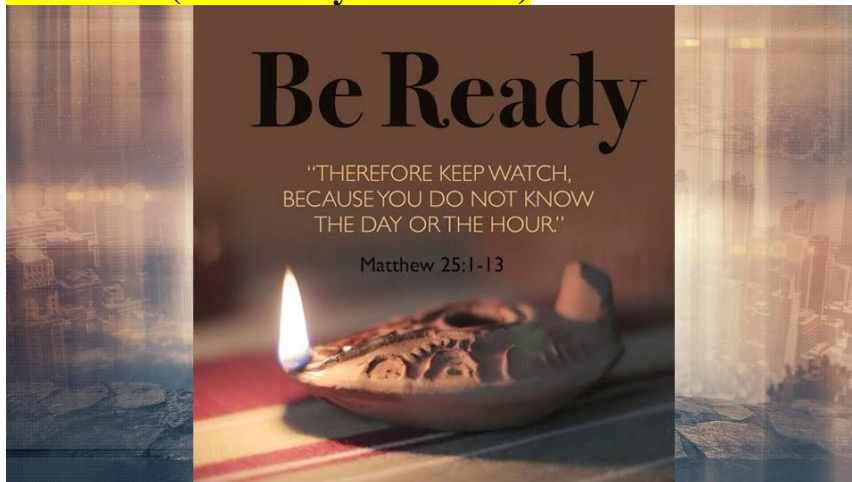
wedding to of course find that the door to the wedding banquet was shut. The five foolish bridesmaids say, once again, “Lord, lord, open to us.” Jesus then says to the five foolish bridesmaids who did not bring oil for their lamps, “Truly I tell you, I do not know you. Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour” (Mt. 25:12-13, NRSV). We need to be ready for Jesus, and we need to believe him before He returns. Once Jesus returns, if do not believe in Him, then it is too late, and door to the wedding banquet will be closed to us.

This story or parable from Jesus is of course about being prepared for His Second Coming or return to earth for his thousand-year reign. I know people who long for the day when we go to be with Jesus, or when Jesus comes to earth, but are we ready? Do have strong faith in Christ? Are we praying, discipling, loving others, or are our spiritual lamps empty of spiritual oil? We are in a period of in-between right now, as once again, it is not quite spring, and it is not quite the season of Lent, until Ash Wednesday this Wednesday. How are we as we wait? Is “Waiting The Hardest Part,” or do we trust God in the waiting? Jesus will return one day, and holiness and righteous will reign through him. Do we have faith in Christ, while we wait? Maybe you or someone you know are having one or more health issues. Maybe you see an end in sight, or maybe you do not. Do you trust in God through this time though?

In my life I have met some folks that are what I like to call, “I’ll be happy when” folks. They will be happy when they get a bigger house, a nicer car or truck, a better job, etc. If any of us are in an in-between this morning, God is right there with us. Since this is true, maybe, just maybe, waiting does always need to be “The Hardest Part.” Maybe we can have bone marrow deep faith in Christ no matter what. I pray and I hope we can all aspire to have faith like this.

To reference our gospel reading from Matthew 25:1-3, here is a picture of an ancient oil lamp, trimmed with a wick, full of oil and burning.

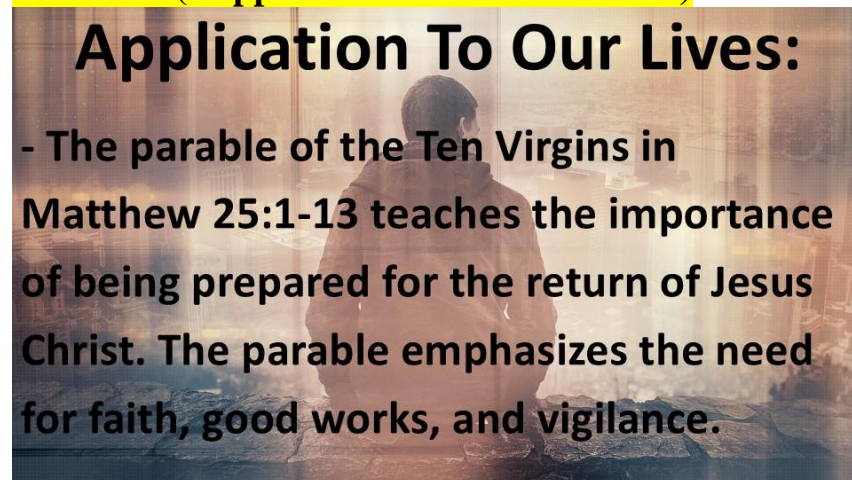
Slide 13 – (“Be Ready - Picture”)



Jesus said that He is the light of the world. The only thing that removes darkness is light, and if we are in time of waiting, if we are in a time of in-between, Jesus’ light is still in us. We can have peace and hope in Christ, even through the most challenging of times. It is not always easy but may we as Jesus told us in Matthew 25:13, “Keep Awake,” spiritually, and stay tethered to Him, for He is with forever, if we turn to him and Lord and Savior.

With this idea of “Waiting Is The Hardest Part” or being in an in-between time, let us look deeply on how the story or “Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids” applies to our lives today. Let us look together:

Slide 14 – (“Application to our Lives”: # 1)

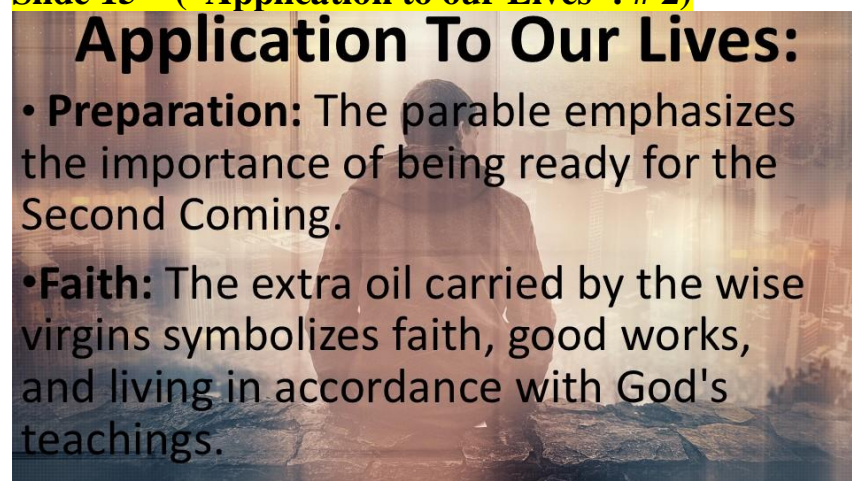


Application To Our Lives:

- The parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 teaches the importance of being prepared for the return of Jesus Christ. The parable emphasizes the need for faith, good works, and vigilance.

Stay focused on Jesus, deepen our faith, serve others, and be vigilant and ready for when Jesus returns. In the way of preparation and faith, here are more application points to our lives today:

Slide 15 – (“Application to our Lives”: # 2)

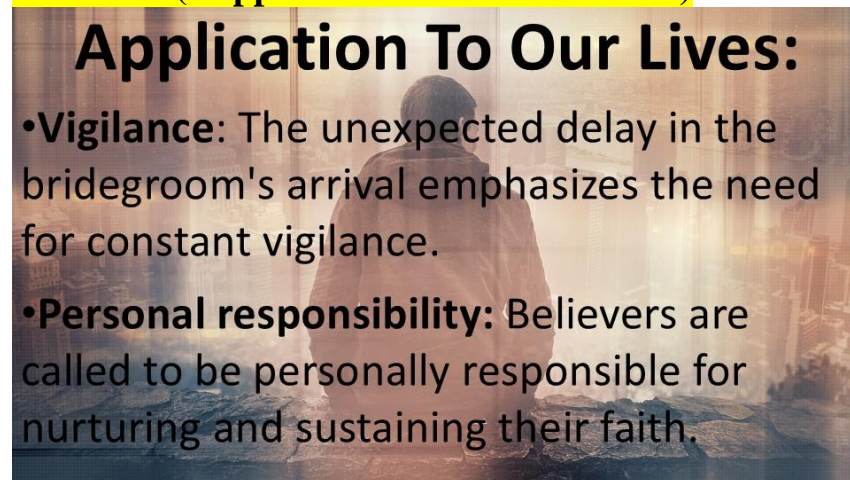


Application To Our Lives:

- **Preparation:** The parable emphasizes the importance of being ready for the Second Coming.
- **Faith:** The extra oil carried by the wise virgins symbolizes faith, good works, and living in accordance with God's teachings.

Be ready to go to be with Jesus, or to have to Jesus' return to earth. Do good, and have extra oil, in the way of being prepared and living Godly lives. In vigilance and personal responsibility, here are a couple of applications to our lives points:

Slide 16 – (“Application to our Lives”: # 3)

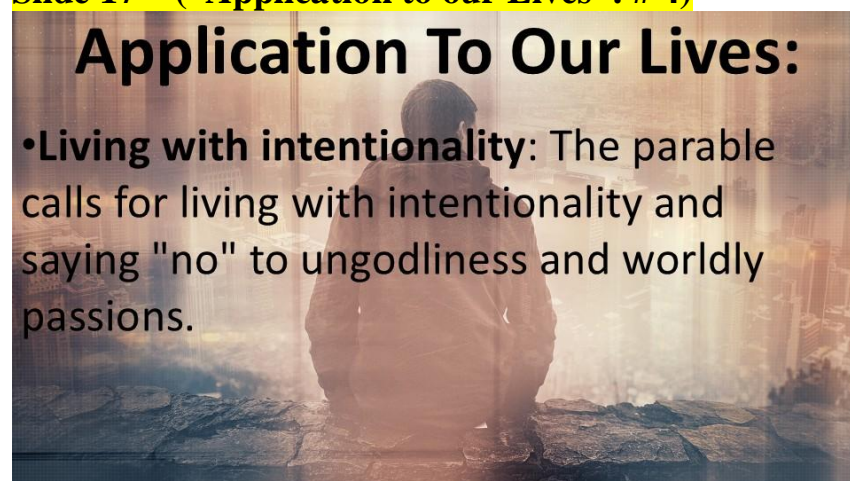
A person is seen from behind, sitting on a stone ledge and looking out over a cityscape at sunset. The sky is filled with warm, golden light, and the city buildings are silhouetted against the bright horizon. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Application To Our Lives:

- Vigilance:** The unexpected delay in the bridegroom's arrival emphasizes the need for constant vigilance.
- Personal responsibility:** Believers are called to be personally responsible for nurturing and sustaining their faith.

If we are in an in-between time, or if we are waiting, may we stay vigilant and trust Jesus with all we have. Lastly, we have an application slide on living with intentionality. Here is what it says:

Slide 17 – (“Application to our Lives”: # 4)

A person is seen from behind, sitting on a stone ledge and looking out over a cityscape at sunset. The sky is filled with warm, golden light, and the city buildings are silhouetted against the bright horizon. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Application To Our Lives:

- Living with intentionality:** The parable calls for living with intentionality and saying "no" to ungodliness and worldly passions.

Stay focused on Christ, no matter where we are today, because if we know him as Lord and Savior we will be with forever. Some say, ‘Waiting Is The Hardest Part,’ but for those of us that know Christ, we know he is always with us. Amen.