

Session 13 How Then Shall We Live? Three Parables

I. PRACTICAL PREPARATION

- A. Jesus said that He would come *quickly* (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20) and that we must live in *readiness* because the end-times scenario would begin at a time that we would not *expect*. Matthew 24-25 are one teaching that focuses on practical ways God's people are to respond. How then should we live? Jesus taught on the end times, then gave practical applications in three parables (Mt. 24:45-25:30).

⁴⁴You also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect... (Mt. 24:44)

- B. Parable #1: ***Jesus' delay is shorter than expected.*** The parable of the faithful and wise servant (Mt. 24:45-51) teaches us that there will be two types of leaders who profess to follow Christ. The two qualities that Jesus wants His leaders to focus on are being faithful and wise.

⁴⁵Who then is a faithful and wise servant...to give them food in due season? ⁴⁶Blessed is that servant...⁴⁷He will make him ruler over all his goods. ⁴⁸But if that evil servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming,"⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him...⁵¹There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Mt. 24:45-51)

1. The faithful servant worked with *good motives*, seeking to feed and help God's people. The wicked servant worked with *wrong motives* that abused his God-given authority.
2. Jesus promised that those who diligently feed His people will rule with Him when He returns.

- C. Parable #2: ***Jesus' delay is longer than expected.*** The parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Mt. 25:1-13) emphasizes the need to cultivate intimacy with Jesus as our Bridegroom God.

¹Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ³Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took oil...⁸The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." (Mt. 25:1-4, 8)

1. Some wise leaders work hard and with good motives, yet with a *wrong spirit* by neglecting to maintain their intimacy with God. Our measure of intimacy with God today can be lost. All ten virgin ministries started off with oil and a shining ministry that brought light to others.
2. ***Virgins:*** All believers are as virgins before God by His free righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; 11:2).
²I betrothed you to one husband...I present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2)
3. ***Lamp:*** Each of these virgins had a lamp, which spoke of a ministry that brought God's light to others (Mt. 5:15-16; Rev. 1:20; 2:5; 11:3-6; cf. Zech. 4:2; Isa. 62:1; Jn. 5:35).
4. ***Bridegroom:*** All these ministries had revelation of Jesus as the Bridegroom God. These are ministries that went out to meet, or encounter, Jesus as the Bridegroom God.

5. In this parable, Jesus' warning is that the wise can become foolish if they neglect to continue to cultivate intimacy with Jesus by going out to meet Him as the Bridegroom King (Mt. 25:1).
6. The **"oil"** speaks of the presence of the Spirit touching our heart as we spend time with God (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27).
7. The foolish took their lamps (ministry), but **took no oil**. In other words, they pursued ministry as their first priority, instead of acquiring oil in their relationship with Jesus (25:3).
8. The wise ministries **took oil** in their vessels with their lamps. In other words, they pursued acquiring oil as their *first priority* before seeking to expand their personal ministry (25:4).
9. The foolish ministries recognized their mistake in neglecting oil. Many "ministry lamps" will go out because they will lack the spiritual vitality of the Spirit's oil. They asked the wise to give them oil to "bolster" their ministries. The wise understood their limitation, knowing that their spiritual history and spiritual preparedness is not transferrable. Christian "self-help" and "pop psychology" sermons will not meet the need of the hour in that day. In that day, we must be a voice that pursues the truth in our secret life and not just an echo of popular ideas.

⁸The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." ⁹The wise answered, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves." (Mt. 25:8-9)

10. Jesus exhorts us to "buy oil," to engage in the God-ordained process of acquiring intimacy with God. We do not *earn* this, but *invest ourselves* in a costly way to receive it.

¹⁸I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich... (Rev. 3:18)

- D. Parable #3: **Jesus' delay is harder than expected.** The parable of the faithful servant (Mt. 25:14-30) focuses on being faithful and diligent in our life assignment even when it is small and difficult.

²¹Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things... ²⁴He who had received the one talent...said, "Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown... ²⁵I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground..." ²⁶His lord...said to him, "You wicked and lazy servant..." (Mt. 25:21-26)

- E. Those responding wrongly worked with the *wrong evaluation* and neglected their assignment. The message in this parable is that we are to be *faithful* (diligent) and *good* (godly) with a *servant spirit* (humility) in context to our ministry assignment even when it is difficult (v. 24) and small (v. 21).

- F. Jesus described His servants as being tempted with *wickedness* (lust) and *laziness* in the end times. The dramatic increase of media (entertainment) presents a generation of old and young believers with new temptations. The quality and quantity of media entertainment (pornography, video games, Facebook, Twitter, sports, movies, news, talk shows, etc.) tempts people to be preoccupied with the lives of celebrities, friends, and strangers, etc. The besetting sin of many believers today is laziness with its procrastination and "veg-out" mentality.

¹Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money... ³without self-control... ⁴and lovers of pleasure... (2 Tim. 3:1-4)

- G. Our ministry assignment (or sphere of influence) may be small in man’s eyes, but is so important in God’s eyes that He greatly rewards His people for being diligent in it. We must be motivated by how important our work is in *God’s eyes* rather than by how big it is in *man’s eyes*.
- H. The message is that God sees and rewards our efforts and that there can be loss of reward. The essence of the fear of God is to know that God sees and rewards what we are doing.
²³***Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,*** ²⁴***knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward...for you serve the Lord Christ. (Col. 3:23-24)***
- I. **Conclusion:** Jesus called His people to be *wise* and *faithful* servants (message of parable #1). Then He identified being *wise* with acquiring the “oil of intimacy” (message of parable #2) and *faithful* as being diligent in ministry assignments that are small and difficult (message of parable #3).

II. WATCH AND PRAY (MT. 24:42; 25:13; LK. 21:36)

- A. Jesus gave us practical counsel on how to be wise and faithful—by calling us to *watch and pray*. Jesus’ main exhortation to be prepared spiritually is by *watching and praying*. God’s people are exhorted 20 times to *watch*—ten times the exhortation is related to the end times (Mt. 24:42; 25:13; Mk. 13:9, 33, 34, 35, 37; Lk. 21:36; 1 Thes. 5:6; Rev. 16:15) and ten times to general Christian living (Mt. 26:38, 40, 41; Mk. 14:34, 37, 38; Lk. 12:38; Acts 20:31; 1 Cor. 16:13; Rev. 3:3).
⁴²***Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. (Mt. 24:42)***
¹³***Watch...for you know neither the day nor hour...the Son of Man is coming. (Mt. 25:13)***
- B. Jesus is the best shepherd, yet His primary exhortation was to watch and pray. He did not mention storing water, food, or batteries, nor establishing a communication system with shortwave radios.
- C. Some believers *pray*, but do not watch—paying attention to what is happening prophetically in the nations. Others *watch*, but do not pray. Jesus calls us to do both.
- D. God’s people need strength to escape the snare of sin and fear so as to stand in victory (Lk. 21:36).
³⁵***For it will come as a snare on all...³⁶Watch...and pray always that you may be counted worthy [have strength] to escape all these things...and to stand before the Son of Man.” (Lk. 21:35-36)***
 1. **Have strength:** A vibrant spiritual life leads to courage and zeal for God. The phrase *be counted worthy* (v. 36, NKJV) is translated as *have strength* in most modern translations. An NKJV footnote offers *to have strength* as an alternate translation. The idea is that we would be *strengthened to respond* to the Lord in a way that is *worthy* of who He is.
 2. **To stand:** Believers can *stand in victory* as overcomers, rather than falling in sin, etc.
 3. **To escape:** God’s people are to be *prepared spiritually* to escape the trap of falling into sin and giving way to lust, drunkenness, fear, deception, etc.

III. TO WATCH

- A. **To watch:** This exhortation *focuses on the mind*—to grow in understanding by watching the biblical signs of the times unfold. As our understanding increases, it produces greater urgency in us.
1. **Scripture:** Watch or search out what the Bible says about the end-time signs of His coming.
 2. **Circumstances:** With a heart of faith, watch the signs progressively unfold in society.
- B. Watching includes being aware of the biblical signs of the times as “anointed observers.”
1. Watching what the prophetic scriptures say about the end-time distress in the nations, people can see prophecy progressively unfold before them.
 2. As people watch, they inevitably talk more about what is occurring that is in line with the prophetic scriptures.
 3. Thus, they connect with more people who have a common urgency and vision.
- C. Watching gives people urgency to *talk to God*—praying to release His power into the crisis.
- D. Watching gives people urgency to *talk to people*—connecting more in unity of vision.
- E. As people watch and talk about what they see, whole communities of believers grow in their connectedness to God and each other and are thus positioned to gain insight into what do when crisis touches their local area.
- F. The command to watch was given to God’s people so that they might avoid the unnecessary losses associated with a thief (Mt. 24:42-43).
- ⁴²Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. ⁴³But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. (Mt. 24:42-43)**
- G. Paul said that we are not in darkness that the Day of the Lord should overtake us as a thief.
- ²You yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night [the unprepared suffer unnecessary loss]...⁴But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief...⁶Therefore...let us watch and be sober. (1 Thes. 5:1-6)**
1. A thief causes one to suffer loss of things that could have been avoided by watching.
 2. The thief motif mostly emphasizes the element of loss that one suffers because of an unexpected coming.

IV. TO PRAY

- A. **To pray:** This exhortation *focuses on the heart*—to grow in strength from connecting with Jesus. Prayer is key to growing in intimacy with God and living invigorated by the beauty of the King.
- B. By praying, we grow in our connection to Jesus’ heart and we release His resources into the crisis. Prayer releases a greater measure of His power and resources into as situation or crisis—justice.
- ⁹“...ask [persistently], and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent...? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Lk. 11:9-13)
- ⁷“...will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night...⁸He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” (Lk. 18:7-8; NAS)
- C. Our inner man is our most important aspect of life, yet it is the most neglected prayer focus. Any who will pray for strength in their inner man will surely receive more. Our experience of the Spirit’s power in our heart can be increased or decreased over time.
- ¹⁶...to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man... (Eph. 3:16)
- D. For free resources on Ten Prayers to Strengthen Our Inner Man: F-E-L-L-O-W-S-H-I-P you can see <http://mikebickle.org/resources/resource/3637>).
- E. The Spirit empowers in small measures. Often we cannot measure or discern the specific times when He touches us. I compare this principle to taking vitamins for years. There is never a day when we think, “This is the day the vitamin really helped me today.” I have taken vitamins for years, and I cannot remember one day when “this is the day it took.”
- ⁸For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. ⁹And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. (Gal. 6:8-9)
- F. Jesus modeled what He taught in Luke 21:20-36 immediately thereafter. In Luke 22, He engaged in earnest prayer for strength in the garden of Gethsemane and asked His friends to stand with Him.
- ⁴⁰He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation” ⁴¹He knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” ⁴³Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood...⁴⁶He said to them..., “Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.” (Lk 22::40-46)
- G. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus exhorted His disciples to watch and pray.
- ⁴¹Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Mt 26:41)

V. SUMMARY

- A. By watching and praying, we position ourselves to receive greater *insight* (by watching) to understand what God is doing and greater *strength* (by praying) to love well as pressures increase.
- B. Those who grow in *understanding* and *strength* will be strengthened to stand as overcomers who escape the snare of lust, fear, and bitterness (Lk. 21:34-36).
- C. People who seek to love well must not be ensnared in fear, deception, or confusion. We must watch so that we understand the narrative and can be part of the solution, not the confusion.
- D. Multitudes will need the help of people walking in power and courage with insight into what God is doing. Such people will be a part of the solution rather than contributing to the confusion.
- E. People with understanding are those who have a *compass* while in a storm on the sea. Get prepared in understanding, and then prepare the unprepared so they can stand against fear and deception.
- F. The Lord is raising up communities all over the earth who prioritize watching and praying. They are growing in their understanding of the biblical end-time storyline. They are seeing how the signs are increasing with both negative and positive events and trends, and they prioritize connecting to God.
 - 1. Together they will know how to respond to situations in their local area—receiving understanding from God on what to do in practical issues like food, provision, and protection.
 - 2. Being deeply connected to Jesus and like-minded believers, they will be equipped to overcome so as to not be ensnared by fear, immorality, drunkenness, and bitterness—so that we make right decisions in times of crisis.
- G. The command to watch and pray is a call to love people well. People will need to be helped by those with godly resolve, courage, and insight into what God is doing. Spiritually dull believers filled with fear and confusion will contribute to the problems of those they love, not to the solutions by making decisions and giving counsel that is contrary to what the Scripture or Spirit are saying.
- H. Many individuals and local churches are called to minister with the forerunner spirit to people — thus, they must prioritize watching and praying.
- I. As for me and my spiritual house, we will serve the Lord by prioritizing watching and praying. I want to be in the midst of a community of people who prioritize watching, praying, and fellowshiping with groups all over the earth that have a similar urgency to press into Jesus.
- J. Biblical understanding equips people to cooperate with Jesus and His leadership and to resist and expose deception and fear. They see the big picture of where things are going. We have confidence that He is with us.