

Living in Light of the Return of Christ

Matthew 24:36 - 25:30

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: When I was a teenager my parents bought a new house. It was around the fall of the year when school was back in session and kids began to toilet paper each others yards. My parents had an opportunity to go on a trip for a week and they thought that maybe I was old enough to stay at home all by myself that week. I wasn't old enough to through a wild party, but I was old enough to stay home. Apparently, I boasted to some of my friends about this opportunity to stay at home. I got word that about 20 of them were going to roll my yard that night. I stayed up all night. Around midnight I heard them. I loaded my 22 pistol with 12 rounds. When they all got in my yard I snuck in the middle of them and began to fire the gun into the air. That was the last time my yard was rolled for a while.

Well Jesus isn't pulling a prank, he has told us over and over it will be a while before His return. Now 2000 years later it is easy to expect that it is not going to happen it is easy to drift. But our Lord says in **Matthew 24:43** ⁴³ “But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

ILLUSTRATION; *I remember how as a boy I would drift off during class. I didn't have attention deficit disorder... I just was disinterested. I was very focused on the squirrel outside the window! Mrs. Harris was 180! My teacher Mrs. Harris would hit her ruler on my table and say, “Pay Attention!” “Focus”*

Well in our text today we will see that Jesus is basically saying the same thing... “Pay attention” “Focus” “Be Ready” for Christ's return.

But Jesus closes what is known as the Olivet Discourse with 3 warnings against spiritual ADD.

Matthew 24:36–25:30 (ESV)

⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have **stayed awake** and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore **you also must be ready**, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Jesus proceeds to tell three parables. Parables are earthly stories with a heavenly meaning. We see:

- The Parable of the Wicked Slave
- The Parable of the Bridesmaids
- The Parable of Talents

Each parable contrasts how the saved and the lost will respond to the **delay** in the Lord's coming.

1. The Parable of the Servant

Matthew 24:45 (ESV)

⁴⁵ "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?" ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But if that **wicked** servant says to himself, '**My master is delayed,**'

Now note carefully, he identifies himself as a servant of the Master.

⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day **when he does not expect** him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This story is different from the typical parable that Jesus gives. Typically Jesus's parables have multiple characters each demonstrating a different response. But here we have a hypothetical scenarios involving the same character (the servant).

One commentator suggested that Jesus told the parable in this way, because each of us should be gripped with the possibility that each one of us could potentially go astray.

Think about it, even of the most intimate followers of Jesus went astray - Judas.

ILLUSTRATION: In recent days Joshua Harris, author of, "I Kissed Dating Goodbye" has announced that he has "undergone a massive shift in regards to my faith in Jesus". He waffles back and forth on the possibility that he is no longer a Christian or perhaps he has discovered a "different way to practice the faith".

That's the warning in this parable - why? Because of the delay in Christ's 2nd coming... people begin to equate **DELAY** with **DISTANCE** and they behave accordingly.

ILLUSTRATION: Remember I've said to you before, I always celebrate some when a person professes faith in Christ. But the older I get, my celebration is tempered with a knowledge that only time will really tell.

Give it a year, give it 10 years... genuine faith in Christ STICKS. It will withstand the terrible storms of life. Nothing is more powerful or more precious than a Senior Saint who has seen it all, yet still testifies, "On Christ the solid rock I stand".

That is the parable of the wicked servant...notice 2nd...

2. The Parable of the Bridesmaids

This parable requires a little bit of context...

In Jesus's day a Jewish wedding occurred in 4 parts:

- A. **The Arrangement** – Two guys make a legal agreement for marriage of their children. EX. Shad and Gary, each have sons and daughters.
- B. **The Betrothal** – Then there is a Ceremony when the two come of age that tells the world these two will one day be married. They are spoken for.
- C. **The Delay** -
The bride would be celebrating and waiting with her bridesmaids (here called virgins) trying to be ready for the grooms return.

Then the **groom** would go and prepare a place for the bride. Then when the place was properly prepared the Father of the groom would send him to get the bride. There would be signs given that would clue the bride in that the time was near, but part of the game for the groom was to come at an unexpected hour.

D. The Actual Wedding

So here in this parable we have 10 bridesmaids who have heard the warnings that the groom is coming... they get their wedding clothes on, they have their lamps so they can go out to meet Him in the night. Look at what Jesus says...

Matthew 25:1-13

¹ "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.**

NOTICE, These two groups of women are described as exactly alike in everything except their preparations.

In another place Jesus compares the saved and lost two wheat and tares. I am told that if you hold a shock of wheat and a shock of tares up to your face, they look

absolutely identical... the only way a farmer can tell the difference is by breaking them open to see if a kernel of grain is inside...

In the same way these bridesmaids all look alike...

- They all dressed for a wedding
- They all took their lamps
- They are all awaiting the return of the bridegroom.

But only 5 took their time and made sure they had the oil of preparation.

Craig Blomberg said in his commentary, *“Jesus apparently wants to teach that spiritual preparedness may not be transferred from one individual to another. All people are responsible for themselves.”*

Now the Bible uses several things to symbolize the Holy Spirit:

- At the Baptism of Jesus it was a dove
- Jesus told Nicodemus the Spirit was like the wind
- On the day of Pentecost it was fire that symbolized the H.S. above every believer

But the most common symbol of the Holy Spirit in scripture is OIL.

- In the O.T. Oil was rubbed on the heads of the Kings at their coronation
- Oil was rubbed on the priest as they began their duties
- The Holy Spirit in Isaiah was called the oil of gladness

A person may have all the **form** of outward religion, but fail to experience the inward substance of the Holy Spirit.

A SOBERING SERIOUS QUESTION: Does your life give evidence that the Holy Spirit dwells in your life? Do you experience his conviction? His guidance? His enlightenment? Do you experience his joy? Do you sense Him giving guidance and energy to your prayers?

Parable #3

3. The Parable of the Stewards

Matthew 25:14-30

¹⁴ “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master,

you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’²³ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’

²⁴ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a **hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,**

Do you see that? He viewed the Master has HARD and UNETHICAL. Basically, he calls him a thief... reaps where he didn't sow.

²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’²⁶ But his master answered him, ‘You **wicked and slothful** servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?’²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.’²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.’²⁹ For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.’³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Now, the word "talent" always referred to money, but the word itself simply represented a measure of weight.

In the days of the text, a "talent" was equal to the wages of a working man for 10 years.

So each received AMAZING gifts from the Master.

The key differences in the servants here are twofold.

They viewed the Master differently and they leveraged their talents differently.

Two of the servants leveraged their talents in a way that was in keeping with the Master's agenda and one did not.

THREE PARABLES, each is about the response to a DELAY.

1. The first showed a man who responded by behaving wickedly and sinfully.
2. The second showed women who responded by becoming lazy and unprepared.
3. The third showed a man who did not steward things in a way that benefited the Master.

How ought we then live in light of these parables?

- **We ought to recognize that DELAY does not equal DISTANCE.** Friend keep in mind, we are closer to the return of Jesus than any other generation in all of history.
- We ought to take careful stock of every area of our life with the question - **if Jesus returned today... would He be pleased?** There is something about this question that gives clarity.

Three Areas Jesus calls us to Examine in light of His coming

- 1. Examine our Moral Standards**
- 2. Examine our Intrinsic Spiritually**
- 3. Examine our Financial Stewardship**

Do these three areas testify that you are ready for the return of Christ or do they condemn you?