Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church Matthew 25:1-13 | The Parable of the Bridesmaids Sunday December 28, 2025

WELCOME:

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

REVIEW:

We continue our verse-by-verse study of Matthew's Gospel today.

Last Sunday, examined the last few verses in chapter 24.

Chapter 24 was tough. We spent six weeks studying it.

It's tough because Jesus taught the Disciples about the future destruction of Israel and the Temple.

He also taught us about His Second Coming and the signs of what to look for before He judges the world.

Now, as we move forward, Jesus wants to reemphasize His main points on what we should be doing as we wait for His return.

Jesus teaches four parables.

Last Sunday, we examined the first one and learned the difference between a faithful Christian and a faithless Christian.

One of the main points that stood out was waiting.

We learned that waiting on the Lord is a test.

In other words, we're constantly being tested.

Waiting is not inaction, but prayerful and spiritual activity.

There is a relentlessness to faithfully walking with and trusting the Lord.

We don't sit still while waiting, but we do things differently.

"In what areas are you passing or failing God's tests?"

Remember that God's tests are to build you up, not tear you down.

God's tests are to humble your heart, thicken your skin, and sharpen your mind.

God's tests are specifically designed by God for you—to change you.

Are you changing? Are you cooperating with the Lord?

If not, the first thing to do is repent—to confess your irritation, anger, and self-righteousness as sin.

The solution is always repentance and surrender.

Surrender is not giving up, <u>but a giving over</u> of your life to the Lord—a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:2)

That's all a review from the first parable.

INTRODUCTION:

Today, we'll examine Jesus' second prophetic parable—"The Parable of the Bridesmaids."

Last week's parable taught us that as we wait for the Lord to return, the camera is always rolling and the microphone is always on.

So we are to be faithful even when we think no one is watching.

Today's parable teaches us about preparedness—it's a masterpiece!

It's also a wake-up call because many of us will not see the end of it coming.

Let's learn its lesson and apply it to our lives today.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 25:1—"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom.

Matthew 25:2—Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.

Matthew 25:3—When the foolish took their lamps, they didn't take oil with them;

Matthew 25:4—but the wise ones took oil in their flasks with their lamps.

Matthew 25:5—When the groom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

Matthew 25:6—"In the middle of the night there was a shout: 'Here's the groom! Come out to meet him.'

Matthew 25:7—"Then all the virgins got up and trimmed their lamps.

-Matthew 25:8—The foolish ones said to the wise ones, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.'

Matthew 25:9—"The wise ones answered, 'No, there won't be enough for us and for you. Go instead to those who sell oil, and buy some for yourselves."

Matthew 25:10—"When they had gone to buy some, the groom arrived, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut.

Matthew 25:11—Later the rest of the virgins also came and said, 'Master, master, open up for us!'

Matthew 25:12—"He replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you!'

Matthew 25:13—"Therefore be alert, because you don't know either the day or the hour.

These are the holy words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, infallible, sufficient, and efficacious Word of Almighty God.

PRAY:

The bride, a princess, looks glorious in her golden gown. In her beautiful robes, she is led to the king, accompanied by her bridesmaids. What a joyful and enthusiastic procession as they enter the king's palace! (Psalm 45:14)

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 25:1—"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten (bridesmaids) who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom.

To understand this parable, we have to understand God's design for marriage in the context of a first-century Jewish wedding.

BACKSTONE:

It consisted of three parts: the first was the engagement.

Keep in mind, there were no dating apps back then.

The Jews didn't allow "dating" as we understand it.

The concept of dating and courtship we have today would have been so foreign to those in the first century.

In the first century, marriages were <u>arranged</u> by the fathers of both the bride and the groom.

Once that arrangement has been made, the second step is betrothal.

Betrothal is somewhat similiar to today's engagement—where a man and woman commit to become married at a future time.

The most significant difference is that betrothals had a ceremony and were legally binding.

At the betrothal ceremony, the couple was considered married, and their relationship could be broken only by formal divorce.

If the husband happened to die during the betrothal, the bride was considered a widow.

The betrothal period could last for a year, during which time the groom would build a home for his new wife and future family.

At the end of the betrothal period, the third step is the wedding ceremony—the entire community became involved.

There was no such thing as going to Vegas and getting married by Elvis in a private ceremony.

Here's the vital part to know for today's parable—

The marriage ceremony and its reception, which could last a week—wrap your brain around partying for a week!

It all begins with the groom and his groomsmen coming to the bride's house.

At the bride's house are the bridesmaids.

Together, the bride and groom, along with all the groomsmen and bridesmaids, would then walk through the streets shouting—letting the entire community know that the celebration is about to begin.

The party began at night, which meant that the groomsman and bridesmaid used lamps and torches so they could see where they were going beautiful wedding processional!

At the end of the week, a close friend of the groom, who acted much like a best man, would take the hand of the bride and place it in the hand of the groom, and the couple would be left alone for the very first time.

The marriage would be consummated, and the couple would live happily ever after.

Matthew 25:1—"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten (bridesmaids) who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom.

Keep in mind this is a prophetic parable—so the groom is Jesus.

Just as God referred to himself as the "husband" in the OT, Jesus pictures himself here as a bridegroom.

Hosea 2:19—I will take you to be my wife forever. I will take you to be my wife in righteousness, justice, love, and compassion.

Hosea 2:20—I will take you to be my wife in faithfulness, and you will know the Lord.

Matthew 25:2—Five of them (bridesmaids) were foolish and five were wise.

We know that the groom is Jesus, but who do these bridesmaids represent?

These women point back to last week's parable regarding who is <u>faithful</u> and who is <u>faithless</u> in the Church.

It's interesting to see how these parables build upon one another.

The accumulation of these parables intensifies the importance of Jesus' Second Coming.

Instead of faithful and unfaithful servants, we now have wise and foolish bridesmaids.

Five faithful Christians and five unfaithful Christians.

Regardless of their level or lack of faith, all of these women are members of a bridal party.

They are not guests, but friends of the bride.

And it's a great honor to be in the wedding party—so these women have a responsibility.

These women have a duty to do their part as members of the wedding ceremony.

Matthew 25:3—When the foolish took their lamps, they didn't take oil with them;

This was the main part of the bridesmaid's job—to bring a lamp and light the wedding procession throughout the city.

Everyone in the procession was expected to carry their own lamp.

For a first-century lamp to work, it needed oil.

It was as if the foolish bridesmaids went into the dark of night with flashlights and no batteries.

Matthew 25:4—but the wise ones took oil in their flasks with their lamps.

We obviously see the difference between preparedness and lack of preparedness.

But more importantly, it's about being prepared for the unexpected.

It's like you and your buddy going out in the desert with your 4x4s.

You, being the wise one, bring extra fuel. Your buddy, the not-so-wise one, doesn't even fill his gas tank all the way up.

Guess what happens when you're unprepared?

Matthew 25:5—When the groom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

Jesus is a broken record—"You don't know the day or the hour of my return. Be ready, be alert, be prepared." — John fall into A pir mal slunder

A wedding was very important. Everything else would be set aside for it.

Whatever plans these bridesmaids had for the week would be set aside for the ceremony.

Matthew 25:6—"In the middle of the night there was a shout: 'Here's the groom! Come out to meet him.'

Many people are dead asleep at midnight—except for you night owls.

Once again, Jesus underscores the unexpectedness of His return.

The shout announcing the groom's arrival parallels the trumpet blast in 24:31.

Matthew 24:31—He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

1 **Thessalonians 4:16**— For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Matthew 25:7—"Then all the (bridesmaids) got up and trimmed their lamps.

"Then" is used with precision; the shout got everyone's attention and caused immediate action.

Everyone woke up, and the women started "trimming" or lighting their lamps.

Matthew 25:8—The foolish ones said to the wise ones, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.'

Matthew 25:9—"The wise ones answered, 'No, there won't be enough for us and for you.

The picture here is that the foolish bridesmaids lit their lamps, but they were already going out—and the wedding procession hasn't even started yet!

Talk about being foolish and unprepared.

In the wisdom of the other bridesmaids, they refuse to share their oil.

We think, "They may be wise, but they're also rude!"

Christians are to love others. True Christians are to sacrifice. True Christians are to share with those in need.

All very true.

KEYPOINT 2:

Christians are to be obedient to the work the Lord has called them to do.

This parable is not about sharing.

It is about being ready for the groom!

Obedience to the groom is their first priority—no one gets in the way of our obedience to the Lord Jesus.

The reason these bridesmaids are wise is that they knew that if they did share their oil, the entire wedding would be ruined.

The wedding would be a disaster without their lamps.

The journey to the groom's house featured an impressive candlelight procession.

They would have never made it to the groom's house!

They would all be walking around in the dark.

Proverbs 13:9—The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is put out.

KEYPOINT 3:

It's not that the foolish bridesmaids were unaware, but indifferent.

They loved the Groom, but not as much as themselves.

Matthew 25:9—Go instead to those who sell oil, and buy some for yourselves.'

Don't you hate it when unprepared people make their problems your problems?

These women knew that there would be delays—there are always delays.

So their negligence is inexcusable.

Notice how the Groom's presence reveals a crisis.

The difference between these two groups lies in the crisis.

On the outside, these women all looked the same.

They had all:

- Loved the bride and groom.
- Said yes to participate in the ceremony.
- All were a part of what we would call the <u>visible church</u>—meaning that they said they were Christians, baptized, participated in the Lord's Supper, served in ministries, and tithed their finances.

But it was in the crisis that the <u>difference</u> between the two groups was unveiled. The same will happen when Jesus returns.

Matthew 25:10—"When they had gone to buy some, the groom <u>arrived</u>, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut.

Here we see another sign of division.

Jesus has repeatedly said that there will be a division between the wheat and the weeds, the sheep and the goats, two men in the field, two women in the same family, and now a division among the bridesmaids.

What is the difference between these two groups of women?

One group had oil; the other did not. What does the oil represent?

Biblically speaking, oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit, beginning with the anointing of King David.

1 Samuel 16:13—So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on David from that day forward.

Jesus describes His own prophetic anointing from Isaiah:

Luke 4:18—The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

During the explosion of the church in the book of Acts...

Acts 10:37—You know the events that took place throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John preached:

Acts 10:38—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power,

The symbolism extends to Believers.

2 Corinthians 1:21—Now it is God who strengthens us together with you in Christ, and who has anointed us.

2 Corinthians 1:22—He has also put his seal on us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment.

1 John 2:20—But you have an anointing from the Holy One,

KEYPOINT 4:

There is an eternal distinction between the possession or profession of saving faith.

No one has ever been saved by saying a sinner's prayer, walking the aisle, or joining the church roll.

Saving faith is demonstrated through repentance and submission.

Saving faith is exhibited by a changed life—fruit.

Kindness, gentleness, love, joy and peace—regardless of your situation.

God has the power to turn sinners into saints, murderers into missionaries, and perverts into pastors.

Only God has the power to change someone's heart and give eternal life.

But no one is saved by borrowing someone else's oil.

Matthew 25:11—Later the rest of the (Bridesmaids) also came and said, 'Master, master, open up for us!'

Notice here—they still don't have oil. They don't have the Holy Spirit!

Matthew 25:12—"He replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you!'

"I don't know you" is devastating.

This is terrifying and should sound very familiar.

Matthew 7:21—"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

Matthew 7:22—On that day (judgment day) many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?'

Matthew 7:23—Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!'

KEYPOINT 5:

This parable teaches us that too little preparation— and too much presumption—result in rejection.

It was a privilege to be invited to the wedding.

The bridesmaids only had one thing to do—just one thing—to keep their lamps lit.

What an insult to the groom.

Spiritually, this parable does not describe a Christian who loses his salvation, because a true Christian can't lose his salvation.

John 10:27— My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me.

John 10:28— I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

The parable is describing someone who only thought they were a Christian.

KEYPOINT 6:

False Christians presume upon the Lord and take from His Church.

False Christians take the Lord's grace for granted.

These foolish bridesmaids are foolish because before the groom arrived, they had too much time, but now, after He arrives, times up.

KEYPOINT 7:

They expected the groom to come on their schedule, not his.

Jesus is not telling a story about something that actually happened—He is warning the Church of the dreadful fate of those who know they should be watching/repenting for His Second Coming and refuse to do so.

He's warning religious people of their religiousity.

He's warning people who are playing the part—who look good on the outside, but are rotten on the inside—just like the Pharisees.

Matthew 25:13—"Therefore be alert, because you don't know either the day or the hour.

Jesus is not afraid of repetition.

It's like a young mom is tired of her messy child's room.

Instead of nagging her child, which hasn't worked so far, she changes tactics.

She tells her child that she can do whatever she wants with her room—but there will be random inspections.

Those inspections have real consequences.

After a good inspection, the allowance is doubled for the week; after a bad inspection, it is eliminated.

The messy child whines, "How can I be ready for random inspections?"

Mom says, "There is one way. You must be ready for random inspections at all times."

KEYPOINT 8:

Preparedness equals love.

A Christian is someone who not only is prepared, but *yearns* for the Lord to return.

Psalm 84:1—How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD of Armies.

Psalm 84:2—I long and yearn for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh cry out for the living God.

A Christian is someone who loves the Lord with all of his heart, soul, strength, and mind.

Because of that love—a Christian is obedient to God's Word.

Failure to prepare for the Second Coming proves that the bridesmaids never truly loved the Lord—they only loved what the Lord could do for them.

The point of this parable is simple—Jesus said the kingdom of God is like these bridesmaids—five foolish and five wise.

When Jesus returns, many people in the church will be excited.

Sadly, the foolish will have no oil, no Spirit.

They will be Christians only in name.

I do not know why Jesus divided the bridesmaids the way He did, making half foolish and half wise.

That is a terrifying percentage. God forbid that 50 percent of us in church today only think we're Christians.

APPLICATION:		

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