

Betrothed 2-19-06

Matthew 25:1-13 (NIV)

¹ "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. ⁴ The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶ "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'" ⁷ "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'" ⁹ "No," they replied, "there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves." ¹⁰ "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. ¹¹ "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!'" ¹² "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'" ¹³ "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

We are picking up our study in Matthew in the middle of the Olivet Discourse. Chapter and verse numbers are an addition to the original writings to help us locate a particular place in Scripture. They often divide thoughts and even sentences. Chapter 25 is a continuation of the theme of chapter 24. One advantage to our study going straight through one book at a time is that we have the context of what we are reading. Jesus had just told of the signs that would indicate the end of the age. He spoke of the powers of heaven being shaken and signs in the skies. (Matthew 24:29) He told a time of great duress that would culminate in His return. (Matthew 24:21) That return would be visible to all. (Matthew 24:27) A great trumpet will sound and the dead in Christ will be raised. Those Christians living on the earth in that day will then be transformed and meet the Lord and the departed believers in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) The last fifteen verses relayed the urgency with which we should be watching, ready, and faithful. (Matthew 24:42)

The passage for today continues on that very theme. Jesus told a parable of ten virgins waiting for their bridegroom. To understand the parable more fully, it helps to understand the traditions of that culture. When a young man desired to marry a particular woman, his father would negotiate the bride price with the father of the bride. (Genesis 34:12) Her services to the new family were worth something, so a price would be agreed upon and the two would be betrothed. The groom would return to his father's home and prepare a place for them to live by adding on to the family home. The groom's father decided when the structure was complete and the bride price was prepared. No one could guess exactly how long that would take. It was not a set date. When all was prepared, the groom would invite his friends and family and they would all journey to the house of the bride. (John 2:1-2) (Genesis 24:67)

As they approached, a shofar would announce that they were approaching. The bride had been waiting in anticipation for this moment. Every time a shofar

Commented [notes1]: 29 "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." Matthew 24:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 21 For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now -and never to be equaled again. Matthew 24:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Matthew 24:27 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. Matthew 24:42 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 12 Make the price for the bride and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I'll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the girl as my wife." Genesis 34:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. John 2:1-2 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 67 Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. Genesis 24:67 (NIV)

sounded her heart must have pounded as she looked to see if it was her groom coming to take her in marriage.

That is the setting behind the parable of the ten virgins. Jesus is the groom who will come and take us from our earthly home to be with Him forever. (Psalm 49:15) We have already covenanted with Him. (Luke 22:20) The bride price was paid in His own blood. Now we are waiting for the sound of the shofar, and we will run out to meet Him. (1 Corinthians 15:52) This is the kind of anticipation and expectation that Jesus is talking about.

I want to be somewhat bold in speaking to you single women. You can relate to this better than the men can. God has placed this desire in your heart. (Genesis 3:16) You long for that knight in shining armor. You wait to meet Mr. Right, but you are looking for Jesus in a man. That desire you have will not be completely fulfilled until that last shofar sounds and you meet Him in the air. Do not let that godly desire compel you into being unequally yoked. (2 Corinthians 6:14) Wait for a truly godly man who can represent Christ to some extent or wait for the day the shofar sounds.

Married women, this is important for you as well. You are longing for your husband to be like Jesus. As holy as he may or may not be, in this life, he will fall way short of Jesus. If you do not like that, look in the mirror and get a check on reality. You are not the perfect bride either. If you are not drinking deeply from the fountain of living water, deeply satisfying your thirst in Jesus, you are going to try to find fulfillment from your mate. That will always leave you dissatisfied. That will always leave you pining for something more. You are longing for the day when you will be transformed into the perfect bride to be forever with the perfect husband, Christ Jesus. God put that in your heart. Be the best mate you can possibly be in this life by being fulfilled in Christ and looking for perfection on the day of Christ's return. You will never find it in your mate, and it will only drive you crazy trying. And all the couples that have been married over ten years said, "Amen!"

That is not a bad thing! That struggle we have as husband and wife is to change us and prepare us for that day. (1 Thessalonians 3:3) It makes us long for the day. Every joy in marriage is only a shadow of what we will experience in His presence. (Ephesians 5:32) Marriage is getting you ready for that day both through the trials and the joyous times. If you want to experience more of the joyous side, the Apostle Paul tells us men be more like Christ and you women to respect your husbands even though they are not perfect. (Ephesians 5:33)

Let us return to the text. ¹ "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. At what time? When Jesus calls the saints home; when we meet Him in the air. The kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, is like this parable. There are a number of virgins waiting for their bridegroom with anticipation. We should not look too deeply into details of parables and try to find more than is intended, but there are a few clear analogies. In Scripture, a virgin can represent someone who has kept themselves spiritually from the world. (James 1:27) In this parable, it is my opinion that the

Commented [notes9]: 15 But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself. Selah
Psalms 49:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."
Luke 22:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.
1 Corinthians 15:52 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 16 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."
Genesis 3:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?
2 Corinthians 6:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 3 so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them.
1 Thessalonians 3:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 32 This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church.
Ephesians 5:32 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.
Ephesians 5:33 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.
James 1:27 (NIV)

virgins are those called to be the bride of Christ. (Revelation 14:4) Many are called but few are chosen. (Matthew 22:14)

They all carry lamps to light their way. (Psalm 119:105) The lamps in Biblical times were small clay oil pots with a handle on one end and a spout on the other in which the wick was inserted. You could easily look in and check on how much oil you had left. John tells us that Jesus is the light that lights everyone that comes into the world. (John 1:9) We all have had the light of the Holy Spirit illuminate our hearts to some extent. Then it is up to us to receive or reject it. No one can say they were never influenced by the Spirit to give themselves in faith to God.

² Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. Remember, we cannot be sure when the bridegroom will return. The virgins that lived in expectation were always prepared. Jesus said, that was the wise way to live. The foolish ones did not take extra oil. Oil is representative of the Holy Spirit. (1 Samuel 16:13) It brings light, illuminating our darkness, and guiding our feet so that we do not stumble. The foolish came with a limited supply. ⁴ The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. They were prepared. They wanted to make sure they were ready. That was a key point of Jesus' warning in the last chapter, be ready!

⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. Here is Jesus warning that it would not take place immediately. It has been almost 2000 years. That is a long time. Has the church fallen asleep? Peter also warned that in the last days people would scoff at Christ's return because of the long period of time in between. (1 Peter 3:3-4) Like the disciples on the night of the betrayal, we want to stay alert and watch for Him, but our flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:41) All of them slept, even the wise ones. That is human.

⁶ "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'" Jesus has said that He will come at a time least expected. It will be the darkest time in the history of man. It will be the earth's midnight. The clarion call will go out, just as in the Hebrew marriage. In the Hebrew marriage, the call meant it was time to assemble for a week long party. For the believers it will be the call to the Marriage Feast of the Lamb, described in Revelation 19:9. It will be a time of uncontainable joy. Imagine it for a moment. *Here is the bridegroom.* Here is everything your heart has longed for. *Come out to meet Him!* That is going to be one wild stampede, but since God does everything decently and in order, it will be a smooth, holy rush. (1 Corinthians 14:33) The One we have longed to meet face to face will welcome us into the kingdom of heaven.

On the other hand, those who dread that call will mourn. They will realize that they have intentionally chosen to defy their Maker. They will remain hardened but know they are doomed. What a sad fate. There could be no more contrasting emotion than what these two groups will experience in that day.

⁷ "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'" There will be those

Commented [notes18]: 4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.
Revelation 14:4 (KJV)

Commented [notes19]: 14 For many are called, but few are chosen.
Matthew 22:14 (KJV)

Commented [notes20]: 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
Psalms 119:105 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.
John 1:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.
1 Samuel 16:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.
4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."
2 Peter 3:3-4 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."
Matthew 26:41 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 9 Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."
Revelation 19:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,
1 Corinthians 14:33 (NIV)

who want to go and meet the Lord, but they are unprepared. Their lax living and lack of anticipation caught them off guard. (Luke 21:34) The wise virgins were not responsible to be prepared for others, only for themselves. They had light to guide their feet and keep them from stumbling. (Psalm 119:105)

Commented [notes27]: 34 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.
Luke 21:34 (NIV)

⁹ "No," they replied, "there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves." I cannot give you the Spirit. I can pray for you to receive the Spirit and to store up in your life more, but I cannot share with you what I have, anymore than you can give the Spirit to someone else. It is like trying to give someone your health. It is not a thing that can be shared. You have your own or you do not. They needed to get their own if they were going to be able to meet the Master. They were unprepared when He finally came. Why? It was not a priority to them. Other things in life took precedence. They had what they originally came with and never responded by getting more. Now that the need is upon them, they want to take from others, but they cannot do that.

Commented [notes28]: 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
Psalms 119:105 (NIV)

¹⁰ "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. There will be those who wait till the last minute to seek God, but it will be too late. (Matthew 24:39) There is a day coming when, like on the great ark that Noah and his family fled into, the door will be shut. As God shut the door on the ark, He will close the door of the wedding feast because He alone knows the hearts of men. (Genesis 7:16) We will ride above the wave of wrath that sweeps over the earth in the wedding banquet at the marriage supper of the Lamb. While we are celebrating that weeklong feast with our Savior, He will be preparing the earth for our return with Him.

Commented [notes29]: 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.
Matthew 24:39 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 16 The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in.
Genesis 7:16 (NIV)

¹¹ "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!'" ¹² "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'" When the wrath sweeps the earth, there will be many who call out in desperation, not because they want their hearts changed, but they want to be delivered from the wrath of the Lamb. (Revelation 6:16) Like those who pounded on the door of the ark as it rose in the waters. Then they will believe, but believing is not receiving. To acknowledge the truth is not to love it. You can still hate it and acknowledge that it is true. (James 2:19)

Commented [notes31]: 16 They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!
Revelation 6:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.
James 2:19 (NIV)

We have heard this from Jesus before in the Sermon on the Mount. ²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV) What does that mean the He never knew them? In John 10, He said He knew His sheep and that His sheep knew Him. (John 10:15) The Apostle Paul wrote that person who loves God is known by God. (1 Corinthians 8:3) Using God's name does not mean there is love for God. Love obeys. Love submits to the will of another. He does not know them means that they have never loved Him or submitted to His will. They just want to take from Him what they can get.

Commented [notes33]: 14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me--
John 10:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes34]: But the man who loves God is known by God.
1 Corinthians 8:3 (NIV)

Does He know you? What a sad sound to our ears, "*I never knew you*". "If you loved me, I would know you. You used my name but never submitted to my will." Are you sure you love Him this morning? Are you submitted to His will? If you can say with certainty, "Yes! I love Him and will do whatever He asks," then you can be sure He knows you.

He called those He did not know, evildoers. To not love God is evil. To refuse to submit to His will, His righteous and loving ways, is evil. God separates Himself from evil. (Habakkuk 1:13a) That is why He cannot know them. At first glance the Bridegroom seems harsh, even calloused that He could say He did not know those who came knocking after the door was shut. As we examine it more deeply, we see He does so with great sadness and finality. (Ezekiel 33:11) It is the way it must be because of the choice of the foolish virgins. They were foolish to be set upon evil. They were foolish to wait until the last minute to seek out what was needed for eternal life. (Jeremiah 8:20) They pretended to have love but it was merely self-love.

¹³ *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.* Jesus tells us again that the time is unpredictable. Because none of us knows the hour of our death or the time of His return, we are to always have that watchful, ready and faithful attitude, the attitude of a bride expecting her groom to show up at any time. It something we do now, at this moment, and for the rest of our life on this earth. When you meet an "on fire" Christian, you see this sense of urgency. You can see that they have this spirit about them. They want to work while it is day. (John 9:4) They know their time here is short, and they want to get in as much as they can.

I am reminded of people when I speak on this subject. I am reminded of my one time prayer partner, Michael Walker and his wife Heather in Botswana. He recently drove through mud the locals would not drive through to minister in a prison. What is the urgency? Why not wait for better conditions. Lions are one thing but the bandits are even more dangerous. 35 inmates gathered to hear the message. 25 of them as well as 10 guards received Jesus as their Savior. Michael has a sense of urgency.

Then there is Danny Palm, a young man in his 20s with a contagious smile. He is in Beijing looking for opportunities to share the gospel as he teaches English. He has a heart condition. What is he doing there? He senses the urgency.

There are those among you who I will not embarrass. The world says to enjoy your retirement and see the world. Oh, you enjoy life, but there is an urgency about you as you constantly labor for the Kingdom, knowing that the time to work is almost up. If you can reach one more soul with the message of the kingdom, or encourage one more wandering sheep to get back behind the Shepherd, you will consider it a good day. You work for the glory of God.

Then there is Sgt. Dan whose parents were honored at the State of the Union. Before Dan was killed by an IED he wrote a letter to family and friends that asked them not to cry. He wrote to tell them that if they got that letter they should know that he did his God given duty to protect them. He wrote that his race was over,

Commented [notes35]: 13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.
Habakkuk 1:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes36]: 11 Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.'
Ezekiel 33:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes37]: 20 "The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved."
Jeremiah 8:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes38]: 4 As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.
John 9:4 (NIV)

and He was finally home. He was so ready he had the letter written in advance. In it, he encouraged them to be about their God given duties with a sense of urgency.

I could go on, but you get the point. These folks are examples to us all of living like they are betrothed to Christ, expectant for His return. When the call goes out, "Come out and meet Him", they will be ready. Will you? They have found there is no better way to live than to be watching, ready, and faithful. They live with sense of urgency, doing what God has called them to do for His glory. That is wisdom!