

BE PREPARED!
Matthew 25:1-13

Woodland Park Church of Christ

16 July 2023

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Now **five of them were wise, and five were foolish.** ³ Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵ But **while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.** ⁶ “And at midnight a cry was *heard*: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ ⁷ Then all those virgins arose 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, ‘*No*, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and **those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.** ¹¹ “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ ¹² But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³ **“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour** in which the Son of Man is coming.”

Matthew 25:1-13

BACKDROP

Generally, three stages of a Jewish wedding in Christ's day –

- 1. *Engagement*** – a formal agreement made by the fathers.
- 2. *Betrothal*** – the ceremony where mutual promises are made.
- 3. *Marriage*** – approximately one year later. The bridegroom **came for his bride; sometimes, he would be delayed.**

Our lesson today is at the third phase – all left was to unite the bride and groom & have a feast.

The virgins (principal characters in the text) attended the bride and were tasked with conducting the bridegroom and his companions into the house and to the bride – procession.

BACKDROP

- Continuation of chapter 24, where Jesus taught His disciples to be ready for His return.
- All 10 virgins were similarly situated.
- All 10 had same opportunity, privilege, and time –
- 60 seconds each minute / 60 minutes each hour / 24 hours each day / 168 hours each week
- Difference (demarcation) between the two groups exists in attitude and degree of preparation.
- Attitude: “I need to act with a sense of purpose and urgency because I do not know when I will be called on” vs. “I have plenty of time to get/make it right.”

Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But 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. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. **Matthew 24:42-44**

“But nobody knows when that day or hour will come, not the heavenly angels and not the Son. **Matthew 24:36 [CEB]**

Resources, or lack thereof, was not an issue (i.e., their “money wasn’t funny” and their “credik (credit) wasn’t bad!”

*And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but **go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.**’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came . . . (Matt. 25:8-9).* Conspicuously missing is a claim by the foolish virgins that they lacked the financial resources (money) or anything else.

Note too: Our failure to respond responsibly and take care of our business does not result in an obligation by others to come to our rescue. Neither does it give us unalienable rights to what others have.

Yes, it’s good to help others, but we must bear our own burden. [Gal. 6:5]

Many do not suffer for lack of opportunity.

Opportunity knocks, but many, like the five foolish virgins, are simply unprepared to seize it –

- To teach a lost soul –
 - But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and **always be ready** to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear [**I Peter 3:15**]
- To glorify God and have God glorified by our deeds – exhibit the fruit of the Spirit [**Galatians 5:22-23**]
- To nurture and provide direction for the next generation (we can't lie dormant and idle) → *The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.* [**Proverbs 29:15**]
- To improve our stead in this life → Many are lax, loose and flippant with their time and other resources

Go to the ant, O lazy one; observe her ways and be wise, ⁷ Which, having no chief, overseer or ruler, ⁸ ***She prepares her food in the summer*** and brings in her provisions [of food for the winter] in the harvest. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to lie down *and rest*” — ¹¹ So your poverty will come like an *approaching* prowler who walks [slowly, but surely] and your need [will come] like an armed man [making you helpless]. **Proverbs 6:7-11 [AMP]**.

Remember Aesop’s fable: “The Ant(s) and the Grasshopper”

The Ants spent the summer productively preparing and storing for the winter. The Grasshopper, on the other hand, slept late and frolicked (played around) by singing and dancing the whole time. When the winter arrived, the Grasshopper found itself dying of hunger, while it saw the Ants distributing, every day, corn and grain from the stores they had collected in the summer. **It is best to prepare for the days of necessity.**

Assuredly, tomorrow is not promised to any of us! But what if God blesses you to see tomorrow, how do you want to face it?

- With eager anticipation and ready to face the challenges because you have readied yourself, or with dread because you have not prepared yourself.
- With a boldness that comes from being prepared, or with morbid fear or concern because you are not ready for the battle(s) you know are awaiting.
 - Good to walk and to talk with God on a regular basis – not just when we need something.
 - I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

Psalm 34:5

I. FORTUNE FAVORS THE PREPARED

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. **Matthew 25:10**

5 Ps of SUCCESS

PROPER

PREPARATION

PREVENTS

POOR

PERFORMANCE

Sometimes you have to study and draw from the enemy's or taskmaster's playbook.

If you have an idea of the enemy's approach, you will be ready and won't get caught off guard!!

- ACT/SAT/MCAT/GMAT/LSAT preparation
- Impossible to know every single scenario that could possibly be thrown at you. Can be aware, however, of the types of questions they ask and the areas generally tested.

Malcolm Butler – hero of Super Bowl XLIX (49). His memorable play was a result of studying film and having an understanding of the competition's tendencies (down and distance; formations; motion activity).

“You know how they are going to come after you.”

II. MAKE WISE, PRODUCTIVE USE OF YOUR TIME

Therefore see that you walk carefully [living life with honor, purpose, and courage; shunning those who tolerate and enable evil], not as the unwise, but as wise [sensible, intelligent, discerning people], ¹⁶ **making the very most of your time [on earth, recognizing and taking advantage of each opportunity and using it with wisdom and diligence]**, because the days are [filled with] evil. **Ephesians 5:15-16 [AMP]**

Procrastination is time's thief and opportunity's assassin. It has wrecked more dreams and killed more hopes than perhaps anything else known to man. In fact, procrastination is to hopes, dreams, and aspirations what arsenic is to the human body.

III. PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD

- We should prepare adequately for life's tasks and challenges and to properly position ourselves to achieve dreams and reach milestones.
- Prepare so you can be a person of excellence.
- Remember, we never really know where and how our blessings (opportunities) will appear.
- “Have thy tools ready; God will find thee work.” **Charles Klingsley**
- Make sure, however, you “Prepare to Meet thy God!”

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, **[Hebrews 9:27]**

BUT GOD IS PREPARED AND HAS PREPARED FOR HIS CHILDREN!!!

- *In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. **[Jn. 14:2-3]***
- *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." **[I Corinthians 2:9]***

Be prepared with a good **ETERNAL LIFE INSURANCE POLICY!**

Thanatopsis ... William Cullen Bryant

[Latin: **Thanatos-** (death) and **-opsis** (sight/view) → a “view of death”]

So live, that **when thy summons comes to join**

The innumerable caravan, which moves

To that mysterious realm, where each shall take

His chamber in the silent halls of death,

Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,

Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed.

By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch

About him, and **lies down to pleasant dreams.**

Lord's Invitation Extended to All

- **Be added to the Lord's body**

Hear the gospel (Acts 15:7);

Believe the gospel (Acts 8:37, 15:7);

Repent of sins (Acts 2:38);

Confess Christ (Acts 8:37);

Be baptized for the remission of sin (Acts 2:38);

or

Lord's Invitation (cont'd)

- Be reconciled unto the Lord (**I John 1:8-9**); or
- Desire prayer. (**James 5:16**).