

## Sermon Outline

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### BE READY TO MEET OUR BELOVED LORD

*Matthew 25:1-13*

#### Introduction.

**The Context:** the second coming of Christ and the lesson of readiness. It has been the theme of Jesus' teaching beginning with Mat 24:36.

- The comparison with the days of Noah (24: 37-41).
- The illustration of the thief (24:42-44).
- The illustration of the good and evil stewards (24:45-51).

#### **The situation** (Verse 1).

- The kingdom of heaven is the visible church because:
  - (i) The church is under a kingly government, the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is a distinct state from any other earthly kingdom.
  - (ii) The church is a figure of heaven and ought to imitate heaven in unity, love, holiness and also worship.
- Therefore, it is no small privilege to be admitted members of the visible church where God has put the honour upon it.
- The visible church at the time of the return of Christ is like the situation described in the parable: "the ten virgins who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom."

#### **Two types of professing Christians** (Verse 2).

- All the ten virgins are anticipating the arrival of the groom.
- They are all virgins who keep themselves pure, not defiled with idolatry.
- They are all very much alike outwardly, they have forsaken all other lovers, and cleave to the Lord Jesus alone.
- They are all professing believers, even 'members of the church' as Matthew Henry says. There is no way *we* can differentiate them, except our Lord alone.
- J.C. Ryle commented: "The visible church of Christ is just in the same condition: all its members are baptized in the name of Christ, but not all really hear His voice and follow Him; all are called Christians, and profess to be of the Christian religion, but not all have the grace of the Spirit in their hearts, and really are what they profess to be."
- The wisdom or foolishness of the girls is determined by our Lord by their preparedness in the things (taking the oil) pertaining to the groom's return (verse 2).
- The five foolish virgins are regarded by our Lord as non-believers who professed by their mouth to be Christians (verse 12).

- The Lord Jesus was very concerned that among His followers, some were not genuine disciples. He is simply saying he is coming back and when he comes back He is going to separate the true disciples from the false:
  - (i) He is going to separate the house with foundation from the one built on sand (Mt 7:24-27).
  - (ii) He is going to separate the wheat from the tares (Mt 13:24-30).
  - (iii) He is going to determine those who fell on the good soil and the bad (Mt 13:1-9).
  - (iv) In our parable today, Jesus is going to expose the virgins with oil and those who are not.
  - (v) In the next parable, He shows us that there are true and false servants (Mt 25:14-30).
  - (vi) In His final parable in the gospel of Mathew, He is going to sort out the sheep and the goats (Mt 25: 31-46).

### **Are we ready to meet our beloved Lord?** (Verse 4).

- We must live wisely and be prepared for contingencies, because there is no way to know exactly when the groom might appear.
- We must be prepared and always make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).
- Always live as though Christ's coming was always imminent.

### **The problem of unprepared** (Verse 5).

- The church is eager for Christ to come quickly but He delays.
- Christ knew that this would be a concern of all Christians all throughout the history of the church, and will cause problem for the unprepared.
- The girls "became drowsy and slept."
- Calvin identifies the sleep to the distraction of this world's business.
- We have many things to care for: family, preparing children taking 'O' and 'A' Levels exams, parents are getting old and sickly and need our company, work's KPI, politics, pleasure, entertainment-seeking, and so on and so on.
- Certainly we thought that we have very good reasons to say to the Lord that why we don't have much time to think about His coming.
- There is no sin in sleep, right? No sin in doing what I have described just now.
- The question is, while tackling life's tasks, have preparations been made for His coming? The key word here is working to prepare for the coming of the Lord, and not working on the distraction of this world without preparation.

### **Individual responsibility** (Verses 6-9).

- The parable is not meant to teach a lesson on sacrificial sharing or a charter for selfish unconcern for others.

- D. A. Carson: “the foresight and preparedness of the wise virgins cannot benefit the foolish virgins when the eschatological crisis dawns ... Preparedness can neither be transferred nor shared.”
- Every one of us has to face and answer the Lord alone in the judgment Day.

### **Missing the deadline** (Verse 10).

- There is a ‘too late’ in God’s time-table.
- Calvin: “It simply means that all must be excluded from entry to heaven who at the precise moment are not prepared.”
- We must always and continuously be prepared. We must be on our toes always!
- At the final day of Christ’s appearance to His disciples after His resurrection, He said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” And when Simon Peter said, “Yes, Lord,” the Lord continued, “Feed my lambs.”
- Frances R. Havergal wrote in her famous hymn, “I gave, I gave My life for thee—What hast thou given for Me?”
- Love is not just a feeling because it is commanded by God. It must be manifested by what we do to those we said we love.

### **Reward and Rejection** (Verses 10-12).

- True Christians shall alone be found ready at the second coming of Christ.
- Washed in the blood of atonement, clothed in Christ’s righteousness, renewed by the Spirit, they shall meet their Lord with boldness, and sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.
- To the other 5 virgins, the Lord told them, “*Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.*” This is what Christ will say to some professed believers.
- Jesus’ answer, says Carson, ‘must not be construed as callous rejection of their lifelong desire to enter the kingdom.’ Instead, ‘it is the rejection of those who, despite appearances, never made preparation for the coming of the kingdom.’
- They may appear desiring to enter the kingdom for the pleasure and benefit of it, and to avoid punishment and condemnation, but are unwilling to believe and obey the Lord.

### **The Lesson.**

- The main lesson: “*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour*” (verse 13). A true disciple must ‘be on the alert always.’
- This parable doesn’t teach us how to prepare. That is for the next parable (of the Talents).
- Readiness is not fretfulness. We are to enjoy the creator’s gifts: food, drink, marriage, children, music, and so live lives characterized by peace, joy, and contentment, and rejoice in the Redeemer’s grace (see Apostle Paul’s letters).
- The Apostle Paul summarizes this outlook in Titus 2:11-14.

- He commands us to live self-controlled and godly lives as we wait for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of Christ. But this can only be so, because Christ has given himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness.
- As regenerated Christians, “we are not under the Law but under Grace.” We do not obey the will of God because we hope to earn Heaven, or dream of escaping from Divine wrath by our own works, but because there is a life in us which seeks after that which is holy, pure, right and true—and cannot endure that which is evil.
- True godliness is the natural outgrowth of a renewed nature, not the forced growth of pious living because of the fear of the Law and punishment.
- Warning: Professing Christians in this parable look outwardly the same as the redeemed. How about those professing Christians who choose to be different? Those who do not keep themselves pure as the virgins and those who have no concern whatsoever in waiting and serving for their Lord?
- The period of delay of Christ’s coming “is a period of opportunity [or what we call ‘gospel opportunities’] to put to good use the ‘talents’ entrusted to his ‘slaves’” (France).