

Preparations
Matthew 25:1-13
November 12, 2023

Today we have another of Jesus' parable of the ten virgins. Five didn't plan ahead and probably thought why take extra oil if we don't need it. We can count on the bridegroom coming before the lamps oil runs out. Why would he take so long to come to something like a the marriage feast in his honor. Surely he would get hungry and come but they were mistaken.

There are many who are talking about Jesus, the bridegroom coming soon. People have been saying it since He bodily left this earth, promising to come again. Some even thought Jesus would come before the disciple Jesus loved, John, would die. He lived a little longer than the other disciples, it is thought, but he died and Jesus still hasn't come. It is as Jesus promised in the last verse for today, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

Being a parable it is pointing to something else besides the parable. We might look at it as some people who are foolish when it comes to Jesus and others who are prepared for His coming again.

We don't know when He is coming again but we are to be ready when He does come. How are we to be ready, that is the question. We put this with the parable of the three guys who received from the wealthy owner and went away. Two of the guys used what they were given to make more but one took the easy route, took what he had been given and buried it and went about life on his own terms and when the owner came back he presented him with what he was given originally. You know how that turned out, the owner wasn't happy and cast out that worthless servant.

He didn't use what he was given. The virgins had lamps but 5 thought the bridegroom would come back before the oil ran out but they were mistaken. Based on what they had seen in the past, they thought the bridegroom would come earlier, when they thought he should come but he didn't. Jesus, not only here in the text for today but in an another text, in the previous chapter, tells of the account of the coming of Jesus that many point to as what they call the rapture. They seem to think Jesus will come back and take Christians out of the world and leave unbelievers.

Their thinking is what I like to call wishful thinking but when He comes again, it will be for the final judgement. For believers it will be a great day as our judgment was on the cross. Jesus paid for all sin and for us, believers, He endured the cross,

despising its shame and our shame only to pay the full price and rise to life, the first born of the dead so that believers could live in the new heaven and earth with Him forever.

We have a different view of what the Bible talks about when it comes to end times. Our view has Jesus, one day, coming and it being the end of sin, torment and trials.

Knowing that, when He comes it will be like the five virgins, we want to be prepared for that day. So what preparations do we need to make for that day? Our salvation is sure because of what Jesus has done, so what are we left with? It is others. Yes, you come here each week to be strengthened to go out into the increasingly more sinful world. You come to have your faith strengthened and to learn of how you might reach that friend, neighbor or coworker or maybe even someone who might work for you with the law and the gospel so that they too can realize they need what Jesus came to do for them and the whole world.

As we hear and see of what many Jews in this nation are having to deal with over this last month and I am afraid they will have to deal with in the future if things don't change, I wonder how long it will be for the next people group, Christians, to be dealing with this same kind of treatment?

I have a book that I use for devotions to start the board meetings. It is called extreme devotion. It is put out by "The voice of the Martyrs." It is an international best seller that is said to have printed over a million copies and in 36 languages. It is about ancient and modern day believers who have sacrificed everything because of their Christian faith. Here is an example of a Ukrainian girl who was facing being sent away to a Siberian labor camp. She was also facing punishment for going into a forbidden area of the prison she was in.

When a guard found her witnessing for Christ, her punishment was to stand barefoot for hours on the ice. When she failed to meet her work quota, she was beaten and denied the watery broth they called the evening meal. One evening, depressed and crying, Vera walked out into the prison yard to be alone. In her misery she didn't notice that she had crossed into the forbidden zone, where prisoners were shot on sight. Suddenly a harsh voice yelled, "Hey, is your mother a Christian?" The stunned and frightened Vera, who had actually been thinking of her mother at the time, answered, "Why do you ask?" The guard said, "Because I've been watching you for ten minutes, but I haven't been able to shoot you. I can't move my arm. It's a healthy arm—

I have been moving it all day. So I figured you must have a mother who is praying for you. Run back—I'll look the other way." Vera saw the guard later that day. He smiled at her and raised his arm saying, "Now I can move it again."

In the devotions, they make comments about how the account can be applied to us. They write: We like to play it safe. We like security over adventure. We prefer comfort to challenge. When it comes down to it, we want to safeguard our lives from as much doubt and fear as possible. Yet we have forgotten that God offers His protection at times when we are on the front lines in His service. God's protection is more like a shield in battle than a security blanket for our comfort at home. When is the last time you stepped out in faith so much that you simply had to rely on God's protection? Are you so busy safeguarding your life that you have forgotten how to trust God? Are you so cautious that you never take risks for God? Regardless of the outcome, witnessing is not simply a "risk". It is faith in action. The text they used for this devotion was Proverbs 2:8 For He guards the course of the just and protects the way of His faithful ones.

She was in prison, we don't know what was the reason but we can imagine that it may have something to do with her ethnicity or maybe because she was a Christian. She could have said her mother wasn't Christian but she told the truth. God went so far as to disable the guard's arm for awhile, something you don't think about or maybe never hear of something like that ever.

I know I told the account before but while Cyndi, Megan and I were in El Salvador they told us of a night where something similar happened. The town where the Christian school operated had some gangs or cartel members who didn't like it that the children were being taught about Christ and being Christians. One night they finally got to the point that they were going to do something about it. After getting organized to go out and do what they had planned to do, none of those there could get up out of their chairs. It was like they were glued to their chairs.

They became so afraid that they knew they couldn't do anything to the school or the head family there. In fact after that incident, some of them actually entered their children in the school. I guess the family must have learned first hand what had happened that night.

There are a year's worth of devotions in the book. Each has a different account of how the Lord worked in the lives of many who faced death because of their faith.

Many live there lives knowing their faith could get them killed but they also are prepared to die for their faith.

We haven't had to face death for our faith, more than likely, but a mother's prayers and a God who loves us and His children can't be matched by they evil that seems to on the increase in the world we are living in.

The virgins needed to be prepared for the bridegroom. We too need to be prepared, not only for Jesus but also meeting Jesus because of someone who may take our lives because they hate Jesus and all who call themselves Christians.

You are here. You are being prepared to handle all that the Lord has for you as you go about your days. I know the Lord will be with you whenever you may be challenged in your faith but thinking and planning for that day will help you to deal with it when it comes as Jesus has promised that trials will come.

We will continue to pray for the martyrs as they face death for their faith. Yes, I am thinking they are coming for the Jews now but we are next on the list. Think about it. What is being done to those who are persecuting the Jews in this nation's schools and cities? Almost nothing. Which group is it that DOESN'T get in the news when they are being persecuted? We may see Muslim persecution in the news or some other religion but not too much about Christians as most of the time they don't strike back but turn the other cheek.

Are you prepared? Each of you will have to ask yourselves that. Jesus went to that cross, prepared. Yes, He was sweating blood the night before as He prepared Himself what awaited Him the next day. He knew what to expect, not only the nails but also the torment of the sins of the world.

He had lived a life, perfectly even though He was tempted in every way that we are. He didn't succumb to temptation but lived the perfect life, the only human to do so. That perfection He has given us, not that we don't sin, but that we have His perfect robe of righteousness place over us.

5 virgins were prepared. They looked ahead as they thought what awaited them was going to be too good to miss out on. They were ready for the party, the marriage feast. Because they were ready, they got in before door was locked behind them leaving the others outside who said they knew the bridegroom but didn't get prepared to welcome him when he came.