

# Foolish or Wise?

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] I'd like us to turn once again to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25, and reading at the beginning of that chapter. Matthew 25. Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish had taken their lamps, they took no oil with them. But the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

You know, as we look at this chapter, chapter 25, and the Lord telling these parables to his disciples and to the common people also, they bear very much upon the judgment that is to come.

The judgment that God will exercise upon all those who he has given opportunity to hear the Gospel and to turn and to live. Now, we're coming here almost to an end of another summer.

[ 1 : 3 1 ] And you know the text which says, The summer has passed, the harvest has ended, and we are not saved. And so now is the accepted time, and today is the day of salvation.

We cannot go on putting things off until another day. We cannot go on thinking that when we've achieved this or planned for something else, then will be the right time to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

Now is the accepted time. Today, even today, is the day of salvation. You know, it's one of the signs of the Lord's condescension, His coming down to our level of thinking and reasoning, that He brings us to understand the elements of salvation in weighing what we gain and what we have lost.

And He really, He appeals to our basic instincts. He says, if you want to save your life, well then really there is only one way.

He says, what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and then lose his own soul? And that speaks to us, especially here, the 21st century, but also in the last century.

[ 3 : 0 5 ] We were very much given over to materialism. We wanted to achieve, we wanted to gather, we wanted to build bigger barns. And what shall it gain us if we gain the whole world?

If we achieve all our plans and all our schemes and then at the end, through neglect, lose our own souls? Once again, I want to emphasize, if we want to know salvation, if we want to be saved, there is only one way.

And that is God's method of salvation. God sent His Son into this world to seek and to save the lost. God offered up His Son a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice on our behalf, so that we might be saved.

God's actions, God's actions, God's plans, God's work of salvation so we might be saved. All we have to do is accept His way of salvation, close in with the way that He is defining to us in this word, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall be saved.

Now this story is about five virgins, or ten virgins, who went to a wedding feast.

[ 4 : 33 ] None of them wanted to miss it. See, there are many commonalities between the five and the foolish. They were all asked.

They all accepted the invitation. They all thought they had made ready to be available there for the wedding.

They'd all dressed for the wedding that was to take place. And the story about these virgins of the wedding feast is a masterpiece in the way that the Lord tells us.

All His parables are masterpieces. The way He spoke, the way He taught, was original. And it was also full of eloquence. And it was also full of teaching.

And all these aspects, the Lord is a master teacher. He explains in the most basic level what we must do to be saved. All we are doing as preachers of the gospel is bringing what the Lord says and try to expand on it a bit.

[ 5 : 43 ] To try and bring some of the insights that perhaps the language teaches us, or what we've learned from books, or what we've learned in conversation and fellowship. And try and explain that and enlarge upon that in different congregations.

But the teaching itself is the Lord's. The parables are the Lord's. As we have nothing in our own minds and our imaginations that can compare with what the Lord has done and what the Lord Himself is teaching.

Now this parable tells of ten virgins who had been invited to a marriage feast. Five were told were wise and five were foolish. The wise took oil for their lamps and the foolish did not.

And then the cry went up. The bridegroom is coming and we're told the wise trimmed their lamps and went out to meet the great bridegroom.

We're also told that the foolish, realizing they had no oil, asked to borrow some from their friends.

[ 6 : 53 ] But we're told realistically on the part of the wise, if we give any to you we will not have enough for ourselves. And ours will go out as well and so there will be no light for the bridegroom.

We only have enough for ourselves. Go to those who sell oil and buy for yourselves. And then we're told this very direct statement while they were gone.

The bridegroom came and the door was shut and the foolish were left outside.

They cried, open the door to us. They received an invitation. They were dressed in the right way.

They came to the door where the bridegroom was but the door was shut. And the horror that faces them is the bridegroom saying, I don't know you.

[ 7 : 54 ] He answered himself, truly I say to you, I do not know you. At one level he doesn't know them because they were not doing what they were supposed to be doing.

They weren't bearing the light as light bearers to meet the bridegroom when he was coming. But also he didn't know them because they hadn't paid attention to the need to be prepared when the bridegroom was coming.

So we told, therefore keep watch for you know not the day nor the hour of his coming. Although there's one big difference, there are many ways, as I said earlier on, in which these virgins were similar.

So we look briefly here at the similarities. They had all been invited, as I said. They had responded joyfully, expectantly.

They had responded in the way that, yes, they would come. And they would come to the wedding feast. All of them had showed their love for the bridegroom.

[ 9 : 19 ] And by waiting there for his coming. Yes, also in their tiredness they had all slept while the bridegroom was delayed. But then a bridegroom came.

And we're told five were ready and five were totally unprepared. It's very similar to the way that we attend on the means of grace.

We come to the means of grace. We're invited to come. We come. We bring our Bibles. We sing our Psalms. But yet, we are not ready.

We have not been renewed. We have not been washed. We have not been justified.

We have not been reconciled. And we haven't been made like God. And so, we are not ready. If the Lord was to come, these aspects that I've just listed would not be true of us.

[ 10 : 35 ] And so, we need to make our calling on election. Sure, we've got to engage with the gospel. Not just attend on the gospel, but engage with the gospel.

And to bring ourselves in a situation where we are as those who wait diligently upon the means of grace. And engage with the word as it is sung and as it is spoken.

And the question here is, are we among the wise or the foolish? Are we among the foolish who are unready?

It's apparent that our long day is coming to an end. Especially those of us of an older generation. Our time is running short.

And the bridegroom's coming is at hand. We don't know when. But we do know it's near.

[ 11 : 44 ] For the youngest of us, it's near. For the oldest of us, it's extremely near. We know, as it says here, he comes during the night when people are not expecting it.

We know that the church is waiting for his coming. And again, we have to ask the question, are we ready? If we're not renewed, we're not ready.

If we're not washed, we're not ready. If we're not justified, we're not ready. If we haven't been reconciled, we are not ready.

If we're not like God, being made like God, we are not ready. Now all these actions are not something that we do to ourselves. It's something that is done to us.

It is something that happens to us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And at one level, the oil that is spoken about here is that defines the Holy Spirit in many places in the Bible.

[ 12 : 53 ] But we can't go out and buy oil equating it to the Holy Spirit. We cannot go out and buy the Holy Spirit to ourselves. Remember the story of Simon Peter and Simon Majors.

When Simon Majors tried to give me the gift, let me buy the gift of laying hands on people and imparting the gift of the Holy Spirit. That cannot happen. But we are to desire the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

We are to engage with the gospel so that our whole heart and soul and mind are so engaged that we want nothing more than the Holy Spirit. And nothing less than the Holy Spirit.

Because nothing less is going to satisfy us. And nothing more is desired. Our whole life is focused and drawn by the mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

Sometimes we think the virgins went out to meet him on the road. But we are told at midnight the bridegroom came when they were asleep.

[ 14 : 07 ] And the cry went out, go and meet him. And so you can see first of all here, the virgins went out to meet the bridegroom, each one bearing their own lamp.

And so it tells us that here there is a need of personal preparation. We are not prepared by some aggregate goodness, or whether we belong to a church or a family or godly parents or grandparents.

Each one of us has prepared, each one of us has prepared in ourselves, in our own desire, in our own need of the Lord Jesus Christ. While the wise had oil in their lamps and were ready to trim them, the foolish didn't, thinking that somehow everything would work out.

And yet again, the question has to be asked, are we ready? Are we ready for the coming of the bridegroom? Are we ready for that time when the bridegroom will return?

And he will call those who are his to go in, go in with him. It's obvious the Lord is warning us about belonging to a church.

[ 15 : 29 ] Without asking ourselves why we belong to a church. The bridegrooms or the ten virgins, they are signifying the church.

We belong to this group. But some are ready and some are not. Some are waiting expectantly, ready for the coming of the bridegroom.

And ready for the time when he will call us to himself. And some are not. The coming will certainly be sudden. The coming will be without warning. And we'll be asked to go and meet with the bridegroom.

See, the foolish virgins brought their lamps. But no oil. And all we see here is neglect on their part.

On their part. They knew the bridegroom was coming. They knew they'd been engaged to be light bearers. They knew their sole task in life was to bear light for the bridegroom.

[ 16 : 32 ] But they took no oil with them in their lamps. They said earlier, the oil here represents the Holy Spirit in our lives.

But the fact that they had no oil wasn't because of forgetfulness. It was because they couldn't be bothered.

And so often that's our own guilt in our relationship to the gospel. And to the demands of the gospel on us.

It's not forgetfulness. It's total and other neglect. It's that we can't be bothered in engaging with what the gospel asks us to engage with.

They assumed there'd be plenty of time. Like we all do. We all think we're immortal. That we're told again and again in God's word, tomorrow is not promised. But we think there's going to be plenty of time.

[ 17 : 34 ] But when the need arose for them, they were totally and utterly unprepared. They either had no understanding of what was required of them.

Or of how sudden the call would be. No understanding of what was required of them.

I want to ask ourselves here, do we have any understanding of what the Lord Jesus Christ, what the gospel requires of us as we come to the means of grace, as we sit under the gospel, and as we are challenged, and by the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, as to make our calling and election sure.

Are we in any way confused as to what is asked of us? And if we are confused, well then it's our duty.

We are commanded to discover what's required of us. We are commanded to go and find out by asking, by discussion, by attending on the means of grace, what is required of us.

[ 18 : 47 ] Now you know, your third catechism says, the scriptures principally teach what God reveals of himself and what God requires of us.

It requires of us in regard to our salvation. God has not brought us into this world just to be as brute beasts and to be born and to die without any distinction between us and the animals of the field.

He's brought us into this world to be his children, to be as those who would interact with him and those who would love him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

And so we are not to be as those who have no understanding. On one occasion, the Lord asks his disciples, have you understood the things I have been telling you about?

And the same thing I have to say here this morning. Are you understanding what is being said in the gospel? And if for some reason it's not being understood, whether it's going over your head or whether it's going over your shoulder and you're not interacting with what's being said, well, discover, talk about it, ask questions about it.

[ 20 : 04 ] It's too important to say, oh, I'll try another time. It must be done. It must be engaged with. It must be discussed until you fully understand it, fully engage with it, and bring your lives under the demands of the gospel.

And so they either had no understanding of how sudden the call would be or how brief would be the interval here in the story between the bridegroom coming and the shutting of the door.

They no doubt thought there would be plenty of time, just like we do. See, the oil in this particular story isn't carried separately.

We told here in verse 4, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. Now, I tend to think here that the lamp carried all the oil.

The lamp was that which had the oil in it. And when the time came, we told that they trimmed their lamps. The lamps wouldn't have been lit until the time it was needed.

[ 21 : 23 ] And their foolishness was that they had failed to persevere in their preparation. And their total and utter lack of preparation at all.

They had no oil. See, the lamp and the oil is one. You've seen pictures, I'm sure, and there is the lamp. It's shaped like an Aladdin's lamp and the wick comes out and you simply light the oil that is in the lamp.

Now, we're told, they're saying, our lamps are going out. Every time they tried to light their lamp, the lamp would flicker and go out. So there was no oil in their lamp. And so, in this, there was a total and utter lack of preparedness.

And the lack of preparedness, because they couldn't be bothered, they thought somebody else would supply it for them. But so, to return again to the suddenness here of the call.

We're told both the wise and the foolish slept. And there's nothing blameworthy in the fact that they were sleeping. Through tiredness, perhaps through a long day, he was very delayed in coming.

[ 22 : 36 ] And so, they were sleeping. What follows is intended to bring into sharp focus the suddenness of the call.

It's midnight. When sleep's at its deepest, and suddenly the cry goes up, the bridegroom is coming. There's a slumbering.

There's a sleeping. There is a tiredness. But some of these people who were sleeping and slumbering because they're tired, they were ready. They were ready at a moment's notice to trim their lamps and go in.

What follows is intended to bring into sharp focus the suddenness of the call. As I say, midnight, the suddenness of the call, the bridegroom is coming.

And then all the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And when there was no oil, the lamps kept going out. Then the foolish said to the wise, give us of your oil.

[ 23 : 47 ] And the wise said, not at all. For ours would also go out. But go for yourself. It's no good saying, help us. Comfort us.

Pray for us. That we might be saved. Because what you ask is impossible. The person themselves has to pray.

The person themselves has to help themselves. By God, the means of grace. The person themselves has to seek the Lord while he is to be found.

And to call upon him. While he is near. We've got to make our own peace. We've got to make our own decision. To seek the Lord. While he is to be found.

Now whether they managed to get oil at that midnight hour or not is not important. What is important is that the door was shut.

[ 24 : 48 ] The absolute last thing they expected was the door was shut against them. It's not that they didn't want to go into the bridegroom. But they were not ready.

In the same way as I asked earlier on. Are we ready? Are we reconciled? Are we washed? Are we justified? Are we ready? To be accepted into the kingdom?

And if we're not, what are we doing? In regard to availing ourselves of the benefits of salvation. The need to be saved.

Are we seeking in the right place? Are we going to the right fountain of life? And you know, the fate was pitiful. They were so near.

They were so near entering in. But they were shut out. It's like those who are so near heaven attending on the means of grace and yet at the last will be shut out. It's not all who are, who will be shut out, who are rebellious and have no time for the gospel and are atheists.

[ 25 : 57 ] But there are also those who are careless. Those who can't be bothered, who want to leave it to another time. The folly is to be a hearer of the word and not a doer of it.

A reader of our Bibles, of attending on the means of grace. Perhaps even a church member. But the question is, is there grace in our hearts?

Do we know whose we are? Do we love the Lord with all our heart and all our soul, all our mind and all our strength? Do we know the reality of the quotation I mentioned before?

Nothing less will satisfy and nothing more is desired. Do we know that in our own experience? We want Christ for time and for eternity.

Now for some of us, our fate will be drastic. Indeed, so much time spent in the company of the saints and yet at the end shut out from their happiness.

[ 27 : 14 ] You know, it's a folly to be a hearer of the word only and not a doer of it. So we're told, watch therefore, for you know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man will return.

It's not enough to be waiting with the church. The one thing needy is to be ready when he comes.

And the only place we're going to find access to readiness is at the throne of grace. It's in the means of grace. It's in hearing the word and reading the word but especially the preaching of the word which is made a feculum to salvation.

To place yourselves in that place and to be ready when the time has come because you've been brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. so sudden will be the coming and there will be no time for anything else but simply to go forth and to meet him.

Just my own experience my next door neighbour was simply getting ready as I go to bed and she didn't make it.

[ 28 : 38 ] She lay on her bed preparing to go to bed and that's where eternity found her. And so it could be for any one of us that we are going through the usual practices of life and of the day and the end could come in a moment of time and the suddenness of it will certainly surprise us.

The conversation between the wise and the foolish ones is to emphasise the fact that it's impossible to make up for the years years of neglect at the moment of the Lord's coming at the moment of our own death.

we can't make up for years of neglect by thinking just at the last moment I'll put it off at the time when I need to do it. The preparation is something that goes on throughout our whole lives.

So sudden will be the call that there won't be time for anything else or doing anything else. As I said earlier on now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation.

just one final word to push home the message. Life is short time is fleeting judgment is sure and eternity is long.

[ 30 : 15 ] May it be that as we engage with God's word as we remember the story of the five wise and five foolish virgins that we will be a part of that number who are ready when the time comes and the call goes up that we are ready to go in with the bridegroom.

May the Lord then bless these thoughts to us. Let us then conclude our worship singing to God's praise in Psalm 116. Sing Psalms 1, Psalm 116 page 154.

I love the Lord because he heard my voice he listened when I cried to him for aid I'll call on him as long as I shall live because he turned to hear me when I prayed.

Sing down to the end of the verse marked nine that's four stanzas to God's praise. Amen. Amen. I love the Lord because he heard my voice he listened when I cried to him for aid I fall on him as long as I shall live because he turned to hear me when I prayed the cords of death ripped and entangled me upon the grave and wish of the grave when grief and trouble

I was overcome then on the name of God I call Lord save the Lord our God is guide and full of grace both righteous and compassionate is he the Lord protects all those of childlike faith when I was in great need he rescued me rest my soul

[ 33 : 34 ] God has been good to you for you oh Lord have saved my soul from death my feet from stumbling and my eyes from tears that I may live for you when I have breath and thou may grace mercy and peace in name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit one God rest on you and abide in you now and always amen