

Sunday Sermon: November 19, 2017

Sermon Text: Matthew 25:1-13

Sermon Theme: Saints Look Forward to the Triumph

1. Saints Expect It

2. Saints Are Prepared For It

“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.*

Looking forward to something, expecting something to happen, should always go hand in hand with appropriate planning. Imagine you have been looking forward to the vacation for 6 months. You get up in the morning, you go to the airport, but you haven’t purchased tickets. You get to a hotel, but haven’t made any reservations. You arrive at the amusement park, but don’t have any passes.

Imagine if you are looking forward to a huge family get-together at Thanksgiving. It is supposed to be a huge undertaking with people staying overnight and lots of food. But you never clean the house or go grocery shopping.

It’s one thing to expect something to happen, it’s another thing to be prepared.

This is the dilemma that we find in our sermon text for this morning. Jesus tells a parable where 5 women were expecting something to happen and were prepared for it, while 5 others expected it to happen, but were not prepared. Jesus is teaching us an important lesson. He wants us to learn that his Saints are prepared for the Triumph. We expect it and are prepared for when it does happen.

The end of Jesus ministry was a confusing time for the disciples. They had many questions and they must have wondered why a lot. Why were the people turning away from Jesus? Why was their growing hostility from the Pharisees and the other religious leaders? Why was Jesus talking about dying? What did he mean when he said that this *must* happen? If Jesus knew all of this was going to happen, why didn’t he do something to stop it, or at least go somewhere else until the problems died down?

Even though the disciples were confused, Jesus remains constant in his message to them. I must suffer and die to that you will be forgiven and heaven will be yours.

Right before Jesus tells this parable, Jesus has done something that has confused his disciples again. Matthew tells us in chapter 23 and 24, Jesus has called the Pharisees and teachers of the Law a brood of vipers. He has prophesied that because of their stubborn unbelief, Jerusalem would be destroyed, that not one stone would remain upon another.

The disciples were concerned. They came to Jesus and asked him when this would happen. The disciples were hoping for a simple answer, but instead Jesus prophesies to them about a much greater destruction and downfall. He prophesies to them that just as Jerusalem would fall, there would be a day when the world would also come to an end.

Have you ever tried to teach someone something? Maybe you thought it was easy. But when you got done explaining, the other person gave you that look that showed they did not understand much of what you said. That is the look that was on the faces of the disciples. They wanted a simple answer for when Jerusalem

was going to fall and he is talking about the end of the world. Like the great teacher he is, Jesus tries to explain it to them not in just one way, but he tries to explain it in three more ways in chapter 25.

The first picture that Jesus uses to explain to them about the end of the world is this parable of the wise and foolish virgins. As we look at this parable we see that Jesus is really trying to teach his disciples that the actual time of the end of the world shouldn't matter. He is telling them to that they should expect it at all times and be prepared for his coming.

The parable itself is pretty easy to understand. 10 virgins were going to attend a wedding banquet. As was the custom of the day, the groom would travel, maybe from one household to another, maybe from one village to another, to announce his marriage. As he did, people would join the procession to celebrate. However, the one problem with travel was the delays. While the 10 women were excited and eagerly anticipated the coming of the bride and groom and the feast that would take place, they were not all prepared for the wait.

These 10 virgins represent all believers who have lived, or are alive, during the last time. That includes you and me. Notice the difference between the two groups of virgins. 5 of them were sensible. They expected the bridegroom to come and made the proper preparations for the bridegroom to come in 5 minutes or 5 hours. They had their lamps and oil at the ready so that they were always ready.

The other 5 did not do a sensible thing. They did not prepare to meet the bridegroom in the proper way. Maybe they did not prepare their lamps because there were more immediate needs that they were concerned about. Being young women who were not married yet, maybe their immediate concern was making an impression by being dressed appropriately. Maybe their immediate concern was getting to the party so that they wouldn't be late. Maybe they got caught up talking about all the fun they were going to have. Whatever the case, in the end they were looking forward to the bride and groom coming, but that excitement and expectation did not lead to proper preparation.

A true Bible-believing Christian cannot read the Bible without hearing that there will be Judgment Day. There are 5 major places where we hear about the end of the world Daniel, 1 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, here in Matthew 24 & 25 and in Revelation. Besides these major places there are many more times that we hear about Jesus return. All believers are like those 10 virgins. All are expecting the Day of Judgment to come, but that expectation may take two very different forms.

On one hand we may hold that expectation like the wise virgins did. We may stand firm like the soldier at Buckingham Palace. Jesus coming back is not a head knowledge, it is very real to us but and part of our everyday life. We believe and know that Jesus can and might come in 5 minutes, 5 hours, or 5 years and we live waiting for that to happen.

On the other hand, that expectation may also be like the foolish virgins. We believe that it will happen just not to us anytime soon. We believe it will happen many years from now to other people. Because we believe Jesus coming only as a concept, our lives do not take on the importance of being ready. Instead, we allow our own immediate concerns to get in the way of proper preparation.

Even those who, at one time were strong in faith, can begin to act like the foolish virgins and fall into spiritual foolishness. Even you and I can fall into this when we don't think about what our Savior says and take it seriously. What happened to those foolish virgins can happen to us. Maybe we become so concerned about living this life well. We want all the toys and extras. We fill our life with these things and do not have time for a little thing like Jesus return. We are too concerned about our own sinful wants and needs and we think that we can always come back to him and he will always forgive us. We bide our time living in our own way, but don't realize that this is the time that Jesus gives to us to be ready standing firm in faith. We may become so involved with the world around us that being in the Word is no longer important to us.

In this parable, Jesus uses a very similar picture to the introduction to our sermon. We would think it would be silly to look forward to a vacation, but make no plans. We would think it silly to look forward to a big family gathering and not clean or go and buy the food. It would be silly to look forward to meeting our Savior, but not be making the proper preparations as we are waiting here on earth.

The 5 wise virgins made the proper preparations. Their lamps were full and they had extra oil waiting. When it was announced that the bridegroom was coming the 5 wise made ready by lighting their lamps. They were ready to join the procession and go into the banquet hall. The 5 foolish had no oil to light the lamps and they didn't know what to do. They tried to light their lamps, but they were dry, They begged for more oil, but

finally they had to go and find some. In the end only the 5 wise who were prepared were allowed into the banquet.

Jesus shows his disciples and us that proper preparation for a Christian is a must. There is a warning in Jesus' words. He warns us not to be foolish and careless. He warns us not to think that we can take his forgiveness and eternal life for granted. He warns us not to be foolish and fall asleep spiritually, living our lives apart from his saving Word and only for ourselves. He warns us not to think we are prepared, but to be prepared.

The preparation that Jesus is talking about is not hard. It is not physically strenuous, emotionally draining, or mentally taxing. This preparation is one that a believer should always be doing. Paul says **Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly**. How does that dwell in us richly? Paul goes on, "**as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.**"

There is also blessing in Jesus' words. What a blessing when he comes and takes his Saints home to the blessing and the triumph that Jesus gives to us freely. We are prepared when we are in the Word often, when worship and Bible Study are part of our weekly routine. This preparation can take many forms, but it is often the little things that show that our preparation meets our expectation. Is time for the Lord the first thing we add to our daily and weekly calendars? Is time for the Lord the absolute last thing that we cut out of those calendars only when illness or injury prevent it? Are we making time for worship and training in God's Word, or are we setting aside that time of preparation where the Holy Spirit builds our hearts into hearts of his saints.

Let's not be silly or foolish in our expectation and preparation. As Jesus teaches, let us be Saints eagerly waiting the Triumph of heaven that he has promised will be ours. And as we wait, may we prepare for the Triumph that will be ours. Let us prepare by being built up in faith in our Savior, Jesus which leads to heaven. Come Lord Jesus, Come Quickly. Amen.