**The Foolish and the Wise**

Based on [Matthew 25:1-13](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt25.1-13)

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This parable is about the necessity of being prepared for Jesus’ Arrival, and about how he will arrive at a time nobody expects.

Jesus’ arrival or your death--whichever comes first--will seal your eternity—seal your fate; and we never know which will come first. This makes preaching to people about it nuanced. St. Paul shows this in his own preaching, when he says, “**Those of us who are alive, who are left, will be caught together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**” (1 Thess 4:17). “We who are left”…sounds like he believes Jesus will come in his lifetime. But St. Paul and all of his audience in Thessalonica are now dead, and none of them will be alive at the moment of Christ’s arrival. So he didn’t mean Jesus would come in his lifetime, but his preaching makes it sound like that.

So too, my preaching to you is to be ready for when Jesus Comes, because if he comes and you are not prepared, the door to heaven will be shut. **I am not saying that Jesus *will* come in your lifetime or mine.** What I am saying is that you need to be ready, even if you will die before he comes; because if you die unprepared, is the same thing as being unprepared at his arrival. Because if you sleep unprepared, you will be awake unprepared.

Ten virgins…all asleep. This means they have all died. This does not mean that everyone *will* die before Jesus comes…scripture clearly teaches otherwise. **But it does mean that you could die before he comes, and the state in which you die, is the state in which you will be raised.** In the context of this parable; if you died without extra oil in your lamp, you will be raised without it, and unable to meet the bridegroom at his appearing.

There’s a bedtime prayer I grew up with, maybe you did too. “**Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen**.

It may sound a bit simplistic, but it is a faithful prayer. It considers death and God’s preservation of the soul. **It is a faithful prayer because, when you go to sleep at night you should be prepared in your heart and mind to die.** And when you wake up in the morning, your first thought should be, “**I hope Jesus Comes today**”. This can only happen, according to the parable, if you go to sleep prepared, so that you wake up with an extra flask of oil.

The difference between the wise and foolish virgins, and their fate, is that the wise fall asleep with an extra flask of oil. **The only fault of the foolish is that they have no extra oil…and here’s why.** They did not were not prepared for that the bridegroom might be delayed. They were not prepared that he might come at midnight, when extra oil is especially needed.

So what is the oil in the virgin’s lamp? I think there are many ways to answer it, and all can be appropriate and right. Faith, good works done in faith, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God. St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians speaks about Faith, hope, and love**. If you persist in these things, you will have oil in your lamp, that is, you will have whatever it is you need to meet the bridegroom when he comes to call, be it in life or death.** The unwise fall away from faith, lose hope, and as a result cannot love. Their oil runs out. But the wise attend to their faith, remember to hope, and persist in love until they fall asleep in the Lord, with enough oil to attend the call of the bridegroom when he arrives.

***Faith.*** Pray to the Lord, morning noon and night. Gather for worship on the Lord’s Day with other faithful Christians. Hear His Word, receive his gifts. Many people weary of prayer, weary of worship, weary of His Word, thinking they know it all already. That is a bad place to be. We are always learning, always growing, and always brought to remember our Lord, by faith, given and sustained in Word and prayer.

***Hope***. Do not concern yourself with things below but with things above. What happens on earth will pass away and turn to dust and ashes. While you are here, remember every morning when you wake that Jesus might come today. **Hope for it. You will live your life differently if you do this, you will prepare yourself.** And every night when you go to sleep, remember that you might die, and do not fear this, but hope for it. Not in that you seek death, but that you are prepared for it, knowing that to live is Christ, to die is gain.

***Love***. This is the greatest Christian virtue, but it can only come through faith, and hope. When you see by faith, you know the truth. When you hope in the Lord, you do not hope in the world. Then you are free to truly love. **Put away all spite, malice and evil thoughts. Let go of grudges.** Love your neighbor. If you see someone in need give; if you see someone in pain, comfort; if you see someone in distress, help; if you see someone hurting you, turn the other cheek. That’s what you’re here for, live in the love of Christ, by faith, with hope.

So, a good lens to consider the difference is between the wise and foolish virgins is a faith, that gives hope, and directs to love. Imagine someone who spends countless hours praying to God. **To an unbeliever this is wasted time, you could be helping out in the soup kitchen, or shoveling your neighbor’s sidewalk.** Instead you’re on your knees talking to the air. Not too productive, not at all a wise use of time. So says the unbeliever, the unwise who does not see the things of the Spirit, because he does not call upon the Lord, and has not received the sight of faith.

The believer is not praying to the air, he’s praying to the living God who has commanded him to, who hears his prayer, and who relents from disaster and calamity upon the petitions of His righteous. The fool is the person who spends his time trying to buffer his pension, skips church to shore up worldly commitments, never prays but thinks he can better himself without the help of God. To the believer, the unbeliever is a fool.

It all depends on faith…on what you see, and on what you hope. **Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen.** (Hebrews 11:1) And if you see what God’s Word says, you will be well prepared to meet the bridegroom. Your good deeds will follow you all the days of your life and even into the sleep of death. And you will awake at the final trumpet not in terror, but in joy. Because the lord has prepared a table for you at the wedding feast and your flask of oil overflows. What awaits you at the wedding feast is joy beyond all understanding. Encourage one another with these words.

Lord Jesus, Come quickly.