

The bridegroom's coming is delayed

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Preacher: Mark Rayfield

[0:00] So, welcome to Calvary Church's broadcast on the 5th of July 2020, our evening service entitled The Bridegroom's Coming is Delayed.

! You're most welcome those from Calvary Church Brighton, those from other churches that might be listening, such as Park Hill Church, and perhaps others that are seeking after truth and meaning in your lives. Whether you're listening in Cornwall or Cambodia, you are most welcome. For those that don't know me, I am Mark Rayfield, a member of Christ's Universal Church and his local church here in Brighton, Sussex, England.

Tonight, the theme is being ready for Christ's parousia, his second advent or arrival, which we have been looking at in Matthew's Gospel and we'll be looking at this throughout the next chapter in chapter 25.

So, if you have a Bible, please turn there, Matthew chapter 25 verses 1 to 13, or on your tablet or device, you have, get that passage please, the parable of the ten virgins.

Following on from Steve's excellent message about being prepared for Christ's return. We thank Phil Wells, our faithful minister, for his ministry from Hebrews this morning, for Matt Jay, his superb work he's doing behind the scenes for the church in terms of broadcasting these meetings online, as well as Annika, the musicians who are producing the music, and the people showing care and the music, and the people showing care and the music, and the people showing care and concern at this time for people in the church.

[1:49] We thank you. You know who you are. The Lord knows and sees all this and blesses it. So, I pray for God's help this evening, for everyone listening, that you will be transformed by the word of God and the proclamation of it, and that the Holy Spirit would help us believers and non-believers alike.

So, let's pray.

We thank you.

And we ask for your forgiveness, Lord, of all that we have done, said and thought, Lord. We thank you for this day where we've been able to meditate on your word in the morning in Hebrews, and now this evening in Matthew's Gospel.

We praise you for all the ministry that's taken place during this lockdown period, for the blessing it is to be able to hear these broadcasts and be strengthened by your word, Lord.

[3:38] Thank you for your faithful servants who have produced many of these talks. We give you praise and glory for how you've helped so many.

And Lord, we come here for thanksgiving. We thank you for the summer days. We thank you that we can see your beautiful creation. The butterflies, the flowers.

Thank you for the plethora of technicolor and beauty we see. Bad liars, roses, fuchsias, poppies. There are so many types and varieties of flowers and flora and fauna.

And we praise you for this. We thank you for the opportunities during this strange season that we have, each one of us, Lord. And we pray that you would take those opportunities, Lord.

We pray and we give thanks for NHS for 74 years in our country. They've been working hard on medical staff, nurses, doctors, cleaners.

[4:42] Oh, Lord, we're so blessed with an NHS. We can often complain about it, but compared to other countries, we have a very good health system. And we thank you for all that they've been doing during this coronavirus time.

it So the parable of the ten virgins

[10:46] Matthew 25, 1-13 At that time 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 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps The bridegroom was a long time in coming And they all became drowsy and fell asleep At midnight the cry rang out Here's the bridegroom, come out to meet him Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps The foolish ones said to the wise Give us some of your oil, our lamps are going out No, they replied There may not be enough for both of us Instead, go to those who sell oil And buy some for yourselves 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 shut Later, the others also came Sir, sir, they said Open the door for us But he replied I tell you the truth I don't know you Therefore, keep watch Because you do not know the day or the hour May the Lord bless his word to us So our second song now One of my favourites Again, sung in a contemporary way This one is by the Grace Baptist in Guildford Thank you Is Turn your eyes upon Jesus That's pre-recorded Look full in his wonderful face So the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of his glory and grace This is a song about the gospel About coming to Christ Repenting Believing And then proclaiming him So I think this is a different version To the one that I'm used to But it's sung Lovely here by a lady From the Guildford Church So May we sing with her In unison Turn your eyes upon Jesus Look full in his wonderful face And the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of his glory and grace Turn your eyes to the hillside Where justice and mercy embraced Then the Son of God gave his life for us And our measureless death was erased Jesus, to you we lift our eyes Jesus, our glory and our prize We adore you We adore you Behold you My Savior and my truth Oh Jesus We turn our eyes to you Turn your eyes to the morning

And see Christ the Lion awake The Lion awake What a glorious come What a glorious come Fear of death is gone For we carry his life in our veins Jesus, to you we lift our eyes Jesus, our glory and our prize We adore you We adore you We adore you I say to have the truth Oh Jesus We turn our eyes to you Turn your eyes to the heavens

[15:58] Our King will return for his own Every knee will bow Every tongue will shout Oh glory to Jesus Oh glory to Jesus Oh glory to Jesus Jesus, to you we lift our eyes Jesus, to you we lift our eyes Jesus, our glory and our prize We adore you We adore you We adore you We adore you I say to have the truth Oh Jesus We turn our eyes to you We adore you We adore you We adore you We adore you Okay, let's look in the word of God So please open your Bibles

If you have them To Matthew chapter 25 Do you think Jesus might come back in your lifetime? Are you too focused on your life here and now that you never give thought to the Lord's coming? Is this parable relevant to us today as it was in Matthew's time?

These are some of the questions that we can think about as we study God's word And perhaps discuss on Zoom later after this service So my first point is Is one be ready during the delay verses one to five be ready during the delay Christ likens his second coming At that time That's one So that's of ten bridesmaids or unmarried young ladies at a village wedding party in Judea Which I've read and heard were elaborate affairs And apparently they still are These ceremonies would last days And would be one of the highlights of the year As it would be a change to a life that was perhaps rather dull and mundane Especially for the ladies in the community It was a time of joyful revelry, celebration, marriages are aren't they?

We were hoping, or some of you were hoping to go to Anna's wedding recently One of the wedding customs would be when the guest's bridesmaids take the groom and his new wife And escort them from his father-in-law's house to their new home They would have carried lanterns in the dark To lead the couple Perhaps they wouldn't be in the dark But in this parable it was To lead the couple safely to their destination And also to accompany The rest of the procession I've read that there were lots of people perhaps in these festivities And not just the bride and the groom All the guests So they had an important role, job, responsibility These particular bridesmaids So who do these

people represent?

[19:18] Well The bridegroom is surely Christ Represents him So he's talking about himself here And the young ladies must stand for the church Which is rather strange Because normally in the Bible we read the church as the bride But here they're cast as the bridesmaids So take a look at verses 2 to 5 please Christ states that his return will be like these wise and foolish virgins Some are prepared the wise and bring oil for their torches in jars Verse 4 Which apparently would have been made out of oil-soaked rags Wrapped on a stick Which would last only several minutes Before being dipped into the oil again to be kept alight The others are labelled foolish As they do not bring enough fuel Perhaps a modern day example of this would be going camping

And only taking one canister of butane with you When you stay for the weekends It's not going to last You're a fool You need to take at least a few bottles if not more Otherwise you'll run out Be prepared Let's go back into the text So in verse 5 The groom is a long time coming Tarrying in old English Kronos is the Greek word Meaning to linger To spend time To delay Or to take time Christ takes his time He hasn't returned for thousands of years We're still here 2020 The people in Matthew's time Would have been thinking Is he going to come back?

Remember Brothers and sisters A thousand years Are but a day to him And a day like a thousand years His timekeeping is different to ours But he does promise to come We know that he wants everyone To come to repentance And none to perish That's why there is this delay He is slow to anger Compassionate On his creation So Another scripture reference is James 5 7 to 8 Which is on the screen I think It says Be patient then Brothers and sisters Until the Lord's coming See How the farmer waits For the land to yield its valuable crop Patiently waiting for the autumn And spring rains You too Be patient And stand firm Because the Lord's coming is near Because the Lord's coming is near We must be patient

James says For our Lord's arrival It's not easy We may get disheartened Where is he? He hasn't come back Perhaps we doubt He will We're distracted In the meantime With different things But he is coming back Brothers and sisters James urges us To be resolute Strengthen your hearts As we wait for him In addition in Hebrews The book we were studying this morning With Phil It says In chapter 10 Which is all about Persevering in the Christian faith Again This should be on the screen Verses 36 to 39 It says You need to persevere So that when you have done The will of God You will receive What he has promised for In just a little while He who is coming Will come And will not delay Kronos And But my righteous one Will live by faith And I take no pleasure In the one Who shrinks back

Or apostatizes But we do not belong To those who shrink back And are destroyed But to those who have faith And are saved If you're a Christian This evening We are to You are to be a Person of faith Person of faith As You wait for Christ's return And you will be saved And you will receive the reward If you don't draw back Christ is patient with us He gives mankind a chance To be prepared To get The house in order Spiritually speaking To be right with him He is merciful in this regard But he will come His parousia could come any minute So his church must be prepared For his return The scripture reads on in verse 5 That these bridesmaids all fell asleep Due to the wait One presumes and perhaps being late at night The point here is that the church need not be on a constant alert

[24:14] All the time To Christ's arrival But that we should have the necessary provision When the time comes This provision is not elaborated on in this parable But we have hints of it in the next Where the picture is of the talents entrusted to his master's servants The servants who use their talents wisely in the kingdom are rewarded the most We should be about the Lord's business As one of our elders often enunciates It should not be a passive waiting It means getting on the job which the Lord has given us Making most of the opportunities he has entrusted you with And these are specific to all of us This evening The Lord has given you gifts, responsibilities, talents Which you should be using for the kingdom of God Are you ready?

If Jesus were to return How would he find you? Would he find you with enough oil To keep your torch burning? Neither group were condemned for sleeping as I said But one for not being ready when the bridegroom comes So we are not condemned for carrying on with the ordinariness of everyday life We have to sleep We must carry on with our jobs that the Lord has given us Whatever we are doing Whether that be 9 to 5 or other hours Perhaps caring for young children Providing for our families Looking after elderly relatives But alongside this Are we living lives in the light of the King's return?

Secondly, verses 6 to 10 Personal salvation cannot be shed Personal salvation cannot be shed In the next section of our parable Verse 6 Christ comes Suddenly At midnight The cry goes out And the virgins wake from their slumber The bridegroom is here And they are summoned to meet him They trim their lamps or decorate them Put them in order Adorn them And the foolish ones are shown up For who they really are They need my oil for their torches As they are running out The reaction of the wise one Seems rather curt And perhaps selfish No We may need it for ourselves Go to the store and buy some yourselves Here is the point Personal preparedness Cannot be shared Verse 9 Our faith is a personal relationship with God

And it cannot be transferred to another person Personal responsibility Is being emphasised plainly here We cannot rely on another person's faith Whether that be parents, siblings or friends We all need to be walking with the Lord And be found walking with him when he returns If he returns in our lifetime Some on the Lord's second coming Will be found out for who they really are Professing believers Who looked good on the outside But had their lamps And had their lamps But had nothing inside of worth The master comes back And sees that they are not productive for him in the kingdom They're hypocrites, studs And sadly this will be the case When the trumpet sounds There will be people like that So personal salvation cannot be shared We need to be walking with the Lord And he comes And lastly

Thirdly Ultimate exclusion At the wedding feast Look at verses 11 to 13 Lastly We see these foolish virgins returning and crying out Sir, sir, or master, master, let us in But the master replies Surely I do not know you Isn't it sad that they were invited to the party They knew their job They knew their role But they didn't get in As they were unprepared They had the opportunity But it's gone The door is now shut They can't partake in the party The festivities On the other hand They get what they deserve And they pay the price They are negligible Because they were chosen to do a specific job And knew what was expected of them But they didn't do it properly This echoes Matthew 7, 23 The passage 21 to 23 It says

[29:14] Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord Will enter the kingdom of heaven But only the one who does the will of my father Who is in heaven Many will say to me on that day Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name?

And in your name join our demons And in your name perform many miracles And I will plainly say to them I never knew you Away from me, you evildoers So to conclude this evening Let us be like those wise virgins Who prepared and have provision for the bridegroom Let us always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord Wherever we are And may we be genuine in our profession of faith So that when the bridegroom returns He will be pleased and say to us Well done, good and faithful And faithful And faithful Servant Will invite us back To enjoy the wedding party What feasts What joy Will we have To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate To celebrate at this party if we are faithful to the end.

Jesus does not only give these parables as a warning but also as an encouragement to keep being patient, to persevere, to not grow weary in doing good.

But he has promised he will surely come and welcome his people into his presence to be with him forever. So brothers and sisters we need to be ready if Christ's return in our lifetime or if the Lord calls us home through death. We need to be prepared for this as well. The reality is that he might call us to himself before the trumpet call, before he comes back. So whichever means he takes us may we be those who are not counterfeit but those who are fixed on the kingdom business promoting the Lord Jesus Christ and serving him with whatever vessels he has given us in the power of his Holy Spirit. And if you're not a believer this evening you might be enjoying lots of things here on earth but they're temporary and be warned that they might be taken, you might be taken

this very night. There is a warning to get right with him. Do not live for what is just here you can see or go. There is still time to repent and turn to Christ so I urge you to repent to come to him so that you will be allowed into the wedding feast because

Jesus says to those come to me all who are weak and burdened and I will give you rest. What a promise. So if Christ's if Christ comes tonight how will he find you?

[32:29] Let's end with another song, Nothing But The Blood of Jesus. This was written by Robert Lowry in 1876 which is when our church was founded if I'm right.

The Lord is still delaying his return it's 2020 but we're still seeing the same hymn nothing but the blood of Jesus is only through his blood that we can go to this celestial city that we can enter the feast of the bridegroom so let us sing this lovely hymn together.

walk and wash away my sin nothing but the blood of Jesus walk and make me whole again nothing but the blood of Jesus walk and make me whole again nothing but the blood of Jesus all precious is the flow that makes me white as snow no other fount I know nothing but the blood of Jesus all my cleansing this I see nothing but the blood of Jesus all my heart and this my pain nothing but the blood of Jesus all my heart and this my pain nothing but the blood of Jesus all my pain nothing but the blood of Jesus all my sins all my sins all my sins all my sins all my sins all my sins all my sins all my sins all my sins all my sins

Nothing but the blood of Jesus All precious is the flow That makes me white as snow No other bounds I know Nothing but the blood of Jesus Nothing can force in our soul Nothing but the blood of Jesus One of good that I have done Nothing but the blood of Jesus All precious is the flow That makes me white as snow No other bounds I know Nothing but the blood of Jesus

This is all my hope and peace Nothing but the blood of Jesus This is all my righteousness Nothing but the blood of Jesus All precious is the flow That makes me white as snow No other bounds I know Nothing but the blood of Jesus Now by this all I've come Nothing but the blood of Jesus Now by this all reach my home Nothing but the blood of Jesus

[36:32] All precious is the flow That makes me white as snow No other bounds I know Nothing but the blood of Jesus So let me end with the Aaronic blessing As we heard last week in Numbers chapter 6 The Lord bless you and keep you The Lord make his face shine upon you And be gracious to you The Lord turn his face towards you And give you peace May that be true for you tonight And God bless you and keep you Many of you will be going on the Zoom discussion So hope to see you there Bye bye from me Bye bye from me

Bye bye from me Bye bye from me Bye bye from me Bye bye from me