

Matthew 25:1–30

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Date: 03 March 2024

Preacher: Bing Nieh

[0 : 00] Matthew 25, 1-30 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 took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, Here is the bridegroom come out to meet him. Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps, and the foolish said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.

But the wise answered, saying, Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves. And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came.

And those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.

Afterward, the other virgins came also, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered, Truly I say to you, I do not know you.

[1 : 07] Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them and made five talents more.

So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time, the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents, saying, Master, you delivered to me five talents. Here I have made five talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful over little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, Master, you delivered to me five talents.

[2 : 18] Here I have made five talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over little. I will set you over much.

Enter into the joy of your master. He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.

So I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours. But his master answered him, You wicked and slothful servant.

You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scatter no seed. Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers. And at my coming, I should have received what was my own with interest.

So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

[3 : 22] And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

You may be seated. Well, it's a joy to be together on this Lord's Day.

Beautiful spring day. And just offer up a prayer as we make our way into the Bible. Father, you are our help.

Not only our ever-present help in time of need, but you are our help in hearing your word, in seeing your Son, in sensing your Spirit.

And so, Father, we pray that you would be our help in these next moments. That the living word would meet God's living people. That we would be transformed and changed.

[4 : 20] We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. In the classic movie, Back to the Future, Marty McFly, having gone from, gone back into the past, faced a dilemma.

Knowing the future, he had to steer the course of the present so that the future could be secured. If you've seen the movie, Marty goes back in time.

And one of his objectives is actually to secure the marriage of his mom and dad. For if his mom and dad failed to fall in love, he would never be conceived and come into existence.

Also, he had to save Doc Brown's life. The mad scientist who invented time travel had to be preserved and protected. See, the movie, certainly entertaining, gave us a glimpse of having, knowing the future, how we ought to act and behave in the present.

If you knew the future, what would you do differently? Hollywood is obsessed with this theme.

[5 : 44] They've invited us into worlds that are imagined. The world's resources are scarce. Humanity is perishing. Survival is unlikely.

The future is dire and dismal unless something changes. I believe that's one of the reasons for this obsession in Hollywood is an impetus, is to move us to act differently or live differently in the present.

Will we establish a utopia? How will it be accomplished? Does AI take over the world? What will it be? Creative directors and script writers want to show us what the world will be like or may be like all with the hope of causing some change in us now.

And this is what Matthew is doing in this passage this morning. This is the sense. Jesus brings his disciples into the future. And he says, in light of what will happen, what will you do about it in the present?

What will you do about it in the present? Picking up where Pastor Carter left off last week, the text continues along this theme of being ready and prepared and watchful as Christians.

[7 : 13] As students, many of, are probably absent this morning, in study for final examinations this week, your aim is to be prepared and ready.

As athletes enter competition season, they are to be physically and mentally prepared. As teachers enter the classroom to deliver the lessons plans, they are to be prepared and ready.

In the same way, as Christians wait, we are to be ready. As we wait for Christ's return, we are to be ready.

Like we heard last week, we are to be ready because in the end we won't have time to get ready.

But what does readiness look like? How should I prepare?

What am I actually studying for? How should I be training? Where should my time and my resources be spent? Well, this morning I want us to see that while we wait, we are to be watchful and working.

[8 : 25] While we wait, we are to be watchful and working. When Jesus comes back, we are to be found watching and working.

Failure to do so is catastrophic. terrifying, horrifying. Therefore, we must be watchful. We must be working.

So firstly, I'll undertake this text really in two parts. We are to watch, verses 1 to 13. Jesus takes his disciples to a future day and you see it there in verse 1.

The kingdom of heaven will be like one day in the future. verse 14 again, for it will be like. He wants to show them the future, particularly about when he comes back.

He has already told them, I do not know when it will take place, but I do know what will happen when it takes place. Though the timeline is unclear, Jesus wants to show them that the events are very clear.

[9 : 35] when Jesus returns, there will be a great separation. Matthew has numerous images that communicate this, whether it's sheep and goats, whether it's wheat and tares.

In our passage, whether it's wise and foolish, whether it be the faithful and the wicked, there is a separation. Jesus distinguishes that there are those who are his and there are those who are not his.

There are two groups that are divided or separated from one another. However, the greatest terror this passage gives us is the terror of an individual that fails to participate in the final festivities of the kingdom of God.

It's not separation. I think some of us think of it as a dreadful day. I remember I was sharing with a friend in high school and I said, you know, I was telling her, you want to come to know and love the Lord Jesus?

And her reply was, well, if my family's not there, then I don't want to be there. And I can tell you this, it may be dreadful to be separated from your family and your loved ones, your friends and your neighbors and those you hold dear.

[10:52] But I think the great concern of this passage is not separation from them. It's actually separation from God. It is separation from God that we ought to be concerned about.

It is, this is the great horror to be found outside the wedding feast. The great tragedy is the door is shut. The exclusion, the shock, the finality of it all.

Both these parables are warnings and hence the sermon will carry that tone. Having gone to a university literally on the shores of the Pacific.

I didn't run often. Actually, I never ran. But if you walked along the shores that were adjacent to the university, there you would occasionally find warning signs.

These giant signs that say, beware, failure, steep cliff ahead, and jagged rocks below and there would be a picture of a stick figure falling off the edge.

[12:04] But the signs were there to serve as warnings because failure to heed these warnings could actually result in a deadly fall. And these parables that we see this morning do the same.

They are a warning sign ahead for you and for me. Failure to give credence or heed to them will result in tragedy. The first parable is comprised of ten virgins.

They are virgins or simply young unmarried women involved in the wedding festivities. The details aren't clear but what appears to be happening is the husband is coming or the groom is coming to retrieve the bride from her home and take her back to a new home.

And while the virgins are awaiting the arrival of the bridegroom to celebrate their nuptials and their new life together the groom is delayed. The groom is delayed.

The women fall asleep and are awakened by a sudden cry at midnight. The ten awake and they light their lamps or they try to light their lamps. Only five had come prepared with extra oil.

[13:15] The remaining five needed to go to the oil dealer to get in the middle of the night to get more oil. And while they are away the groom arrives. I'm just summarizing. The marriage feast begins.

The door is open temporarily. But by the time the five unprepared virgins return the door is shut. The scene is quite shocking.

In verse 11 the other virgins came also saying Lord, Lord open to us. and to that they hear I do not know you.

I do not know you. They plea while standing on the outside of the door and are met by the bridegroom's rejection and denial. And it affirms what Jesus said in chapter 7 of Matthew where the disciples are warned not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord enters the kingdom of heaven. You see the suddenness of the groom's arrival or the suddenness of Jesus' arrival showed the lack of watchfulness by the foolish virgins.

[14:25] They were unprepared. They were not vigilant and watchful. And the question you and I must answer is what does it actually look like to watch for Jesus' return?

What does preparation look like? What does it mean to be vigilant? And I want to give us two just observations. The first is this. To watch means to bring your own oil.

Now you're saying what does that have to do with anything? What's interesting about this passage is that some have accused so there's ten virgins there.

Five have oil five don't. With the five that had oil what they should have done is lent it or gave it to the five who didn't. But the passage clearly tells us that there wouldn't have been enough for all ten. But I think you might think that would be the Christianly thing to do. Right? But no. The parable communicates that each must bring their own oil.

[15:33] No one enters on the oil of another. Now what does that mean? I cannot rely on someone else's Christian merit to get in.

I can watch with you. I can wait with you. But I cannot watch for you. That you yourself as an individual have to make your own preparations.

It is something you must do for yourself. You imagine this. You're taking an unweighted exam. I know it's not many times you take an unweighted exam these days.

But an unweighted exam. You get a perfect score. Your best friend gets a zero. You cannot share your score with your friend.

And even if you're like, hey, let's split it 50-50. You get 50% and I get 50%. That's still not passing. You cannot give them your score because it doesn't belong to them.

[16:44] You will pass and they will fail. In the language of scripture, one will be taken and one will be left. So you and I must make our own accommodations.

We must bring our own oil. Now what is oil? What is oil? Is it good works? Is it a ton of Bible memorization?

Is it a ton of generosity? Is it a ton of service? Yes. Yes. All of it. All of it.

It is ultimately the obedience, the obedient Christian life. You must bring your own. I can't bring it for you. To watch means to bring your own oil.

Secondly, To watch means to engage your mind. Now, I know it's not just your mind, but we certainly have to think rightly about the Christian life.

[17:44] It's interesting in these verses, it's the wise and the foolish. As if to say, the wise are prepared for a delay, a long wait, an unexpected arrival.

At a minimum, wisdom flows from the mind. It's something that requires thought, the gathering of data, the processing in such a way that allows me to make good decision making.

To be wise as a watchman is to be wise as a good soldier stationed in an outpost. That soldier must minimize distractions.

That soldier must minimize disturbances. That soldier must make choices that allow him or her to maintain watchfulness for their own well-being and whatever they're there to serve and protect.

A distracted watchman is a poor watchman. You see, the modern equivalent is this. Let's say you're going on a trip.

[18:46] A long trip. A long, long, long trip. Maybe you don't even know the end of the trip. You have to sit down and make a list of things you need to pack.

You have to sit down and plan the journey. You need to be thorough in what you pack. You need food for the journey unless you hunt it yourself. You need to pack what is necessary to survive various weather elements.

You need to bring, I mean, here's probably the closest modern-day equivalent. You need to bring a battery pack for your phone. Right? The worst feeling you have in the world is all of a sudden I'm at an important place.

I need to make an important call. I need to go to an important location and my battery is dead.

Right? You need to bring, so you sit down, you write a list, and you meticulously work through what you need because your very survival may depend upon it.

you and I must treat our spiritual lives in that way. What do I need along the way? What will get me to the end?

[19:56] Certainly Bible reading, certainly fasting and prayer, certainly the regular gathering with God's people to sing his praise, to sit under the preaching of his word.

You'll need Christian friends to pick you up when you've fallen down. You'll need Christian friends to push you down when your head has gotten too big. You'll need Christian friends to chase you down when you've walked astray.

You'll need to serve God to remind yourself that your time is not your own. You'll need to give to God to remind yourself that your monies are not your own. You'll need to speak to others about God to remind you that one of the primary purposes he's left you on this world earth is to tell others of his glorious gospel.

So the question is how are you ordering your life to reflect this readiness? What have you packed? What have you planned for possibly a lifelong wait? Evidently Matthew wants you to know that though Jesus' return will be sudden it's not necessarily soon.

[21:10] The bridegroom is delayed in verse 5. The master returns in verse 19 after a long time. What steps must you take?

Must I take that prioritize this waiting and watching? We can't be indifferent about our Christian profession.

See I think this is what plagued these five virgins the five foolish virgins. They were indifferent about their spiritual lives and as a result self deceived.

The parable ends with the horror of being self deceived. Some will find on that final day that the faith that they possessed was actually fake and false.

They are in the words of a former colleague of mine professing unbelievers they acknowledge Christ but in the end Christ did not acknowledge them.

[22 : 18] While we wait for the Lord's return we are to watch. We are to watch. Secondly while we wait for the Lord's return we are a people that work we work verses 14 to 30.

I don't merely mean work to make a living or income though it certainly may include our employment but Christians live knowing that they will have to give an account for the resources they were given the relationships they were entrusted with the platform from which they stood the opportunities that were afforded to them you see with this parable at the heart of it is this Jesus tells the disciples he tells really all Christians that one day we will be held accountable for how we spent our lives our lives are a heavenly investment that are to produce some earthly return God has so endowed each and every one of our lives that when he returns to retrieve us he not only expects to retrieve us but to retrieve us and additional profits according to this parable the parable in summary is comprised of three servants you see it each has been entrusted with the master's property the first received five talents the second received two and the last received one now a talent was usually associated with as a measurement of weight depending of what you are weighing determines the value and so a talent of gold would certainly be worth more than a talent of silver but modern commentators have somehow come up with a number that it's about a talent is about 20 years of income for a day worker and so because we can do some math let's just extrapolate that 20 years of income for a minimum wage here in

Chicago it would be equivalent five talents would be equivalent to 100 years of work by let's just say a minimum wage worker that equates to 3 million dollars so the first servant got 3 million the second got 1.8 and the last one got 900 K now you're like oh that's not bad at all and it's not bad at all but the first two servants having received their talents set out to trade and they brought back 100% return so five brought five two brought two and when the master returned after a long ways away they both received the master's commendation the master says to them well done good and faithful servant you have been faithful over little now I will set you over much enter into the joy of your master but I want to spend a lot of time on this third servant!

the servant who received one talent comes forward having buried his talent he speaks up only to receive his master's displeasure rather than being good and faithful he is found evil and slothful or evil and lazy the third servant somehow knew his master expected a return claiming he was a hard man you you have unreasonable expectations you expect yield where you have not sown and therefore out of fear buries the master's investment the servant's excuse was really to blame the master for his unfair expectations which resulted in the servant's in action the failure of this third servant this third servant failed not because they lost money but this third servant failed this third servant failed not because he did something wrong but this third servant failed because he simply did nothing.

And as a result, what was given to him was taken away and given to the good and faithful servants. Horror ensues and the worthless servant is now cast into the outer darkness. In that place there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[26 : 56] It's Matthew's favorite metaphor for eternal punishment. You see, the failure of the five foolish virgins was indifference toward the return.

He's not coming. The failure of this final servant was in action while waiting for Jesus' return.

See, what ultimately condemned this disciple and made him unready to meet the Lord was the fact that he proved useless for the kingdom of heaven.

His performance didn't match his profession. He was not a murderer. He was not a thief. He was not even a waster of God's money. But he did nothing.

And that led to his ruin. And the warning sounds this morning, we cannot beware of a do-nothing Christianity. Inactivity for the kingdom of God shows that you don't care about the kingdom.

[28 : 03] And the final servant warns us in several ways. The first is this, building the kingdom of God is hard work. This third servant seemed to know that.

That God, you're asking for something that's very difficult. To bring up yield where there's no seed sown. You reap where you do not sow and you gather where there's no seed.

And your expectations, God, are so difficult, so unreasonable, and therefore, I'm not even going to enter into this work. Building the kingdom is hard work.

We need to acknowledge that. Second, we need to acknowledge that we can be slothful and lazy. Apathy is a danger.

There is no place for a lazy Christian. Diligence is required. Duty is required. Determination is required.

[29 : 10] Some will stand, I mean, some will stand in that final day before the Lord and their failure to enter into the joy of their master will be under the excuse of, I was tired.

It was too much work. Beware of our slothfulness and laziness. We need to see that all of, thirdly, we need to see that all of our resources and spiritual gifts and opportunities are there to serve Christ and his kingdom.

what we have is actually to benefit the kingdom of God and her cause and regardless of if you are a five talent, a two talent, or a one talent servant, the expectation is the same.

God presumes a return on his investment. That's his presumption. I'm not asked, you know, I could sit here and say, man, this guy's a five talenter.

This guy's a two talenter. I'm probably a point one talenter. But it does, regardless of how many talents you've received, the expectation is the same.

[30 : 24] The command is to employ that talent to further the cause of Christ. What is a talent? What is a modern day talent?

You might say, I have no money. I don't have, you know, I don't have a hundred years of anything, really. Not even of life. Well, J.C. Ryle writes helpfully.

A talent is anything where you can glorify God, our gifts, our influences, our money, our knowledge, our health, our strength, our time, our senses, our reason, our intellect, our memory, our affections, our privileges as members of the family of God, our advantages as possessors of the Bible.

All, all our talents, all that we have are on loan from God. We are God's stewards. We are God's debtors.

We are to take all of these resources and employ them to build the kingdom. them. And if you're disheartened and you're like, I think I only got the one talent.

[31 : 41] I think that's how we often feel. We'll know this. That one talent, what you have is invaluable because I will argue this, that that one talent is the gospel in you.

that one talent. In that one talent, you possess the greatest treasure in all the world. You possess the message that rescues all of humanity.

The reality is that when that talent is sown, that talent of the gospel, it produces fruit. Let this sit with you. Being a possessor of the gospel, knowing the good news of Jesus, is the greatest gift you can give to the world.

It is not generational wealth. It is not some personal legacy. It is not even the volume of books that you want to write. It is the gospel faithfully disseminated to your loved ones, your family, your coworkers, your classmates, your lab mates, your friends, and your foes.

foes. That is the best use of your one talent. Our lives cannot be spent on ourselves, for to do so is to bury our own, your talent.

[33 : 15] But because we belong to God and our lives are lived before God, our gifts are from Him and are to be used for Him.

We have to assess our kingdom priorities. I don't know all your talents, but you do. We certainly think of personal advancement, but what about kingdom advancement?

We think of growing our financial portfolio, but what about the kingdom's financial portfolio? We are self-serving by nature, but how can we be self-giving?

We maintain full work and study schedules, but we have never scheduled service for the Lord, or have we?

We have an abundance of plans, but seldom have we planned our own spiritual development.

Sadly, maybe speaking to myself, I've largely abandoned Bible reading, private prayer, failed at the, maybe failed at gathering with a regular assembly of believers.

[34 : 43] And so here we have, as we wait, are we being watchful? Are we working?

And being warned about the future, we are therefore compelled in the present to live differently.

And our present lives need to heed this warning because there is a day, a sudden day, in the future, when the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and the sound of the trumpet of God, and he has returned.

And while we wait for the day, we are to be those who are watching, constantly watching, and working, constantly working, anticipating the arrival of the groom and the ensuing marriage feast. We are those not to be found indifferent or inactive as we wait for our master. For the sweetest words we can ever hear are well done, good and faithful servant.

Enter into the joy of your master. master. Two warnings, two signs.

[36 : 01] Do not be indifferent. Do not be inactive. Watch, watch, watch, work, work, and work.

And in so doing, we will please him when he returns. Father, we give you thanks for this morning. And your word speaks pointedly and pointedly toward our hearts that are so self-oriented.

Lord, you haven't come back really in 2,000 years. are you even coming? And Lord, maybe I just am a little tired so I don't want to be about your business right now.

And yet, Lord, these parables remind us that we were to be those who are constantly watching and constantly working. And so strengthen our hands to do so.

Soften our hearts to follow you well. Help us to long for the day, the voice, the sound of well done.

[37 : 22] Well done. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.