

Living in Readiness: The Call to Prepare for Christ | Matthew 25:1–13

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[0 : 00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we're dedicated to encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. Located in Ontario, Oregon, Pastor Patrick Daly preaches insightful sermons from the Word of God, offering practical applications for modern living.

We're delighted to share this sermon with you. We're going to go ahead and get started. The title of this sermon today is, Living in Readiness, the call to prepare for Christ.

For many of us at this time, we are preparing for, I mean, let's think about it, it's November 24th, 30 days. We're going to have Christmas Eve.

For others, we are thinking of Thanksgiving, and we're thinking of what kind of meal and preparation that we have to have for a Thanksgiving meal. We think of the Christmas season that's coming right up.

And it's a time where we are preparing. It's a time where we are waiting. We're waiting for the holidays to come around, for to visit our friends and our family.

[1 : 01] And it's also a time where we're getting very close to the Advent season, where we are focusing on the waiting for Christ. It's just a wonderful, it's the season, right?

Tis the season. And I want us to go, let's open our Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 25. And we're going to be reading the parable of the 10 virgins.

And I want to give you a disclaimer first and foremost that these verses are talking about what is to come in the future, right? The second coming of Christ.

And just as we as the church wait for Christ's return, we also think about how we are preparing for the Advent season.

So it's a wonderful connection from the first and the second coming. So feel free to turn to the scripture reading from the Gospel of Matthew chapter 25.

[2 : 05] We're going to go through verses one through 13, the parable of the 10 virgins. Keep in mind that right before is where you see Christ, where Jesus is talking about, no one knows the day or the hour.

We're then going to go into the parable of the 10 virgins and then after, you have the parable of the talents and the mentioning of the final judgment. So there's a lot of symbolism.

There's a lot of language here that it may seem very strange for us in this post-modern or modern context, but it has very significant and very deep meaning.

So let's read together. It's page 987 in your ESVP Bible or the Gospel of Matthew chapter 25 in your Bible or mobile device app version of your choice.

So let's read together. Then the kingdom of heaven will be like 10 virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

[3 : 15] 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.

They prepared their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, give us some of your oil for our lamps are going out. And the wise answered saying, well, 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, let's pay attention on this. Those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast.

And then what happens? The door was shut. The door was shut, right? Afterward, the other virgins came also saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

[4 : 20] But he answered, truly I say to you, I do not know you. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

This is a very interesting scene, right? We're talking about these 10 virgins. We can go to that next slide, the one after that. We have this scene here, and I try.

I really try to find some images that represent what's going on. So you're gonna have to forgive me a little bit here. You have this scene with the 10 virgins, and they are preparing for the wedding feast.

And what's interesting we can observe right away is some of them are prepared with oil, and others are not, right? That's kind of interesting.

There's this distinction between those who are prepared and those who aren't. We can think of other parables right away. We can think of the wheat and tares.

[5 : 18] We can also think of the sheep and the goats. Or we can even think of the foolish builder and the wise builder. You see, scripture is full of a lot of this very interesting parabolic, right?

Parable language. Symbolism. And so we're seeing here 10 representing completeness. And we're seeing this kind of distinction.

It's those who are preparing for the bridegroom to come back, and only five, half of them are entering in, and the other half are shut out.

What's very interesting when I was studying this, and really praying and reflecting on this, is you'll find that this is later on, but in scripture there's another time where a door was shut in Genesis.

It's Genesis chapter seven verse 16, where you had the Noah's Ark, where the door was shut. It's very similar to what we're finding here in the Gospel of Matthew here.

[6 : 23] And so the question then comes for us, what does it mean to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, for his first coming as we celebrate the Advent season, but also his second coming in judgment, because this parable is speaking of future judgment.

There is this connection between the first coming and the second coming of Christ. And it has a great deal to do with preparation and anticipation.

You see, the Jewish people, they were to prepare their way for the Lord, just as we are to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ.

That's why it is so important for each and every one of us to come to know the Lord, to be prepared for that second coming, because here's the thing, in knowing the Lord you are safe and secure in the arms of the Father, right?

That's the call, that's the whole point of Christianity, is to spread the good news of the Gospel, to share in the death, burial, and resurrection, and when we're talking about Advent, we're talking about Christ being born, and being born in a manger, and the fulfillment of all of this prophecy that's happening.

[7 : 37] And it's to show that God is consistent in his word. And just as God has been consistent with the first coming of Christ, so too, will he be consistent with the second coming of Christ.

Now we see here in this image, I don't have an image of a bridegroom. I only have the 10 virgins in the door, but the idea is that they are waiting.

The bridegroom represents Christ, who's coming, it's delayed. So that's very interesting. Now when we think of a wedding feast that's happening, well you don't want the bride or the groom to be delayed.

You want them to show up for the wedding, right? Or the wedding feast, it would be kind of, we think of that, we think, oh, how terrible, for someone to not even show up for their wedding feast, or a time for a wedding now.

But here it's talking about the delay representing the return of Christ giving time for us as Christians, for us as people to come to know the Lord.

[8 : 40] That is something that's so important, that there is this, as it were, intentional delay. Here's the thing, just because it's delayed doesn't mean Christ isn't gonna show up.

He is going to return. It's the timing in which we do not know that will happen. In Revelation 19, 7 through 9, you don't have to turn there. You find this language that's very similar to what we're finding in Matthew.

It says, let us rejoice and exalt and give him the glory, for the marriage of the lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

You find in scripture that the bride of Christ is the representation of the church, and the bride groom is the lamb, right? It is Christ.

We also have the virgins here. Now what's interesting, in this image, we have the virgins who are basically they're holding lamps. Now if you remember when we did our sermon series on Ezra, we had a very similar scene, where the priests, where you had the people of God carrying the vessels from the place that they did not belong to the place that they needed to belong.

[9 : 52] So it's a very similar image, but here you have the virgins that are holding the lamps. Some translations say they're holding a torch, depends on which translation. But for this, for argument's sake, we're just going to call them the lamps.

Now the lamps are a representation of vessels, right? And we've talked about vessels before, right? When we think of what is it that you are filled with?

Are you filled with the Holy Spirit, or are you an empty vessel? Are you a vessel that is honorable or dishonorable, not full of honor?

And so in this image, right, so we have this picture here, the lamp, and again, I really tried to make an image that would kind of represent what we're going for, the oil representing the Holy Spirit, the lamp representing the vessel, and then the flame.

And then comes the question, well, what do the virgins represent? And there's two ways we can look at this. It can represent this image, the virgins holding the lamp, can represent us holding our hearts, everything that we are, being filled with the Holy Spirit, or not filled with the Holy Spirit, right, having the flame, right, being the light of the world, or it can also mean the virgins representing churches.

[11 : 19] And the vessels representing the congregation, so to speak. And it's very interesting, and I know it gets very controversial, of, well, then what is a church that's filled with the Holy Spirit, and what's churches that aren't?

But the idea is that we have to be mindful of such things, especially when it's found in Scripture. Think of how churches are to prepare the way of the Lord.

They are to prepare people to know. Churches are to focus on the gospel message, keeping the main thing, the main thing, and letting the Holy Spirit flow through churches much as individuals.

And so that's what we're seeing here. We're seeing these different things that are happening. So the lamps are symbolizing vessels, right? It's the, some scholars have said it is the outward expression of faith, right?

Is it filled with the Holy Spirit? Is there a flame, right? Is it filled with the flame of Christ? And the oil representing the Holy Spirit? And so the first thing that we can observe here is that the virgins are representing the waiting for Christ's return.

[12 : 30] Okay, now the big thing with this is that, it says here, all wait for the return, but not all already. And this is, this can be very heavy language for some of us.

Whether we know it or not, judgment is going to come, right? It's whether or not you believe in the Lord and you're saved and you know where you're gonna go, or you're not.

It's very clear in this kind of language, are you prepared for the return of Christ or are you not? That's what it's speaking of. And whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not, not all are ready.

Now for us, we have to think, that's why it's so important for us to share in the gospel message so that we can get people to turn to Christ, to receive the gift of salvation.

So the wise are the one that are prepared with oil, representing believers that are filled with the Holy Spirit, and the foolish are unprepared. They represent those that may not, they may attend church, but they may not believe in the Lord.

[13 : 37] And unfortunately that is something that happens. Or it could be an unbeliever, right? Or it could be a what some would call a false church. That's the reality. We also have the delay of the bridegroom, the delay of Christ, which as I was mentioning, it is allowing for time to pass so that people come to know the Lord.

Because the Lord is patient, He is kind and merciful, and He gives us an opportunity to come to believe in Him, to come to know Him, to grow in Him and to do good in His name.

The cry at midnight is the bridegroom's sudden arrival. It's representing the unexpected return of Christ. And we see this happen.

The parable of the 10 virgins is very similar to, remember when the disciples fell asleep and Christ went to go pray? You see a very similar parallel, right?

Where they don't know the time when Christ will come back. And I know with the disciples being asleep, it's like, hey, you couldn't be with me and pray for one hour. So you see kind of this similarity that's happening here.

[14 : 44] And so then we go into, well, what can we, right, we've talked about the lessons here, right? All are waiting, not all are truly ready.

It's a call for us that first, let's go back to that first one. That first one is very important. If you don't know, you should examine whether you're a believer or not, right?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Do you believe the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? It's a call for all of us to examine our hearts, to examine our psalms.

The second one is the lamps and the oil, right? The vessels and the Holy Spirit. Now, I love Galatians chapter five, verses 22 through 23, which talks about the fruit of the Spirit being love, joy, peace.

I know there's more, right? So here's the thing, those first three are they're not advent themes. Isn't that really cool when we're thinking about that?

[15 : 47] We're thinking of the fruit of the Spirit. And I referenced in your notes, Zechariah chapter four, verse six, when it's talking about the rebuilding of the temple, we also think of how we build our lives, right?

It's a very powerful verse. I know it gets taken out of context at times, but it's still very true, not by might, not by power, but by my spirit says the Lord. It's talking about, again, the temple being rebuilt, but also when we're building our lives, we have the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The bridegroom's delay, number three, is waiting upon the Lord. The delay, now, many of us, in the, there's a pastor's prayer group that I like to go to every so often.

And we like to joke about, there's a book out there. If you know the name of it, if I butcher the name, I apologize in advance. But the book is pretty much along the lines with 88 reasons why Christ will return in 1988.

And it's a real book. And when we're thinking about this, the bridegroom's delay, it's waiting upon the Lord. The reality is we don't know when Christ will return.

[17 : 02] And then, I mean, if you wanna make a lot of money, say when it's gonna happen, but be prepared to be incorrect, right? I'm sure the 88 reasons why Christ will return in 1988, how embarrassing that must be, right?

When, okay, well, it's the end of the year, it's December 31st, Christ isn't back. What am I gonna do with myself, you know? But the thing is, there's a lot of books out there.

There's a lot of people on YouTube, TikTok saying, okay, Christ's return is going to be XYZ date on this hour, on this minute and whatnot. But the reality is we don't know the hour.

The delay is not knowing the day or the hour, and the delay allows for more to come to Christ. Could you imagine if we actually knew the date and time?

Like, really think about that. Like, I'm gonna throw out a number. And I'm not saying Christ is returning in 2032, but think about that. Like, if you had a, this is the date Christ is going to return, imagine the good and the bad things that can happen.

[18 : 13] The reality is there are some things that we are not meant to know. And the timing of when Christ will return is just not one of those things. In 2 Peter 3, 9, the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise.

We then go to the fourth one here, which is speaking of the closed door, the finality of judgment. And I mentioned earlier that Genesis chapter seven verse 16 is another time when a door was shut.

Now, could the door have been open and water just go on in? I'm sure you could have the placement of the door high enough, but there's truth that's behind it. The door being shut representing, look, this is it.

The end is now. You're shut out of the ark. You're shut out of safety. And in the same way, we think that we have to realize that the door will be shut, much like we're finding here in scripture, right?

It's in verse 10 of Matthew chapter 25. While they were going to buy, the bride room came and those who were ready went with him to the marriage feast and the door was shut.

[19 : 31] One of the beautiful things about being here on earth is that we have the opportunity to come to believe in Jesus Christ, to receive the free gift of salvation in him.

The other thing is that we can share in our testimony and in the gospel message with others. When I am in heaven, I can't do that anymore. When you are in heaven, you cannot do that anymore.

And even when we're considering the door being shut, there will come a time where it's no more. That's very heavy and very difficult language, I admit.

But it goes to show how important it is for us to believe in Jesus Christ, knowing that, look, we are all sinners that are in need of a savior.

All fall short of the glory of God. But think for a moment how important it is to recognize it is what has been done on the cross by Christ dying, being buried and on the third day being raised from the dead.

[20 : 34] That all who believe, who so ever believes, shall not perish but have eternal life. That's incredibly important for us. That's why I always, always, always put John chapter 6, verse 47 at the bottom of your notes, where Christ says, truly I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

So it's important for us to share in the gospel message, but first and foremost, it's important for us to become a believer. For some of us, we may be on a spiritual journey.

I know there's a lot of seekers out there. They're trying different things. Seek first the kingdom of God. Seek that relationship with Jesus Christ.

Grow in the faith. Become more mature. Leave the elementary things like I was mentioning last week. It's very difficult when I hear when the book of Hebrews is saying that baptism is an elementary thing and we're to leave that aside and focus on the deeper things of God is that's difficult because baptism is one of the most controversial, one of the most argued things out there.

The laying on of hands is an elementary thing. And on one end, I'm like, that's, that's awesome. There's other things we've got to focus on seeking the things that are higher of the Lord.

[21 : 57] But at the same time, I'm like, guys, why are we arguing over this? We've got to move forward in our faith. And so again, Revelation chapter three verse seven through eight says what he opens, no one can shut.

And what he shuts, no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. And this is showing just the power of the opening and the closing of the door.

And in all of this, then it comes to the question then. You see, with every message, every verse that we go over, we have to ask ourselves what is going on in the text? What can we learn?

And thirdly, what can we apply? How can we live out these verses? The first thing is for you to examine your spiritual readiness.

Ask yourself the question, is my faith spirit filled or is it only the appearance? Some people, they know how to look the part, right?

[22 : 57] It's difficult for me talking about this, I admit. Some people look Christian, but they're not actually Christian. For some of us, for my generation, you might call them posers.

Or you might think of the word, a poser, or a fake or a phony. You got to have legitimate faith in Christ. Examine that. I think of Psalm 139 when it says, search me, oh God, and know my faith.

Psalm 139 when it says, search me, oh God, and know my heart. Just like we went over last week, the parable of the soils. How is your heart towards the Lord?

How is it? Only you can answer that. And quite frankly, I don't want to know the status of all of your guys' soil and all your guys' heart. But it's a call for you to examine that.

The second one is, join in the marriage feast while the door is still open. You have an opportunity to respond to Christ.

[23 : 59] God gives us all an invitation. Are you going to respond to that invitation? It's just like in the real world, right? We get invitations all the time. Sometimes we get literally invitations to weddings.

Or we get invited to a birthday party. Well, I want to go to Jesus' birthday party, right? Think about how every single moment of your life is an opportunity for you to come to the Lord.

If you haven't already, if you know the Lord, may you grow in him. May you know what it means to follow in the footsteps of Christ, knowing truth from lies, being more in the light, and forgetting the former things of your former life.

The door is open, but it's not open forever. So if you don't know the Lord, take this time to reflect and make that decision and join in the marriage feast.

Isaiah chapter 55, verse 6, I love this verse where it says, Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he is near.

[25 : 11] Many of you may know that verse. Ask yourself, are you seeking the Lord? The third thing is let your lamp be filled with oil and live prepared for Christ's return.

Be filled with the Holy Spirit and live a life that is pleasing for God. I cannot emphasize enough. It's not about salvation. It's not about what you do.

It's about what has been done for you. We are saved by grace through faith so that no one can boast. And because of this, we are called to do good in the name of Christ.

And so, be filled with the Holy Spirit. In Colossians chapter 1, verse 10, live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of the Lord.

Or Ephesians chapter 5, verse 18, be filled with the Spirit. You want to know if you're a Christian, you shall know them by their fruit.

[26 : 16] Right? That's so, so important. The fourth thing then is to help others prepare for the feast.

This is important for us when we think about it. As I've mentioned before, the greatest decision that you can make in this life is to become a believer.

And while you're still alive, while you're still kicking and breathing, right, and throwing your arms around everywhere, that is important for you to share in the Gospel message, to be an ambassador for Christ, to participate.

Right? Think about how in Scripture, right, the Great Commission, to go and to make disciples. How important is that?

How important is it for us to share in our testimony and how God has worked in and through our lives? Who you can speak to is unique to you.

[27 : 16] Every single one of our stories and how God has worked in our life, it's important in the eyes of God. And here's the thing. I bet you there's someone that you know that you can talk to that is unique to you.

That you can share in your faith, that you can share in the Gospel message. It says here, to invite others to the feast, sharing the Gospel, right?

You share in your testimony. And also, living as an ambassador for Christ. In our everyday interactions, upon being saved in living as a Christian, we live out this faith.

We are to exhibit the love of Christ to others, right? Just how I was mentioning Galatians, the fruit of the Spirit, the Advent themes, right?

Love, joy, peace, and there's so many more. So let this be a call for you. Ask yourself, am I prepared for Christ's second coming?

[28 : 25] And then as we are thinking of Advent, am I prepared? Thinking of Christ's first coming. Again, there is a connection.

It is the anticipation. It is waiting upon the Lord for His timing. Oh, how much do we want to make things on our time in 1988, right?

When we think about it. But the reality is, it's in God's timing and the time for you to make a decision for Christ. If you haven't made it, is now.

And the time for you to share in the gospel message with others is yesterday, but also now, right? So let this be an encouragement for you.

To join in the feast. Let your lamp be filled with oil. Let you, may you come to know the Lord again, to grow in Him and to do good in His name.

[29 : 20] May you remain rooted in Christ, allowing for God to transform your life every single day. Because God has a greater plan.

God has a better way than what the world has to offer. I'm telling you, I've tried doing things my way and it seems good at first, but God's got a way better way.

And so in that, let us just remember. Let us be like the five virgins that were prepared and not like the foolish ones that were not prepared.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for this time and this opportunity for us to gather together as we've gone over this very unique parable.

We pray, Father, that truth was spoken here in such a way that it allows for us to be transformed by your word. Father, I pray for transformation to happen in this church, for healing, for comfort, for restoration.

[30 : 27] Father, we are so grateful for every gift that you have given to us.

You have given us this life, this opportunity for us to choose you. We pray, Father, that our lamps will be filled with the Holy Spirit. We pray that decisions are made for Christ and that we will grow in you.

And as we grow, may we remember to do good in your name, being that ambassador for you and sharing in our faith, sharing in the gospel message with others.

May we prepare. Prepare for your first coming as we're celebrating this time of Advent. It's just a wonderful time for us to remember your first coming, but in the same way that we prepare for your first coming, may we prepare for your second coming.

May we sing this last song together, lifting up a shout of praise to your Holy Name. May we be thankful for the grace and the love and the truth that comes from you.

[31 : 41] And Father, I want to pray especially for every single person who's here physically and those who are watching online. May you know that you are loved by Christ and the invitation is extended to you.

And all of these things we pray and we all say together, Amen. Amen. Thank you for tuning in to the Ontario Community Church sermon podcast. For more about our church and how you can get involved or support our mission, please visit ontariocommunitychurch.org.

May God's blessings be with you.