

Unprepared - Matthew 25:1-13

Introduction: In 1988 a cameraman who was also a skydiver jumped from a plane along with several others to film them as they individually jumped out of the plane. After the final skydiver opened his chute something tragic happened. The cameraman, having completed his filming, reached for his ripcord, and discovered that he'd forgotten to put his parachute on. Up until then, he was enjoying himself. But he was unprepared for the jump. He made a foolish mistake. Nothing could save him; his faith was in a parachute which he had forgotten to put on. He plunged to his death because he was unprepared.

Tonight, in our study through Matthew, we come to a parable of Jesus that deals with the subject of unpreparedness. In order to fully understand the rich meaning behind this parable, we have to know a little about the Jewish wedding customs.

First the parents played a major part in the choosing of the bride. The son could tell his parents who he wanted to marry, but it was the parents who would go with the son to ask for the permission to marry their daughter. The parents would dicker on the payment for the daughter and when an agreement was made, the couple was recognized as being married. There was then a period of about a year that the husband would go and prepare the home. This would be what we consider the engagement time. The bride, though considered married, still lived at home with her parents and there was no physical contact. This was the stage that Mary and Joseph were in when Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit with Jesus. Then after everything was ready, word was sent to the bride's family that the groom was done with his preparation and was coming after his bride.

On that night, the bride would have her brides maids go out into the streets and wait for her husband. There weren't any street lights and they would have these torches that would light the way for the groom to come receive his wife. The bridegroom is probably at the house of his bride's father; from there he would take her to their future home.

This parable opens at the point where some of their friends are waiting to join the procession and go in with the groom to the marriage feast. There does not seem to be much difference in their external appearance.

They were all attendants; they all took their lamps; they all slept while they waited; and they all went forth to meet the bridegroom. Yet there was once major difference between them: Five of them were wise and five of them were foolish. Five of them were prepared; five were unprepared.

Now these five foolish attendants were unprepared physically for the coming of the groom, but the application of this parable is spiritual unpreparedness - especially since it comes immediately after Jesus taught in the previous chapter, about not knowing the day or hour that Jesus would return, So now, let me draw your attention to 3 facts concerning Spiritual Unpreparedness:

1. It is a Fashionable Way of Life. (1a) *"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like..."*

Jesus told another parable in Matthew 13, about the wheat and the weeds. In that story, Jesus taught that there would be unbelievers (weeds) in the church age who would be virtually undistinguishable from believers.

So like it or not, the church of today is made up of the prepared and the unprepared; of the wise and the foolish. According to surveys, there are a number of people even within the church whose names are on the rolls, but they do not have a genuine salvation experience with Christ. In fact, in some circles, it is the fashionable way of life. For many, having their names on a church roll somewhere means they've been accepted as Christians. They look the look, talk the talk, and even give the give, but it's all a show and a sham. On the outside, everything looks and says "*I'm a Christian.*" But on the inside, where it matters, their actions and fruit say otherwise. It's like someone wrote many years ago, "*I looked for church and found it in the world; I looked for the world and found it in the church.*"

But let's look at this parable to see a couple of things these wise and foolish virgins have in common:

A. A Common Profession. They all were probably dressed alike. They all had their lamps with them. The emphasis here is on the outward not the inward. It was the fashionable thing to do. On the outside, they all professed to be properly prepared wedding attendants. But for half of them, their outward show couldn't produce an inward glow, because of their empty lamps. This reminds us that an outward symbol of religious profession can never substitute for the reality of knowing Christ in the heart.

Being ready means having a relationship with the Lord. Being ready means actively living in faithfulness to God; it's more than just calling yourself a Christian but actually living like one. Next we see:

B. A Common Intention. They all went to meet to meet the bridegroom. They all had the same profession and they all had the same intention. But even though their intentions were good they were still unprepared.

Many today have good intentions.

You may intend to become a Christian; but are you?

You may intend to go to heaven; but are you heading that way?

You may intend to read you Bible daily; but do you?

You may intend to pray regularly; but are you?

You may intend to be spiritually prepared; but what about now?

Good intentions don't amount to much. What matters is where you are now. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. You may be sincere and mean well, but well-meaning and never-doing will only bring you defeat and heartache. If you just have profession and intention in your religious life you will be spiritually unprepared.

The second fact concerning Spiritual Unpreparedness is:

2. It is a Foolish Way of Life. (3)

The Bible says that the man who does not prepare to meet God is acting foolishly. He may be an intellectually foolish, as God says, in **Psalms 14:1 (NIV)** "*The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.*"

He may be materially foolish as God told the farmer in **Luke 12:20 (NIV)** “... *You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?*”

He may be a religiously, as God says here in vs. 3, “*The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them.*” (**Mt. 25:3 NIV**).

When the crisis came, those foolish virgins discovered that they were unprepared to meet the Bridegroom (8).

These foolish virgins said to their wise counterparts in vs. 8, “...*give us some of your oil, our lamps are going out.*” It’s easy to go along with the fashion of religion; but when the real crisis comes, only personal experience counts. No one can cover for you. No one can wear a parachute in your place. No one can get saved for you. It doesn’t work that way. You need your own. The foolish saw that they did not have enough oil, and they asked their wise friends to loan them some of theirs, but that wasn’t possible. So, instead of enjoying the gala, they found themselves unable to meet the groom. They looked ready for the reception, but they lacked the required ingredient.

You see, another person’s faith will not cover you. Just because you were raised in a Christian home or you’ve been to church a thousand times with other people of faith does not mean that you have faith. It will not rub off. You cannot “*catch*” faith like you catch a cold. God has no grandchildren, only children.

Every spiritual birth comes directly from Him. Your faith must be your own. It is good to sing “*Faith of Our Fathers*,” but it’s better to be able to sing, “*Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine!*” What about you? When Christ comes do you have that blessed assurance? Will you be ready or not? The third fact concerning Spiritual Unpreparedness is:

3. It is a Fatal Way of Life. (10) “...*And the door was shut.*”

Today the door of grace stands open, but there is coming an time when the door is going to be closed. This means:

A. A Lost Hope. All hope was lost. No amount of begging, pleading, asking, knocking, or bargaining will do when the door is shut. For these foolish virgins, inside there was light, joy, and gladness. But outside there was disappointment and darkness.

And that’s the way it will be for the foolish and unprepared person. Today is the day of grace and the door is wide open to enter in. But when it is closed, it is closed forever. It also means:

B. A Lost Soul. (12) “...*I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.*” Those are some of the most horrible words ever to be uttered! But in this case, they were deserved. These 5 foolish virgins had as much time to prepare as the others. But they preferred to be foolish and fashionable and it proved to be fatal.

No wonder the Lord closes with a warning, “*Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day nor the hour*” (v. 13).

Conclusion: All this really means that we must be spiritually ready. If there is one thing Jesus preached it was

the need to be ready. Over and over again we hear Him say as He did in **Matthew 24:44 (NIV)** “*So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*”

No one can do it for you. No one can wear a parachute in your place. You need your own. You must make a personal decision to follow Christ.

There is coming a day when it will be too late. The foolish bridesmaids cried for the door to be opened, but the sad truth is, their cries were insincere. If they had really wanted in, they would have been prepared.

I close with this story. During one of his expeditions to the Antarctic, Sir Ernest Shackleton left some of his men on Elephant Island with the intent of returning for them and taking them back to England. But he was delayed three times as he tried to reach them but was prevented by the ice. Finally, on his fourth try, he broke through and found a narrow channel to the island.

Much to his surprise, he found the crewmen waiting for him, supplies packed and ready to board. They were soon on their way back to England. He asked them how they knew to be ready for him. They told him they didn't know when he would return, but they were sure he would. So every morning, the leader rolled up his bag, packed his gear and told the crew to do the same saying, “*Get your things ready, boys. The boss may come today.*” Jesus is coming soon. Are you prepared for His coming?