

PARABLE OF **THE TEN VIRGINS**



INTRODUCTION

A parable is more than a story. They are earthly illustrations of heavenly realities, designed to challenge our hearts and not just inform our minds. Jesus used these simple stories—about farmers, coins, and fathers—to reveal profound truths about God's kingdom.

One of Jesus' most important parables is the Parable of the Ten Virgins, found in **Matthew 25:1-13**. It's a story about ten bridesmaids who are waiting for a bridegroom to arrive so they can join his wedding party. It follows directly after Jesus warns that we must be watchful, for the Son of Man will come at an hour we do not expect (Matthew 24:42-44).

It appears to be a simple tale about ten bridesmaids awaiting a bridegroom - a familiar scene in first-century Jewish weddings. Five bridesmaids are celebrated as wise for their foresight, while the other five are condemned as foolish for their neglect. Yet, this earthly story unveils a heavenly warning and a promise, painting a vivid picture of the ultimate preparation: **being ready for the return of the King**.

This story is a powerful picture of **spiritual readiness**. It teaches us that following Jesus isn't about a one-time decision, but about a sustained, personal relationship with Him that keeps us **prepared** for His return, whenever that may be. The core question it asks every reader is: **Are you truly ready, or are you just assuming you are?**

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Matthew 25:1-13, *"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.² Five of them were foolish and five were wise.³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them.⁴ The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps.⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.*

⁶"At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

⁷"Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

⁹"'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

¹⁰"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 was shut.

¹¹"Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!'

¹²"But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.'

¹³"Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

Understanding the first century Jewish wedding

Understanding the first-century Jewish wedding customs is crucial for appreciating the full weight of the Parable of the Ten Virgins. The scene Jesus describes was a familiar one to His original audience.

The Sequence of Events

1. *The Gathering at the Groom's House: A great crowd of family and friends gathers at the groom's family home, which is the venue for the wedding feast. The crowd is so large it spills out into the street.*
2. *The Groom's Journey: The groom, accompanied by his close friends (the "friends of the bridegroom"), journeys to the bride's family home, which was probably in another part of town or a nearby village.*
3. *The Procession Back: The groom collects his bride and leads a joyful, meandering procession back to his own home. The pace was often leisurely, as the party celebrated along the way.*
4. *The Anticipatory Wait: The main crowd of guests waits at the groom's house, anticipating the procession's arrival to commence the feast.*

So, the ten young women (virgins) were part of the waiting crowd, likely tasked with a ceremonial role—perhaps to light the way for the final leg of the procession or to form a welcoming party.

The Bridegroom represents Jesus, wedding represents the final wedding banquet, the ten virgins represent those who are waiting for the Messiah but only those who are prepared will enter into the wedding banquet.

A lesson on Preparedness – 5 wise vs 5 foolish

The Parable presents a powerful contrast between two seemingly identical groups.

- At first glance, all the ten virgins looked identical
- All were invited, had lamps, and were expecting the bridegroom
- But the real difference lay in the extra oil the wise virgins carried

This teaches a crucial truth: *you cannot tell who is truly ready just by looking at their outward religious activities or hearing their words.* The real difference is hidden, internal, and revealed only over time and under challenging circumstances.

The Wise Virgins:

The wisdom of the wise virgins is their **preparedness** - they brought 'extra oil' for their journey.

- The '*extra oil*' represents personal spiritual depth - it is the inner resource stemming from a genuine relationship with God, cultivated in private through prayer, obedience, and trust.
- It is the '*fuel*' of the Holy Spirit that keeps our faith burning through dark times, delays, and disappointments.

- Crucially, this 'oil' cannot be borrowed or transferred. You cannot rely on your parents' faith, your pastor's faith, or your friend's prayers. Your readiness must be your own.

Importantly, the wise virgins were ready for the delay:

- Their faith was not based on a quick, exciting arrival. It was sturdy enough to handle the "long night" - the times when God seems silent or distant.
- Their faith was patient and enduring, not reliant on outward circumstances or emotional highs.

The Foolish Virgins:

The foolish virgins were careless and unprepared. They only carried the oil that was already in their lamps, thinking it would suffice. Their preparation was shallow, and they ran out of oil.

The Cost of Oil

Speaking from a mountain named for the very tree that produces oil when crushed (the Mount Of Olives), Jesus taught the principles that define this costly process. **Jesus taught that the "price" of this spiritual "oil" is the daily surrender of our self-sufficiency**, a refining process that produces genuine faith. The process of extracting oil compared to a disciple's journey:

Crushing & Pressing of Olives: *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:23)*

Separation of Oil: *"No one can serve two masters..." (Matt.6:24)*

The Oil: *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)*

There is indeed a cost for being a follower. Non-discipleship, rooted in self-sufficiency, creates a spiritual void, depriving a person of God's supernatural peace, a faith-based worldview, and the abundant life found only in the Spirit's power.

This entire process culminates in the New Testament's call for the believer's total consecration: *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." (Romans 12:1)*

A "living sacrifice" is the daily "crushing" of our own will, the ongoing "pressing" of our desires, to release the fragrant "oil" of a life fully surrendered to and empowered by God. empowered by God.

They had to rely on others to save them, but it was too late.

- They were not prepared for the long haul. They assumed that the bridegroom would arrive on their schedule, rather than building a life that was ready for His plans - whatever they may be.
- They did not have a relationship with the bridegroom. The last words of Jesus to them were astounding – *‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’* (Matt.25:12)
- They confused outward religious activity with an inward, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The foolish virgins were like people who prepare for a wedding by buying the right clothes and knowing the time, but never actually developing a friendship with the groom. The parable's urgent warning is this: **Do not confuse outward religious activity with an inward, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.**

Carpe Diem

The Parable of the Ten Virgins is not just about the second coming of the Lord; it is also about spiritual opportunity. It is about our readiness to seize the day (*carpe diem*) because the present moment, this day, is the only place where you and I live. Scripture tells us that today is the day of salvation (**2 Corinthians 6:2**) and since we cannot live in the past or the future, we have to live in the present. **Our readiness for eternity is proven in how we engage with the opportunities of today.**

Salvation is far more than a transaction for the forgiveness of past sins. It is fundamental to deliverance into a new reality (Colossians 1:13). This means we are to **"have a different order of life."** We are called to live in this world but from the resources and reality of God's Kingdom.

So, watching for the Lord's return is not a passive sky-gazing. It is an active, engaged life, lived with the hope that Christ may appear at any moment. **It means holding two truths in tension: the King is coming, and the King is already with us. And His Kingdom is in our midst.**

Therefore, we move through our days with a holy anticipation, seeing every encounter as a potential divine appointment—a chance to meet the Lord in a stranger, to serve the Lord in the needy, and to work alongside the Lord in the daily tasks He has placed before us. **So, seize the day! Carpe Diem!**

The 'Extra Oil' – What Is True Preparedness?

The greatest mark of being God's child is having a heart that desires Jesus more than anything else. This very desire is the "*extra oil*" that keeps your faith burning until the day you see Him. You are defined by a glorious, future hope in Jesus.



The extra oil symbolizes a deep, **personal relationship** with Jesus. It is not mere religion, but a living friendship with God (Romans 15). It is a desire to see His Kingdom come, a longing for His reign and rule over our lives and the world, a holy anticipation.

The extra oil also symbolizes the **infilling of the Holy Spirit** that keeps your faith burning. As the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8, the Holy Spirit creates in us a "*groaning*" for heaven. This is not a groan of sadness, but of holy anticipation:

1. We feel a deep sense that this world is not our final home.
2. Our greatest longing is to be in the presence of Jesus.
3. We eagerly await the day when God will renew all of creation

The foolish virgins were waiting, but their hearts were not truly yearning for the Bridegroom. They had the form of faith but not its sustaining power.

You cannot borrow, fake, or buy this *"extra oil."* It is cultivated only through a sincere and growing friendship with God, surrendering fully to His reign. Everything else in life—accolades, possessions, temporary successes—pales in comparison to the brilliant dawn of His coming. This holy groaning for His presence is what separates a passing interest from a prepared heart. It is the essence of true readiness.



Be Watchful

Christ's return is imminent. That means it could happen at any time. The angelic proclamation in **Acts 1:11** is our certain promise: *He will return in the same way He ascended*. His coming is both near and guaranteed.

Nothing stands in the way of our Lord's immediate return, and we are taught repeatedly in Scripture that we should be ready, expectant, busy, obedient, loyal, and fully prepared, like the wise and faithful virgins. The parable's command rings through the ages: ***"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour"*** (Matthew 25:13).

The New Testament is inundated with multiple warnings to be watchful. *"The Lord is at hand"* (Phil. 4:5). *"The coming of the Lord is at hand . . . the Judge is standing at the door!"* (James 5:8–9). *"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry"* (Heb. 10:37). In the book of Revelation, *Christ repeatedly says, "Behold, I am coming quickly!"* (Rev. 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20).

But Church history is full of stories about date setters and their cults who think that they have figured out a specific time frame for the Second Coming, quit their jobs, sold off their assets, and moved to a mountaintop or desert somewhere to await the sounding of the last trumpet. The past few decades especially have seen an upsurge in self-styled prophets and amateur numerologists were certain about the date and chronology of the end times. All of them have been disappointed, discredited, disillusioned, or brought to disgrace.

So, we are called to live in balanced faith: living with the urgent hope that He could return today, while remaining patiently diligent even if He tarries for a thousand years. We are to scoff neither at the promise of His return nor at the responsibilities of our present life. And this is the profound lesson of the parable.



The wise were prepared for the long night, their lamps fuelled by a sustained and personal relationship. Their readiness was not a frantic, last-minute calculation but a steady, enduring faithfulness. To be watchful is to live with a heart oriented toward heaven and our hands faithfully engaged in the work He has given us on earth, proving our hope is in the Bridegroom Himself, not merely in His arrival time.

Nothing stands in the way of His coming. The same grace that saves us teaches us that *“we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2:12–13).

The Parabolic Trio – A Test of Your Heart!

In **Matthew 24 and 25**, Jesus delivers a powerful trio of parables—the *Faithful and Wicked Servant*, the *Ten Virgins*, and the *Talents*—just before His crucifixion. These are not random stories but a deliberate, escalating diagnosis of the heart of a believer awaiting the Lord's return. Each parable tests our faithfulness in a different sphere of life.

First, the **Parable of the Faithful and Wicked Servant** (Matthew 24:45-51) reveals our heart toward the church community. It asks if we are faithfully serving our fellow believers, or abusing our position in serving the household of God.

Second, the **Parable of the Ten Virgins** (Matthew 25:1-13) turns the spotlight inward, revealing our heart toward our individual, personal responsibility. It is about the private, unseen state of our soul—the "oil" of a genuine relationship with Christ that cannot be borrowed from others.

Finally, the **Parable of the Talents** (Matthew 25:14-30) directs our gaze outward, revealing our heart in the context of the world. It challenges us to be faithful stewards of the resources and opportunities God has given us to impact the world for His kingdom.

Together, these parables form a complete picture. They ask: **While we wait for Christ's return, are we faithful in our service to the church, in our personal spiritual readiness, and in our mission to the world? They are the Master's comprehensive check-up for a waiting heart.**

The three parables in Matthew 24 and 25 share a common vocabulary, built around *five repeated words*. This fivefold repetition underscores their core message, which is detailed in the table below.

Theme	Faithful & Wicked Servant (Matt 24:45-51)	Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13)	The Talents (Matt 25:14-30)
"No one knows the day or hour"	Implied in the servant's assumption, " <i>My master is staying away a long time</i> " (v. 48).	Explicitly stated as the parable's conclusion: " <i>...you know neither the day nor the hour</i> " (v.13).	Implied in the " <i>long time</i> " before the master returns to settle accounts (v. 19).
"Watch" (grēgoreō)	The call is to be a faithful manager, actively doing the master's work while He is away.	The virgins are all told to " <i>watch</i> ," but the wise demonstrate it through preparation.	The command to " <i>watch</i> " is implicit in the call to be faithful and productive with what is entrusted.
"Wise" (phronimos)	The " <i>wise</i> " servant is the one found faithfully administering the household (v. 45).	The " <i>wise</i> " virgins are those who brought extra oil for their lamps (v. 2, 4).	The " <i>good and faithful</i> " servants are commended for their wisdom in investment.
"Prepared" (hetoimos)	Readiness is defined by responsible and obedient conduct during the master's absence.	Readiness is defined by having a sustained, personal supply of oil, making them " <i>ready</i> " to meet the bridegroom.	Readiness is defined by actively using one's resources/gifts, resulting in a greater return for the master.
"Delay" (chronizō)	The wicked servant's flawed reasoning begins when " <i>the master delays his coming</i> " (v. 48).	The central crisis occurs when " <i>the bridegroom was a long time in coming</i> " and they all became drowsy (v. 5).	The narrative tension is built on the fact that the master returned " <i>after a long time</i> " (v. 19).
Central Theme	Faithful stewardship and responsibility during Master's absence.	Constant Preparedness for a sudden arrival of the Master.	Productive stewardship of resources when the Master returns

The 'Delay' in the Lord's coming is the Mission of the Church

The perceived delay in Christ's second coming is not a failure of promise, but the space granted for the mission of the church. In the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:18-20**), the resurrected Jesus, possessing all authority, commands His followers not to wait idly, but to act: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."* This global mission—baptizing and teaching—is the primary task of the interim period.

The *"delay"* is therefore a divine provision of time for the fulfilment of this very purpose. It is a season of grace for the gospel to reach every nation, not a sign of divine absence. The church is called to be actively engaged in this work, understanding that the extension of time is directly tied to the extension of God's kingdom. **The period of waiting is, in essence, a period of working**, fuelled by the promise of Christ's enduring presence, *"to the very end of the age."*

The core of Christian hope is the certainty that God will ultimately restore everything. This means His kingdom will fully arrive, Jesus will be revealed as the true Lord, and His plan for a renewed world will be completely realized. Right now, we see evil and injustice causing widespread suffering, often appearing to win. Yet, Jesus' teachings and the very nature of God assure us that this brokenness is not final. We are invited to join God as partners in His restorative work. Our mission is not a hopeless struggle, but a meaningful participation in His plan. Through our actions and words, we demonstrate a powerful truth: **the King is on His way, and the life of His future kingdom is already breaking into our present world.**

The Heart of Knowing and Being Known by God

When Jesus says *“Truly I tell you, I don’t know you”* (**Matt.25:12**), it is one of the most sobering and heart-piercing statements in all of Scripture. He’s not speaking to atheists or skeptics, but to people who *called Him Lord*.

This phrase echoes Jesus' words in **Matthew 7:23**, where he says to those who claim to have done mighty works in His name - who performed miracles, cast out demons, and prophesied—in His name.

In both **Matthew 7** and **Matthew 25**, Jesus highlights a core reality of life with God: knowing and being known. To know God biblically is not merely to acknowledge His existence or to do things in His name. **It is to live in interactive relationship with Him**—a with-God life marked by loving obedience, humble dependence, and transformation of the heart.

When Jesus says, *“I never knew you,”* He’s not saying He lacked awareness of these people. He’s saying, *“You and I had no shared life. You were doing spiritual things, but apart from Me.”*

In Matthew 7:21, Jesus says:

*“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the **will of My Father in heaven.**”*

So what is the Father's will?

It isn't a checklist of miracles or a résumé of ministry accomplishments. It's not religious hustle or how loud you can shout "Lord, Lord." But it is this:

- To be formed into the likeness of Jesus (Romans 8).
- To live in union with Christ through His Spirit (John 15).
- To become a person increasingly full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5)

We assume that signs of God's power (prophecy, healing, miracles) must mean closeness to God. But Jesus shatters that assumption. It is entirely possible to operate in spiritual gifts and still not walk in spiritual intimacy. The gifts of God can function without

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet"

In **Psalm 119:105**, the psalmist writes, *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."* This verse beautifully expresses the function of God's Word—not just as knowledge or information, but as illumination for life's journey.

But it's possible to carry a lamp and still walk in darkness. You can know Scripture from cover to cover. You can pray loud, sing strong, serve faithfully. You can feel the flicker of the Spirit in moments of power and still miss the heart of it all—relationship. The five foolish virgins forgot their oil. It's a sobering reminder: You can have the form of faith without the fire of intimacy. You can know the Word, and still not know Him.

Word without Spirit is dry. Spirit without Word is wild. But neither is enough without relationship.

In Zechariah's vision (Zech. 4), the golden lampstand was fed with oil directly from two olive trees—an endless supply. No human hands filling it. No striving. Just an unbroken, living connection. That's what God offers you.

Not a once-a-week visit. Not a surge of inspiration when things get tough. But a steady walk. A lamp lit by His Word, fuelled by His Spirit, and sustained by closeness with Him.

Because in the end, it won't be about how much Scripture we memorized or how powerful our experiences were. **It'll be about whether we knew Him—and whether He knows us.**

the fruit of the Spirit—but that’s not the life to which Jesus calls us. The foolish virgins assumed proximity was the same as intimacy. It wasn’t. That is the same message echoed in Luke 6:46: “*Why call Me “Lord” and not do what I say?*”

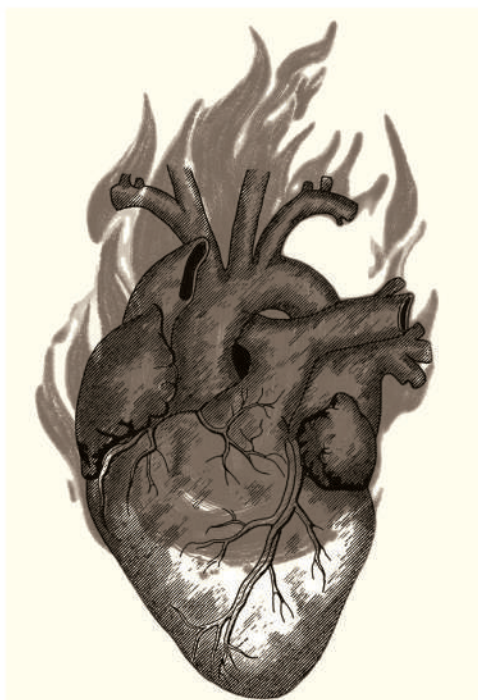
To call Him Lord but reject His commands is to live a life of spiritual contradiction. Jesus makes it clear: *you cannot separate faith from obedience, and you cannot separate obedience from relationship.* Doing God’s will means becoming the kind of person who naturally does what Jesus says—not out of obligation, but out of relationship. Out of love. Out of trust. Out of nearness.

He’s asking for something far simpler—and far deeper:

A life surrendered.
A heart obedient.
A relationship that is real.

Because in the end, the only
thing that will matter is this:

**Did you know Him?
And did He know you?**



The Shut Door as Finality

It's one of the most unsettling moments in all of Jesus' parables: the door shuts. The shut door, followed by the words "*I do not know you*," makes the separation permanent. A lifetime of poor relationship—characterized by neglect, presumption, and a lack of true devotion—culminates in eternal exclusion. The door is shut because the relationship was never real.

The parable illustrates that a poor relationship with God is ultimately exposed as no relationship at all. The foolish virgins were at the wedding party, they expected the bridegroom, and they called him "*Lord*." They represent those with a nominal, cultural, or superficial association with God.

This imagery points forward to the return of Christ—an eschatological moment when the time for preparation is over. **The door that swings wide today in grace will one day close in finality.**

It echoes similarly in other parables as well:

- In the Parable of *Wheat and the Tares* – both look the same until separated at the harvest (Matthew 13).
- In the Parable of the *Net*, the fisherman catches all kinds of fishes but in the end, one must sort the good fish from the bad (Matthew 13).

- In the Parable of *Sheep and the Goats*, they are divided based on what they did with their lives (Matthew 25).

And in every case, the distinction is not about performance, but about real relationship with God, expressed through love, faith, and obedience. In essence, the “*shut door*” is a stark warning that poor relationship with God, marked by unpreparedness and unfaithfulness, leads to irreversible separation.

But today the door is open for all. Lord Jesus Christ is returning soon. The New Testament authors frequently speak of Christ's return as something that is “*soon*” or “*at hand*.” This sense of urgency and expectancy was a central part of the early Christian mindset and teaching.



- Just because Christ's return has been delayed from a human perspective does not mean we can become complacent or less vigilant or irresponsible.
- Also, it means that every generation of believers is called to live with a constant readiness and expectancy for Christ's return, as if it could happen at any moment.
- God's slowness or delay in return is not because God enjoys delay, rather it is for more people to be saved.

2 Peter 3:8-9, *"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*

The Parable of the Ten Virgins teaches us that the bridegroom *will come*, the door *will* be shut, and the only thing that matters is being ready when it happens.

Therefore, we are not to be upset by the phrase *"Jesus is coming soon."* We are to be motivated by it. It is a call to live in a state of prepared readiness, ensuring our lamps are filled with the oil of genuine faith, because for every generation, the return of Christ is always imminent.

Conclusion

The Parable of the Ten Virgins ends not with a calendar date, but with a command: *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour"* (Matthew 25:13). The shut door and the heartbreaking words, "I do not know you," are not meant to scare us, but to sober us. They strip away all spiritual complacency and call for a faith that is personal, prepared, and persevering.

In light of this, the declaration *'Maranatha'*—"Our Lord, come!" (1 Corinthians 16:22) has long been used in the church as both a hopeful plea and a sober reminder that Jesus, our King, is coming soon. It is the prayer that shapes our priorities, fuels our vigilance, and tests the authenticity of our faith. Therefore, let us live with lamps trimmed and oils burning, our hearts ready to welcome the King to enter the wedding feast.

In essence, Maranatha echoes the parable's core: *"Our Lord, come!" Be with us now. Be with us always. Be with us to the end, which will be the beginning of all things renewed in You. Amen!*

Chapel Service

Every Wednesday | 7pm
@ Temple of God



Teens Church

Every 2nd Saturday | 5.30pm
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