Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Fate of the Unprepared
Scripture: Matthew 25:1-13
Code: 2375

The music has prepared us for the Word of God this morning as we consider together the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our text is Matthew chapter 25, the first thirteen verses. And I invite you to open your Bible, if you will, and look to that text, Matthew 25. I want to read to you this marvelous parable and then to teach the things that God has given us contained in it. Beginning in Matthew 25 verse 1:

Then shall the Kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.

Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps and the foolish said to the wise, Give us of your oil for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered saying, No, lest there be not enough for us and you, but go rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Truly I say unto you, I know you not.

Watch therefore for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man cometh.

This parable is taken from the great Olivet Discourse. The Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24 and 25 is the Lord's own sermon on His Second Coming. And this particular parable is a warning parable. There are several such warning parables in this section of the sermon. In the early part, He gave the signs of His coming and now in the light of that He warns the world to be ready for when it happens.

The disciples had said to Him, to begin the sermon really, "When shall these things be?" In other words, they wanted to know the time of the Second Coming, the time of the establishing of the Kingdom, the time of setting up the Messiah's rule on the earth. His answer came in chapter 24 verse 36, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven nor the Son, but My Father only." He repeated it in verse 42, "Watch therefore, for you know not what hour your Lord doth come." He repeated it in verse 44, "Therefore be ye also ready for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of

Man comes." He repeated it in verse 50 where He says, "In an hour that he is not aware of."

Four times already the Lord has said He is coming in an unknown moment. And now He gives a parable and concludes the parable by saying, "You know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man comes." The disciples said, "When will it be?" And He said, "No one will ever know." It will be sudden and it will be unexpected. You will know the general time because I'll give you the signs, which He did in chapter 24 verses 4 to 31. You will know the general marks of that time which He called "birth pains" leading to the birth of the Kingdom. But the exact moment and the exact hour you will never know, for as the epistles tell us, the Lord will come as a thief in the night, unexpectedly and suddenly.

This parable is a parable with the intent of teaching us the suddenness and the unexpectedness of the coming of the Lord which therefore should call us to preparedness so that we are not caught in that unexpected moment unprepared for His coming.

Notice verse 1. It starts with the word "then." Then takes us to a time. What time? The time when the Lord comes that He has just been speaking of in the prior passage closing chapter 24. The time when He comes to reward the faithful servant and to punish the unfaithful servant. It's at that time that the Kingdom of heaven, that is the sphere of God's rule, will be like this. So here is a parable to illustrate the time period of the Second Coming. That's the intent of the opening of verse 1. It takes us to the time of the coming of the Lord and calls for readiness, preparedness, alertness on the part of all of us for that time will come unexpectedly and suddenly.

It goes without saying, I guess, that we're aware of the fact that the first time Jesus came the world was not ready. They should have been. The prophets had marked out very clearly the signs to look for. They said there would be a forerunner. There was. They identified him as a voice crying in the wilderness. That's exactly what John did. They said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. He was. Born of a virgin. He was. Of the line of David. He was. They said He would come to Galilee. He did. They said He would have great power. He had it. But the world still was not prepared and not ready. And so He came unto His own, says John, and His own received Him not. He was in the world and the world was made by Him but the world knew Him not. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, He said, how oft I would have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood but you would not. And in Luke chapter 19 and verses 41 and following, we read, "And when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known even thou, at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace but now they are hidden from thine eyes." If you had only known what time it was, if you had only known that I was here and now it's too late.

And this parable warns the world not to let that happen again. For there will be no recourse in the future.

Now the theme of the parable is very simple. It is not complex. The parable is meant to teach us that Jesus is coming. That He is coming to judge sinners and to reward the righteous. That He is coming in a sudden and unexpected moment and everyone should be prepared. And afterward there will be no second chance. People may knock all they want, but the door will be shut. The day of opportunity will have come and gone forever.

Now the parable is very simple. It's rich. It's exciting. And I think its marvel is in its...it's in its simplicity. As you read the many many writings that have been written around this parable, it can get very confusing. There are the allegorists who want to turn it into an allegory and give every single thing in it a mystical meaning so that you get lost in a mass of verbiage of hidden secret spiritual ideas. That is not the intent of a parable.

And then there are the devotionalists who want to see in every single thing something applicable to the Christian life. And that's wrong as well.

And then there are the critics who just want to deal with the data and say it's a confusing parable because they can't figure out who the bride is and even where the bride is since there's no bride mentioned. Where the bridesmaids at the bride's house or the groom's house or were they out in the street and if they were out in the street did they sleep in the street or did they go into a house and sleep? How heavy were the poles that they carried with the lamps on them? And could young maidens do that? Who are the young maidens? And on and on and on and on it goes.

But all of that just needs to be set aside. The message is in the simplicity and clarity of the parable, not in the confusion brought to it by allegorists and devotionalists and critics. All we need to know is four things: the wedding, the bridesmaids, the bridegroom and the warning.

Let's look, first of all, at the wedding. It is a wedding scene, after all. And only that which is significant to the application is drawn from the wedding scene. Let me tell you a little bit about the setting, if I may.

It would be a very typical wedding in a typical Israel...typical Palestinian village or Israel town in the time of our Lord...very typical. A wedding was THE greatest event in a village or a town. It was the greatest single social celebration those people knew anything about. Everybody got involved, friends, family, extended family, everybody. It was a time of happiness. It was a time of festivity. It was a time of celebration. And that's the scene we have here.

But it's essential for us to know that in a Jewish marriage, there were three elements. The first is engagement. Long before the scene here there was an engagement. And the engagement was an official contract between the two fathers who were giving their daughter and their son to each other,

as it were. So engagements weren't really made with the couple, they were made with the fathers.

A little while after that, there would be what was called the second phase of the wedding or the marriage and that was a betrothal. Now the betrothal was the official ceremony. The couple would come together before friends and family and they would make vows and covenants and binding promises. They had an actual marriage ceremony and they made their commitments. They were then officially married. And any breaking of a betrothal period was a divorce. There had to be an actual divorce, that was that binding. And if the husband happen to die during that period, the wife was considered a widow even though the marriage had not been physically consummated nor had they come to live together.

The point was this. The fathers made an initial engagement for the children to be married. The children then made their vows to each other which were binding. And then there was up to a year for the young man to get things ready to take the bride to be his own. He had to provide a place for her, perhaps to build an addition on his father's house, or a house of his own, or to purchase land and cultivate a field and show that he could care for her. And so he had a year to prepare his home for her, to prepare his life for her. At the end of the time that he needed he would go to take her and she would become his own and live with him. There was no ceremony to that. That was just the official wedding. And that's the third phase and that's what we see here.

By the way, it was a very good principle. It was a very good way to set up a marriage. Parents who very often have a little longer range view than their children were involved. Secondly, the betrothal was a wonderful thing because when the vows were made they were absolutely binding because certainly a man didn't want to spend a year getting ready for a girl to come and be his wife and have her say at the end, "I don't know how to tell you this but I found somebody else." So once the betrothal was made, it was absolutely binding and all of his preparation would indeed lead to fulfillment.

But you can imagine, can't you, the anticipation in the heart of a bride and a bridegroom having to go through the process of finally getting to the culmination, of finally coming to the place where the marriage was going to be consummated. Great anticipation. And the scene here is phase 3, the actual gamos, in the Greek word, which is the wedding festivity, the wedding feast, the wedding celebration itself where he comes to her house and she's waiting there with all of her bridesmaids and he arrives with all of the men that are with him and they...he collects his bride and her maids and they all go with torches, parading through the night sky and through the village in a celebration of singing and talking and joy that is just unequalled in their social life. It's finally come to that. Everything is ready. He has prepared a home for her. He is now going to get her and take her to that place. And when they arrive at his home that night, and they always started those weddings at night so that they could have a processional through the village and everyone in the village could enjoy the joy and the festivity, then the wedding party would go into the house and celebrate as long as seven days.

At the end of that period of celebration, the friend of the bridegroom, who was like the best man, would take the hand of the bride, place it in the hand of the bridegroom and everyone would leave...hopefully. Enough is enough. And so it would be a marvelous evening, a marvelous beginning to a glorious celebration for which this bride and bridegroom had waited a long, long time.

And that's the wedding. And everything is ready. And we join in on the beauty and the wonder of the festivities. A second thing we need to know to understand this parable is the bridesmaids. Notice verse 1. "Ten virgins," it says, "took their lamps," actually the Greek word means torch. It is not the word lamp, for example, used in Matthew 5:15, you remember, where our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount said a man does not take his lamp and hide it under a bushel. That's a lamp. This is the word torch, a different word. It is used, for example, in John 18:3 to speak of the torches that the Romans carried when they came into the Garden of Gethsemane to take Jesus prisoner.

There was a long wooden pole. On the top of the wooden pole would be some kind of a wire mesh apparatus attached, filled with cloth. That cloth would be soaked in oil and then lit to give a flaming torch. They would carry on their person somewhere a little flask of oil so that they could keep that lit for as long as was necessary. So here are ten virgins who take their lamps and go forth, no doubt to the house of the bride, waiting to meet the bridegroom. They are her chosen ladies. They are the young girls who will attend to her. It calls them virgins, by the way, that is the way for virgin, parthenos which means an unmarried girl who is a virgin. They were young in those days when they married and these were her friends who as yet were not married, chosen because they were sisters or cousins or very dear and close and intimate friends. And it was a special joy and a special thrill to belong to her special group in anticipation of this glorious evening.

By the way, there's nothing intended in the fact that they were virgins regarding the morality of the people they illustrate. In other words, the fact that you have virgins here is not to say something spiritual about the people they represent. It simply fits the wedding pattern. They were just ten bridesmaids. And the custom was that virgins were the bridesmaids. That is not to say that though they represent others...that is to say, rather, that though they represent others, the others they represent in the parable are not necessarily pure and spotless and undefiled. So we don't want to draw any spiritual conclusion.

By the way, as a footnote, you want to avoid doing that as you work through the parables. Unless the Lord gives the meaning, you're really on your own if you start giving meaning to other things. They are intended to convey very simple direct truth which the Lord explains.

Notice how many of them. There were ten. Apparently the Jews were really delighting in the number ten. It took ten men to eat the paschal supper, according to Josephus. It took ten men to constitute a synagogue. It took ten men to give a wedding blessing. And apparently ten bridesmaids was just the

proper number. So she had what seems to be a rather customary number of people in many of the Jewish festivities and rituals, ten of them.

Now they take their torches. On the wooden pole, they have the torch, they bring it because that's sort of like their invitation. Just like perhaps at a wedding today bridesmaids may carry flowers or light candles or whatever, this was the symbol that they belonged to the wedding party. And they brought their torches along to light the night sky in the wonderful procession that they would all enjoy...when the bridegroom finally came.

It says they went to meet him. The word "meet" is interesting. Technically it's the word used to refer to greeting an official newly arrived dignitary. So it's kind of an official term. This was a very official event, a very special event.

Now we ask ourselves the question: who are these girls? And it's very obvious from what our Lord says who they are. They are professed Christians. They are those who claim to belong to Christ. They are those who have gathered with the assembly of Christian people to await the coming of the Lord. They are those who say they know Christ. And they anticipate His coming. Who say they believe and they know about the wedding and they know the time is near and they even say they've made their preparation. They have on their wedding garment and they have their torch.

Their presence symbolizes their interest and their torch symbolizes their profession of faith in Christ. They show outward marks of watching for the coming of the bridegroom. They show outward marks of readiness. They show outward marks of commitment to Jesus Christ. Their part of the believing community. They're gathered as bridesmaids, as it were, ready to be received into this glorious marriage celebration. They profess to love Christ's appearing. They profess to hear the gospel and believe. They profess to be disciples to wait for the Son, to desire the Kingdom.

And, frankly, when you just see the ten of them, they're not very easy to distinguish. They all have on their wedding garments. They're all chosen bridesmaids. They all attend to the bride. They all have their torches. And they are at first indistinguishable but they are not alike. And this is the message of the parable.

Verse 2, five of them were wise and five were foolish. The searcher of the heart knows. It may not have been clear initially but the searcher of hearts knows. And there is a characterization in verse 2, as He looks into the heart of these ten and five were phronimos, having to do with the brain, thoughtful, sensible, prudent, wise. And five were moros from which we get our word moron, stupid. So they are very different. Not outwardly distinguishable, but inwardly very different...very different, as different as you can be...wise and stupid.

One commentator, I believe, draws a very interesting picture for us at this point. He writes, "There is not a more grand or a more beautiful spectacle on earth than a great assembly reverently worshiping God together. No line visible to human eye divides into two parts the goodly company. Yet the goodly company is divided into two parts. The Lord reads our character and marks our place. The Lord knows them that are His and them that are not His in every assembly of worshipers," end quote.

And He can look down on this assembled group, if you will, of bridesmaids, all of you saying we wait for His coming, we have our garments on, we have our torches in hand. But He knows whether you're wise or whether you're stupid. We may not. He knows. And the differentiation here is preparedness, verse 3 and 4. Here's where their wisdom and foolishness manifests itself.

"They that were foolish took their torches and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels," that is those vessels they carried on their person to pour onto the torch along with their torches. The wise, they carried the flask with the oil. The fools had no oil at all. They made no proper preparation. It was all outside. It was all external. But they hadn't cared for the most necessary thing and that is the oil so they could light the torch. They all made profession but only five had the genuine oil of preparedness.

Now what is that oil? It is the necessary reality of saving grace that distinguishes people. There may be a crowd of people all of whom outwardly ostensibly apparently honor Jesus Christ, but there will be different hearts, some prepared and some unprepared. The oil is like the garment of Matthew 22:11, you remember that the wedding feast there, the king calls a wedding for his son and he sees the guests and he finds a man without a wedding garment. He is also unprepared. He tries to crash the Kingdom, as it were, without a prepared heart. And so, the oil is the necessary grace without which no man shall see the Lord. It is true salvation. It is imputed righteousness. It is genuine holiness granted by faith in Jesus Christ. It is a transformed inward life.

But some of them were like those of whom Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:5 and says they had a form of godliness but without power. The foolish virgins were outwardly attached. They were committed intellectually. They were committed socially. They were even committed religiously. But they had no light and they had no life. They had no ability to be conformed to the law of God. Their faith in terms of James 2 was dead faith. It was faith that had no product, that could do nothing. And the purpose of the parable is to warn us not to be caught in such unpreparedness when the Lord comes.

Now I hasten to say to you that this is a ringing repeated theme of our Lord's ministry. He over and over again speaks to this issue. He says, for example, that in the Kingdom there will grow together wheat and tares, right? And they will look so much alike that we don't dare start pulling them out lest we pull up the wheat but wait until the coming of the Lord when He will make the distinction. And He talks about soil that looks good and the seed is planted and the plant comes up and flourishes but it

has no deepness of earth or it is strangled out by the roots of weeds and found to be dead and non fruitbearing. But at first we can't tell the difference. This is a repeated message of our Lord and it points up the fact, and I think this needs to be emphasized in every church across this world that the church is filled with people who are unredeemed and unprepared for the coming of the Lord. It's filled with them.

I am interested in the...that in this particular parable of ten virgins, the Lord didn't say one of them didn't have any oil, He said five of them didn't. And although I don't want to take something and make it a mathematical conclusion out of that, what that says to me is that He sees a large number of people like this. It isn't to say that half of everybody in the church is unredeemed but it's surely is to say that it's a common issue, it's not isolated. And I believe the church is filled with these kinds of people who are unredeemed people, who are unprepared and whether they meet the Lord at His Second Coming should He come in their life time or whether they meet Him in death, and they will one or the other, they will be at that moment unprepared though they have been religious and though they have been involved in Christian people and though they have nice feelings toward Christ and though they may be self-deceived into thinking that all is well.

This is not a popular message, by the way. I wrote an article on this and publishers refused to publish it in a magazine. They said it would upset people. And so we let people go to hell in self-deception? Our Lord warns over and over and over and over about this.

The extremity comes in verse 5. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all dozed and finally fell asleep." The bridegroom tarries, in this particular analogy that our Lord is drawing, the bridegroom doesn't come when they expect him. It's later and later and later and later. And this is a rather subtle hint to the disciples who think that Jesus is going to establish His Kingdom immediately that it's going to be longer than they think. But more than that, I get the feeling in the context of Matthew 24 and 25 that the Lord is saying even when you've seen the signs given in 24:4 to 31, even when you've seen all those signs that will happen in the time of the Tribulation, even when you've seen the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, it's still going to be a time before He finally comes. There's a gap of time in there and people are seen waiting and waiting and waiting and then sort of just going back to the normal things of life, they doze off and go to sleep. Some people are so excited at the thought of a wedding that they can't sleep for a long time before. But these people have waited so long and they finally just settle. They can't keep themselves awake and they fall asleep.

What our Lord is saying is there will be a time of waiting before He comes. And it will be a time that will sort of lull people into "Well, we have to go on with routine as usual." Nothing wrong with sleep. Sleep's a wonderful thing. Nothing wrong with that at all. But there's something wrong with it if you're not prepared for what is going to waken you out of your sleep. That's the issue. Sleeping is not condemned. The wise were asleep like the foolish. And when the bridegroom comes and they wake up, the rest of the wise was sweet rest because they're ready. The rest of the foolish was folly indeed

because they're caught unexpectedly.

What it's saying to us is that in waiting for the Lord, you know, we can't all the time be on our tip toes. We can't spend all our lives on the roof in our pajamas singing "The King is coming." I mean, life goes on, right? And some of us have said we've been waiting and we've been waiting and we've been waiting and where is He? And so you sort of settle back in to the fact that you have to eat and sleep and work. It doesn't mean that we're not waiting. The fact that we're not all congregated on a hill somewhere doesn't mean we're not waiting. It means that while we wait we go on. That's why, as we saw in chapter 24 verse 40 it says that when He does come two will be in the field and one will be taken, the other left, two will be grinding at the mill, one will be taken and the other left. They'll be going on with the routine things of grinding and plowing and planting. And some will be in business and some will be at the farm. And our Lord said, didn't He, in chapter 24 that it would be like it was in the days of Noah, verse 38, there will be eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage. In other words, life as usual.

And so, he tarries and the girls fall asleep. That's how it is in human life. We have to take care of the human things. It doesn't mean they weren't prepared. Five were, five weren't. The ones who were prepared could well afford to go on with the routine of life. The ones who weren't prepared could ill afford to go on with the routine of life, they should have taken care when they could, when they had opportunity. Their false security let them sleep through their day of opportunity. And that's the tragedy.

Let's look at the bridegroom in verse 6. "And at midnight there was a cry made." Now he has tarried a long time. That's a funny time to start a wedding...at midnight. But for the point that our Lord wants to make, He is simply saying it's an unexpected time. And now we understand more why they were asleep, right? Sleep is wonderful and sleep is where you're supposed to be at midnight. But the tarrying was so long that now at midnight when no one expects the wedding to start is exactly when he comes. And it's kind of fascinating in a way, I guess, that in Exodus 12:29 it tells us that the deliverance of Israel from Egypt began at midnight, also in an unexpected time. Maybe that's why the rabbis used to say that the Messiah would come when He came at midnight.

It's a late hour. An unexpected time reminds us, doesn't us, of the epistles where it says He will come as a thief in the...what?...in the night. The world somehow is lulled into complacency and He comes in an unexpected moment, even after all the signs. I mean, the bridesmaids knew the wedding was near. They could read the signs. They knew it was time to gather at the bride's house and the festivities were going to occur. They knew the preparations had been put in place. We might say if they were living in the Tribulation time, they had seen the birth pains. They knew it was time but they still wasted their opportunity. And at midnight there was a cry. And the cry obviously was to announce his approach. And I suppose there will be such a cry when He comes finally to set up His Kingdom in that last and glorious moment, a cry out of heaven. And the cry is this, "Behold, here comes the

bridegroom. Go out to meet him." And this is, of course, the moment, the glorious moment that begins the wedding. And even though it's late, it's going to go on for seven days anyway so it's...it's wonderful that it should start even then. The procession is collected as the bridegroom comes with his ten attending men, perhaps. Meets the bride with her ten bridesmaids together with their lamps, they are ready to light them and proceed to his prepared home for her. This is the Second Coming. This is the Second Coming, the very moment of it.

Verse 7 says, "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their torches." Perhaps they readied all of the cloth and the ones with the oil poured the oil on ready to go and lit the torch and it flamed in the night sky. Those who had no oil, they knew it now. Oh, maybe they thought they could just go down the street just before he got there. Maybe they didn't think it would be midnight when he came and everything would be closed. Or they hadn't even bothered to think about that, maybe they thought they could just sort of borrow that, nothing is said about that, we don't know, they were just unprepared.

They certainly didn't do what 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, "Let a man examine himself." Examine yourself to see whether you be in the faith. They were deceived. And now when everything is revealed, they're naked. They have no oil. They possess not the necessary internal grace of holiness. They can't light the torch. And verse 8, "The foolish said to the wise, Give us of your oil for our lamps are going out," the Greek says. They no doubt lit the dry brittle cloth and it smoldered for a little while and then went out. It won't burn. Ours are going out. Give us some of yours.

But you know something? If the call to go to be at the judgment seat of God came to you whether in death or the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and it came to you when you were not ready and you were not prepared, all the saints in heaven and all the people on earth could stand weeping in your behalf but could never save you...never. You see, salvation is non-transferable. That's the point. It is not to interject into this that the wise were selfish, that's not the point. The parable is not intending to teach selfishness. It is intending to teach the non- transferable nature of salvation. The saved can't save the lost. Give us your oil is a request that no one can answer. Every person must have his own salvation. Every person must make his own life right before God. You can't grab my arm and be dragged into the Kingdom. You can't share my oil.

I have a little object lesson sometimes I use with children. Take an eight and a half by eleven piece of paper and I fold it a certain way and I say to the kids, "Do you have a ticket to heaven?" And they'll say no. And I say, "Well, I'd like to give you a part of mine, I'm sorry you don't have one, I'll share mine with you." And I tear it and hand them their part. They open it up and it spells "hell." What's left in my hand I open up and it's a cross. And the lesson is very simple. You don't get to heaven on anybody else's oil. That's what our Lord is saying. In that moment, if preparation has not been made, there is no preparation possible. We can't impart our salvation as much as we might like to anyone.

So, the wise answer in verse 9 and say, "No, lest there be not enough and you. Go rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves." The idea here is simply to teach that you've got to procure your own. The buying does not assume that you have to pay a price for salvation, that it's not a free gift. You do pay a price in a sense, you pay the price of giving up your whole self, right? Like the man who sold everything he had to buy the treasure hidden in the field and the other man who sold everything he had to buy the pearl of great price. Or Isaiah's chapter 55 verse 1 invitation, come and buy without money and without price. The idea here is simply to say you've got to go procure your own. No one can give it to you.

Oil was plenty. And oil was available. But not at midnight and not right now. You had equal opportunity but you slept away the day of grace and you slept away the time of opportunity. The sellers of oil you know, the Scriptures, the apostles, the prophets, teachers.

And the implication here is that no one is allowed into the festival without a lit torch. It was sort of like the symbol that you were a part of the wedding party. And there was no way in without it. And they didn't have it.

People, I tell you, this is the most fearful teaching the Bible gives. And Jesus gave it over and over and over again that there are in the church myriads of people who are unprepared to face God. And they are deceived about that. And in a moment when they face the reality of their unpreparedness, it will be in that moment that it's too late.

In Luke 6:46, the Lord said, "Why do you call Me, Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say? Whosoever comes to Me and hears My Word and does them, I will show you to whom he is like, he is like a man who built a house and dug deep and laid the foundation on a rock. And when a flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon the house and could not shake it for it was founded upon a rock. But he that hears and does not is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth against which the stream did beat vehemently and immediately it fell and the ruin of that house was great." It's the same thing. There are people who have built their religious house but have no foundation. That necessary grace isn't there. That reality of imputed righteousness isn't there. That resident holiness of God isn't there. That transformed character isn't there. Salvation isn't there, no matter what appears on the outside. Oh, they are happy about Jesus. Oh, they may like to belong to the community of believing folks but they are not prepared.

And in that last moment when they are told to go and get their own, it says in verse 10, "While they went to buy, the bridegroom came and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage and the door was shut." No teachers now. The teachers are silent. No place to buy the oil now and the door is shut. What a thought. There are those moments of sheer terror immediately after the awareness that you have met holy God and are unprepared. The feeling that must have been in the hearts of the

people in Noah's time as the water started to go over their heads and they beat on the door of the ark to no avail. And their mockery had ended and was replaced by the sheer terror of their foolishness.

The door's open now. It will be shut then. Some will not be ready. Some in that time of Tribulation will see all the signs. They'll see the sign of the Son of Man in heaven and then they'll go to sleep when they should be preparing. And it is so even today. The lesson is the same for us. Every one of us meets God at the moment of death if we're not alive in that time of His great coming. And it is in that moment when we will be awakened to the unpreparedness and the shock of all shock is those who will stand there as Matthew 7 says and say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name and in Thy name cast out demons and in Thy name done many wonderful works? Then will I profess to them, Depart from Me, I never knew you. Depart from Me, He says, you workers of iniquity."

Frightening...it's frightening. But I believe the church is filled with those kinds of people. Listen to the warning as it comes again in the thirteenth chapter of Luke, the same thing only at this time in another setting all together. Jesus has just said strive to enter in at the narrow gate. And then He says when once the master of the house is risen up, Luke 13:25, and has shut the door and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. And He shall answer and say to you, I know you know from where you are. And then you shall begin to say, We've eaten and drunk in Your presence and Thou hast taught in our streets, but He shall say, I tell you I know you not from where you are, depart from Me all you workers of iniquity, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Well, notice verse 11 in the parable. They're gone. The marriage begins. And it says, "Afterward came also the other virgins saying, Lord, Lord, open to us." They want in. No oil, they want in though. I mean, we're Your friends. We're part of the wedding party...we...we belong to...in the fellowship. We were involved, see.

And so He answered in verse 12 and said, "Truly I say to you, I know you not." It's incomprehensible. There's no second chance. You see, the only sure way to be ready on the unexpected day is to be ready every day...every day.

I don't know, I thought about it the other night when that guy drove down the sidewalk and plowed down a group of people in Westwood. I mean, you never know. It may be your day. The day when the Lord comes or the day when the Lord comes to you and you face the inevitable hour of judgment and you can knock all you want and you will know you are not prepared but to no avail.

And that brings us finally to the warning which makes a lot of sense after the parable. "Watch therefore." Literally, keep on the alert. Be ready. Based upon this, be ready "For you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man comes." You don't know that exact moment. That's true in terms of the Second Coming. Yes, the era we know, immediately following the Tribulation. Yes the signs we know, immediately after the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. But how far, how much

space, how many moments, how many days, how many months? We don't know. But in an hour when men think not. This is the fifth time He has said it in this sermon. You don't know, you don't know, you don't know. So be ready all the time. You see, to be a little late is to be late forever.

In Luke 21 and verse 34 we hear it again. "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be sort of overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." In other words, you're sort of encased in the things of this world, the cares of this life. "So that day come upon you unawares." In other words, you live for this world and you're caught in the moment of confronting God. And it comes, verse 35, like a trap on all them that dwell in the face of the whole earth. So watch ye therefore and pray always that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man.

Don't be caught unawares. Don't be caught unprepared. That's the message of the parable. Alfred Lord Tennyson took this parable and turned it into a song for a Queen Guinevere who had learned too late the cost of sin. Listen to what he wrote.

"Late, late so late and dark the night and chill, Late, late, so late but we can enter still. Too late, too late, you cannot enter now. No light had we for that we do repent. And learning this the bridegroom will relent. Too late, too late, you cannot enter now. No light, so late and dark and chill the night, O let us in that we may find the light. Too late, too late, you cannot enter now. Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet? O let us in though late to kiss His feet. No, no, too late, you cannot enter now."

Let's bow in prayer.

It is a sobering word, our God, that we have heard. The enigma of it all when we sang "Jesus is coming again," when we heard sung of His coming, we shall behold Him, our hearts were filled with overwhelming joy. But now they're filled with fear. And like the Apostle John, thoughts of the Second Coming are sweet in the mouth and bitter in the stomach for on the one hand it means Your glory and our redemption, on the other hand it means judgment and damnation to the unprepared. And, O God, may it be that no one here is deceived, that there are none here who have their torch and not the oil, who are outwardly professing Christ for the approval of men or the salving of their wounded conscience, but who do not hunger and thirst after righteousness in their hearts. I pray for those oil-less torches who have no prayer life, who have no hunger for godliness, who have no love of obedience, who have no passion for the lost, who give evidence of no oil, who are tares, who are shallow soil, weedy soil, who are houses with no foundation. O God, by Thy grace open their hearts, fill the vessel with oil that they may be a part of the joy of the Kingdom celebration of the wedding of the Son and His bride.

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