



“What’s in You?”

- Matthew 25:1-13

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Matthew 25:1-13 *"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 "Now five of them were wise, and five*

were foolish. 3 "Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4 "but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 "But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. 6 "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' 7 "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 "And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 "But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' 10 "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' 12 "But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

When I was a kid, Cracker Jacks and breakfast cereals still had prizes in them. Of course we inevitably went after those prizes the moment we opened the box. We weren't too interested in being patient and waiting until we accidentally stumbled across those incredibly worthless yet coveted prizes. No, we wanted them immediately.

Matthew chapter 24 served to warn us of what is coming in the “last days” of planet earth: our incredibly valuable “prize in the box.” But most of the time we have little interest in the “caramel coated popcorn and peanuts” which reside inside but are uniquely focused on the prize that goes along with it. And yet it seems Christ **is** quite interested in the peripherals and He is unrelenting! For chapter 25 goes on to warn us concerning what life should look like in light of chapter 24's revelations. Again, there is little herein concerning our exit or the “prize of heaven”, but rather more concerning our living in the light of Christ's sure and quite possibly *imminent* return. The issue is not so much our leaving, but our faithfulness in light of that fact.

The world today...*or at least in the west*, seems to have an obsession with prophetic events, the rapture of the church and the Lord's second coming. Certainly all of us that count ourselves true followers of Christ indeed look forward to being with Christ “mono a mono.” All of us that are His will have that day, and there will finally be “no more tears and no more crying.” Revelation 21:4 speaks of a day in which Christ “will wipe every tear from (our) eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” But as we have already discussed, somewhere lost in the hype and the Hollywood is the call to actually live in light of that coming day.

Sadly, replacing holiness and faithfulness today is instead a plethora of end days fictional movies and books that sell by the millions. It seems only a very small number of faithful followers “get it.” Such is not to suggest that we’re dealing with some sort of “secret knowledge” reserved for the elite few. No, what is out there is available to us all. But it does indeed seem that only a relative few have not lost track of “the point.” And that is clearly that we live in the reality of the fact that the “bridegroom is indeed coming.”

There were three stages to a Jewish wedding in that day. The first was the engagement - a formal agreement made by the fathers. The second was betrothal - the ceremony where mutual promises were made. And the third was the actual wedding/marriage - approximately one year later when the bridegroom came at an unexpected time for his bride. (Guzik)

The figure of the bridegroom in this parable story is of course Jesus Christ. The bride’s identity is not mentioned, but one would suppose her to be believing Israel. It is however the virgins, *or bridesmaids*, that are the focus here and they, in their implied purity, is a picture of the greater church.

Yet the key to this story hinges on those lamps...and more specifically, *what is in them*. The lamps represent both our witness and our illumination. Clearly, *we are the lamps*. But what is this oil? The oil is a perfect picture of the Holy Spirit. A picture of the presence of God indwelling inside of us. If we extrapolate logically we know that the burning oil provided light to see where they were going. Yet however nice the lamp may be, without the oil it serves no purpose and we are essentially and ultimately immobilized. Like having the batteries in your flashlight go dead while touring a cave!

Elsewhere in scripture we are entreated to not hide such a light “under a basket.” (Matt 5:15). Meaning, if we have the lamp and we have the oil, then let the light shine! Not just for you, but for everyone that you have contact with every day.

Note the progress of the story. All of these ten virgins set out in the beginning to meet the bridegroom. Each of us no doubt began our journey of faith with the same excited intention! Yet five of the ten failed to follow through with their plan, despite the zeal they possessed in the beginning. The text says that these five were “foolish.” So, while hardly a science, we are here given a scenario of a 50/50 chance. Actually pretty good odds when you consider the “parable of the sower.” For in that account we only get a 25% success rate. 1 out of 4 who make it to maturity. It all sounds like a dangerous path anyway you look at it. We don’t need scriptural parables to tell us that a lot of people who start this race fail to finish, and fail for a lot of different reasons and a lot of different distractions.

We must acknowledge that in the beginning these ten had no discernable differences. They looked the same, and they had the same intentions. The only difference was that five were wise and five were foolish. Foolish in the Greek is “moros” which means “stupid.” It’s where we obviously get our word “moron.”

Throughout scripture we see oil presented as a picture of the Holy Spirit. While each of these ten looked the same as the others, and they all indeed each had their lamps, 5 of them lacked the crucial ingredient by which to bear light. None of it matters if there is no light. “...**now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.**” (Romans 8:9). They had the profession, yet they failed to power that profession with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

One can't help but notice also that everybody was asleep. All ten. But God's grace had not been removed. His hand was still upon them, and thus the call was given. In chapter 24 Jesus was sounding the alarm. Passionately calling mankind to wake up before it's too late. And indeed, all ten got the message. All ten woke up! The bridegroom was coming, indeed He had arrived.

This however, is where the road diverged. For having no oil, the "stupid" ones asked the wise ones to give them some oil. But we must know that this is not possible. For this "oil" that Jesus is referring to cannot be given from one person to another. It must be acquired personally, for the Holy Spirit is designed to regenerate on an individual basis.

Certainly from time to time someone will stroll into our fellowship here with the best of intentions and even an innate excitement at the premise of the coming bridegroom. They like what they see here in this church and want some of that vibe for themselves. Yet many of those same folks will at some point get quite distraught when they seek and even demand in some way or another that the other folks here give them some *their* lamp oil. And however we might love them, we cannot save another. The Holy Spirit is not a commodity that we can transfer to another! That work is reserved for Christ Himself and Christ alone. The oil is indeed available, and we can point you to the broker, but we cannot do more than that. Everyone must get their own.

This scenario happens much more than you might realize. There are many who seek to acquire this Spirit through spiritual "osmosis." Seeking the light that is found in those who possess it, there are those who attempt to take hold of it by being around those in whom He lives. But that is an attempt to "...*sneak over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate,*" as John 10:1 tells us. But that passage tells us that such a person "must surely be a thief and a robber!" Redemption and our spiritual standing is ultimately a deeply personal and individualistic experience. One that cannot be manipulated by another or "fixed" by a priest or pastor like fixing a parking ticket.

In time, just as now, these foolish individuals manifest the very real state of their being, because having a lamp means nothing unless it gives light. Without the Holy Spirit personally filling them, no light will shine. Romans 8:9 says "...*You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.*" Sadly, masses of intellectual believers stand in those shoes today. They believe in the actuality of the bridegroom and even believe that He is coming soon. But they are not ready for Him. Not ready to live, and not ready to die either. They have no lamp oil, and no one out there on the street can see any difference between them and the declared unbeliever because both are standing in the dark. Both are unprepared.

Portraying a truth that is so very important, Jesus paints a picture of a "too late" scenario. Our human tendency is to always believe that there is still time, but the reality is that there is coming a day when *the door will be shut*. Only those who are *practically ready* will be included in the wedding feast. Not philosophically or intellectually or because of "good intentions." It is so very clear that absence of the Holy Spirit's presence will exclude us from participation in the eternal.

Upon rebirth, the Spirit of God comes to us in response to our confession of faith. The act of salvation is innately a surrender to God's redemption, His ownership, His oversight, and His control. Because we often fail to understand the depth and magnitude of salvation and its profound all-encompassing affect upon us, we tend to say the words but reject the premise. We at some point speak a perceived magical "sinner's prayer" and then promptly say no to all of salvation's costs and manifests. In other words, we want salvation, but only as far as the whole heaven and hell scenario goes, and of course the whole "blessings" experience. We aren't really into the whole "God controlling us" thing. This just quite simply says we are not really born again! We have not

surrendered our life! We aren't saved because we said some words, we are saved because we surrendered our lives to a Savior that we believe to be the Messiah...God in flesh...our only true redeemer.

God's plan for us while we wait for Him is that we burn brightly in a world that is so very dark. That reflection begins with what we know as the "**baptism of the Holy Spirit.**" This speaks of a full life immersion into the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. A situation where the Spirit of God "takes the wheel" in our lives and we **go** where He wants to go, **when** He wants to go there, and **how** He wants to get there, and **remains** as long as He wants to stay there. The doctrine of **practical sanctification** is the exercise of that kind of presence. A growing "*setting ourselves apart for the exclusive use of God.*"

Often the question arises "*How do I know if I have really been baptized in the Holy Spirit?*" The answer to that question is really not as complicated as you might think. Is your lamp burning? Is your light shining? Do you illuminate the path of life for those you come into contact with? What do people see when they look at you? A bright and shining lamp? Or just the same old darkness that is offered by the world at large?

Now what happens at the end of this scriptural account is something we had better clearly hear, for our eternity is hanging in the balance! According to this account, without that oil...without the Holy Spirit in us, we not only do not *have Him*, He *does not even know us!* We will be turned away from the wedding banquet and will be lost. We so often think that the control of the Holy Spirit, (*and please note the word "control"...because God is not sharing His glory with anyone*), is an *optional* thing, an optional aspect of Christianity. Something we can negotiate and put off. But we fail to realize that the Holy Spirit is GOD, and His presence and control is the essence of reborn Christianity lived out! The Holy Spirit burning inside you is not an option. It **is** Christianity...

Once again, let those words from Romans roll over you. "**...now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.**" (Romans 8:9). Life in the light of the Holy Spirit will be crazy. It will be unpredictable, scary at times, contrary to our fleshly wants, and fruitful in its pursuits. You will know one thing for sure. And that is what will be going on is not *you*. It is a vivid realization every day you are possessed by Him!

Clearly our Lord is emphasizing the importance of having the Spirit of God in us. Salvation is more than just reciting a sinner's prayer, going to church, or even believing in His existence. **James 2:19 NLT "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!"** We are clearly called to action. Unless we move, we will only be left in the dark. And sadly, a darkness of our own making.

Those who have been born of God really **look** for the coming of Christ. Our text began with the words "... *the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to...*" This is not speaking of some heavenly eternal home, but the realm in which we true believers reside here and now. So this account is for us and for the "*here and now.*" All ten of the bridesmaids were looking for the groom to come. They just weren't all *ready* for the groom to come. There are many professing Christians who have a head knowledge of Christian doctrine but have never really been regenerated by the Spirit of God. With their lips they talk of Christ, but their hearts are from Him.

Did not all ten go forth to meet the Bridegroom? Yes, but that does not make them saved persons. For 5 of them, their profession was empty. Their physical presence but lack of oil and light represents the ordinary lives of unsaved church attenders. There is no reality of salvation. There is externalism but no power, religion but no regeneration, church-ianity but not Christianity, human works but not Spirit-works.

What's inside of **you**?