



**St. Augustine**

"The five wise virgins came, and "went in." How many are ye, my Brethren, in the profession of Christ's Name! let there be among you the five wise, but be not five such persons only. Let there be among you the five wise, belonging to this wisdom of the number five. For the hour will come, and come when we know not. It will come at midnight, Watch ye. Thus did the Gospel close; "Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour." But if we are all to sleep, how shall we watch? Watch with the heart, watch with faith, watch with hope, watch with charity, watch with good works; and then, when thou shalt sleep in thy body, the time will come that thou shalt rise. And when thou shalt have risen, make ready the lamps. Then shall they go out no more, then shall they be renewed with the inner oil of conscience; then shall that Bridegroom fold thee in His spiritual embrace, then shall He bring thee into His House where thou shall never sleep, where thy lamp can never be extinguished. But at present we are in labour, and our lamps flicker amid the winds and temptations of this life; but only let our flame burn strongly, that the wind of temptation may increase the fire, rather than put it out."

~Sermon on Matthew 25

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Around the Word  
**Bible Study**

Trinity, 2015

Parables:  
"Of Oil & Faithfulness"  
Matthew 25:1-13

**Introduction:** Much has happened since the telling of the last parable even though little time has passed. After Jesus (still sitting in the Temple) tells the parable of the wedding feast (Matt. 22:1-14) against the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders, they launch several unsuccessful verbal challenges toward Him which He ultimately follows up by proclaiming "The Seven Woes Against the Pharisees and Scribes" and proclaiming lament over Jerusalem (Matt. 23). The scene changes with Jesus and His disciples leaving the Temple and going up to the Mount of Olives from where they can look back and see the temple. Here the subject changes as well as Jesus begins to tell of what to expect at the end of days. Jesus' final parables paint vivid pictures of what the end shall look like both for the faithful and the unfaithful or, in the case of this parable which begins Matthew 25, the foolish and the wise.

**Opening: Psalm 143**

- <sup>1</sup>Hear my prayer, O LORD;  
give ear to my pleas for | mercy!\*
- In your faithfulness answer me, in your |  
righteousness!
- <sup>2</sup>Enter not into judgment with your | servant,\*  
for no one living is righteous be- | fore  
you.
- <sup>3</sup>For the enemy has pursued my soul;  
he has crushed my life | to the ground;\*
- he has made me sit in darkness like | those  
long dead.
- <sup>4</sup>Therefore my spirit faints with- | in me;\*
- my heart within me | is appalled.
- <sup>5</sup>I remember the days of old;  
I meditate on all that | you have done;\*
- I ponder the work | of your hands.
- <sup>6</sup>I stretch out my | hands to you;\*
- my soul thirsts for you like a | parched  
land.
- <sup>7</sup>Answer me quickly, O LORD!  
My | spirit fails!\*
- Hide not your face from me,  
lest I be like those who go down | to the pit.
- <sup>8</sup>Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast  
love, for in | you I trust.\*
- Make me know the way I should go,  
for to you I lift | up my soul.
- <sup>9</sup>Deliver me from my enemies, | O LORD!\*
- I have fled to you for | refuge!
- <sup>10</sup>Teach me to do your will,  
for you | are my God!\*
- Let your good Spirit lead me on | level  
ground!
- <sup>11</sup>For your name's sake, O LORD, pre- | serve my  
life!\*
- In your righteousness bring my soul out of |  
trouble!
- <sup>12</sup>And in your steadfast love you will cut off

my | enemies,\*  
and you will destroy all the adversaries of  
my soul, for I am your | servant.  
Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\*  
and to the Holy | Spirit;  
as it was in the be- | ginning,\*  
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

**Read Matthew 25:1-13**

**v.1-4: "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps."**

How does this parable continue an already established theme and one which is prevalent in the New Testament? See Matthew 22:1-14, Eph. 5:22-33, especially v. 25 & 32, and Rev. 19:9.

There are ten virgins. Where else does the number ten show up in Scripture? (cf. Ex. 20, Mt. 18:24, Mt. 25:28, Lk. 15:8, Lk. 19:11-27. Count the number of times "God said" is written in Gen 1. Also skim over Ex 7:14-12:32 and note the section headers. Note what day of the month the Lamb is to be slaughtered in Ex. 12:3) What might this indicate concerning the number's significance?

Read Mt. 24:43-51 (esp. v. 45). How does this help us understand the nature of this parable and the picture Jesus paints with His words?

How does 2 Tim. 3:1-5 (esp. v.5) shed more light on how the lack of oil truly distinguishes the foolish from the wise virgins? How are the two

groups similar and what critical fact differentiates them?

**v.5: "As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept."**

What does the bridegroom's delay symbolize? See Hab. 2:3; Luke 18:7; Matt. 24:22, 36 & 44; Heb. 10:36-37; Rev. 6:10.

Look again at the brief parable at the end of Matt. 24. How does the warning against the mindset of the servant in Mt. 24:48ff apply to our current parable and the delay of the bridegroom? How does it admonish us concerning our lives today?

To what can sleep be compared in this parable? (cf. Matt. 9:24, Jn. 11:11-15, 1 Cor. 15:20, 1 Thess. 4:14-15) Given this and what comes next in v.6-10, to what specific event does this parable point? In what way is the event to which this parable points interconnected with that to which the parable of the wedding feast (Matt. 22:1-14) points?

Given the distinction made between the wise and the foolish noted in v.3, does the fact that they all sleep make any difference concerning their preparation? Would anything be different for the 5 foolish had the bridegroom not delayed, or if they had all remained awake?

**v.6-10: "But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut."**

Look back on Mt. 24:29-31. How is Jesus' description of how His coming at the end of time will unfold comparable to the picture painted here in the parable with the bridegroom's arrival?

If sleep is comparable to death, to what end-times event would the virgins' awakening be compared? (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20-21)

When ought the foolish virgins have thought to obtain oil for

## Bible Study

## Parables Matthew 25:1-13

their lamps? How does this, coupled with the wise virgins' inability to share their oil (not out of greed but because they only have what is needed for themselves), help us to understand what the oil represents? How does this demonstrate the importance of our reception of Christ's gifts via the Church? (cf. Rom. 10:8-17, Heb. 10:23-25)

The wise virgins' suggestion to the foolish to go "to the dealers" (the logical place to find oil) is not ill-conceived. This is tantamount to a person being pointed to the Scriptures in order to obtain what is needed to be received into the Kingdom of God. But why is it too late at this point in the story?

**v.11-12: "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us. But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.'"** How does this reflect Rev. 3:20 but in reverse?

How does John 10:1-9 make a point similar

to the one being made in this parable?

How does the conclusion of this parable in the verses above reflect the teaching Jesus gives in the sermon on the Mount earlier in Matthew? (cf. Mt. 7:21-23)

**v.13: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."**

The parable is over and this verse returns us to reality and the stark truth of the matter which Jesus here emphasizes. This is not a summary of the parable but a repetition of Mt 24:42. How do you know that you are prepared to meet the bridegroom when he arrives? (cf. Matt. 19:16-26, Matt. 27:15-50, 1 Pet. 3:18-22)

**Closing: Wake, Awake for Night is Flying (LSB, 516)**

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