

BIBLE STORY: THE PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

Matthew 25:1-13

Central Thoughts

- We are called to be ready for our Lord's Second Coming by faithfully hearing His Word and receiving His Supper.
- Jesus is the Bridegroom of His bride, the Church.
- Oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit who calls us to repentance and faith by the Word of God.
- A lamp is symbolic of the heart.
- The flame that burns is symbolic of the miracle of faith created by the Word and Spirit of God.
- Wisdom is to believe in Christ; Foolishness turns away from Christ in impenitence and unbelief.
- The Christian life is a vigil in the Word of God and prayer, by which we watch and pray for His Second Coming.
- As a bride adores her husband and looks forward to being with him, so are we called to love Jesus and long for His coming so that we might be with Him forever.

Discussion Questions

Note: In Bible times, weddings were very different than they are in our culture. Betrothal was not merely an engagement; betrothal was the binding commitment and pledge of marriage itself. When a man and woman were "betrothed" they were legally married before God in the Old Testament Church, but they were not to live together for a period of months to test the faithfulness of each of them. Were they living a holy life and committed only to each other? This question was put to the test during this time of waiting for the marriage feast where the bridegroom would come for his wife, there would be a great celebration, and the bridegroom and bride would begin to live together in marital bliss. The bride longed to see her bridegroom and the bride's attendants were to make careful preparations so that they were ready for his arrival. This background helps us understand the details of the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins.

Who are the ten virgins?

They are the bridesmaids of the bride.

Who is the bridegroom?

Jesus

Who do the ten virgins represent?

Christians who are waiting for their Lord's return (His Second Coming)

What did the five foolish virgins fail to do?

They took no oil for their lamps

What did the wise virgins do?

They took oil for their lamps

What do the lamps represent?

The hearts of the Christians

What does the oil represent?

The gift of the Holy Spirit

What does the flame in the lamp represent?

The miracle of faith created by the Holy Spirit

How does the oil of the Holy Spirit fill the lamp of our hearts?

The Holy Spirit fills the lamp of our hearts with faith in Jesus by God's Holy Word and Sacraments

Who are the wise virgins?

They are the faithful believers in Christ

What is it to be wise?

To be wise is to continue to hear the preaching of God's Word and to receive His Sacraments so that we believe in Christ and are ready to receive Him when He comes again in glory.

Who are the foolish virgins?

They are Christians who have lost their faith in Christ

What is it to be foolish?

To be foolish is to become lazy about hearing the preaching of God's Word and to stop receiving His Sacraments so that the light of faith goes out in the lamp of the Christian's heart.

What did the ten virgins do when the bridegroom delayed his coming?

They all slumbered and slept

What does it mean that all ten slumbered and slept?

All Christians struggle with doubt, unbelief, and fear. We all have a tendency to be lazy about our need to be watchful and attentive to God's Word while we wait for Jesus' coming.

What awakens the ten virgins from their slumber?

At midnight a cry was heard: "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!"

What does this midnight call represent?

This call to awake from slumber and meet the bridegroom is the call to repentance and faith in Jesus.

How frequently do we hear this call to "awake from slumber" and be ready for the bridegroom's coming?

We hear the call to repentance throughout our lifetime so that we are ready for Jesus' coming.

What is it to be ready for Jesus' coming?

It is to hear His Word, confess your sins, receive His forgiveness, and to look forward to His coming at any moment in repentant faith.

What did the foolish virgins not have when the bridegroom returned?

They did not have the oil of the Holy Spirit, so the lamp of their heart no longer burned with faith in Christ.

Could the foolish virgins buy more oil once the bridegroom had come?

Once the bridegroom came, it was too late for them to receive any more oil for their lamps.

What must we have in our hearts when our Lord returns?

We must have the gift of the Holy Spirit and faith in Christ to be ready for His return.

Why does the bridegroom say to the foolish virgins, "I do not know you!"

They had lost their faith and no longer believed in Him.

What is the final warning Jesus gives to His Christians as they wait for His coming?

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

What does the word "watch" mean?

To "watch" means to be hearing the Word of God and calling out to our Lord in prayer. Hear the Word, confess your sins, and pray to the Lord for His help and strength. We are to live our lives as Christians, not focused upon the things of this world, but focused upon our Lord's Word and Sacraments. We are called to "look up" in faith as if our Lord could return at any moment.

How will we always be prepared for our Lord's coming?

We are prepared when we continue to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and faith in our hearts by hearing our Lord's Word and receiving His Sacraments.

Meditation on the Bible Story

We are called to be the bride of Christ, to love Him, to trust in Him, and to long to be with Him forever. He makes us beautiful through the washing of water and the Word. He speaks words of love to us in the Gospel. He forgives our sins and comforts us. He gives us to eat of His body and to drink of His blood for the forgiveness of sins. Where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation with Jesus. We look forward to His coming. We long for His return. It is wise to believe in Christ, to trust in His Word and to meditate upon His promises. It is foolish to turn away from Him through the laziness of unbelief. We need His Word to keep the oil of the Holy Spirit and the bright light of faith burning in the lamp of our heart. To watch and pray is to hear preaching and His Word. By His Word we are taught to confess our sins, believe in Jesus, and long for His Second Coming in glory.

Prayer on the Bible Story

O Lord Jesus, by Your Word and Spirit, wake us up each day to a life of repentance. Teach us to watch and pray for Your coming, and by Your precious Gospel, keep the oil of the Holy Spirit and faith burning brightly in our hearts, so that we are prepared for Your coming; for You are our blessed Bridegroom who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.



Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins
Matthew 25:1-13