

Matthew 25:1-30 - Empty Lamps and Hidden Treasure

We have spent the past couple weeks going through Jesus' words on the end of times. When he will return, in what manner are we to walk while we wait his return, and what may be some signs to look for...

We ended last week with chapter 24

(paraphrase) - The master coming early to his servant.

We saw last week with Dominic, as Jesus exhorted, that until Christ returns we must be waiting as a humble servant in the household of God, living on mission, awake, and aware to what he is doing.

We are called to be absolutely faithful in our context. Leaning on the hope of Jesus' return, but not living immobilized like we need bunker down and weather the storm until he returns. Rather **actively** loving the people around us as the wise servant does here in chapter 24.

Jesus also gives us a serious warning... He does not give us sentimental cat posters saying "Just hang in there". There is a consequence for those that live as though their master will never return - like the foolish servant who lives lawlessly and selfishly. We will continue to unfold that harsh yet loving warning from Jesus in chapter 25...

The end of chapter 24 ends with a story of the master coming earlier than expected... Chapter 25 begins with him showing up later than expected...

Matthew 25:1-13

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those virgins rose 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, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' 10 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. 11 Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' 12 But he

answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

So Jesus sets the stage here with a story of 10 virgins... Virgins was just another word for a young and unmarried woman. They are all bridesmaids in a wedding. Back in those days, the wedding would be preceded by a parade where the bridesmaids would walk around the city carrying torches around the bridegroom.

This was their only job... To be ready when the groom was ready, and parade him through the city to the wedding venue.

Some of the bridesmaids were smart in saying, "Hey, we should be prepared for anything. No matter what time the bridegroom comes out, we will be ready for him."

The other five bridesmaids assumed that the groom would be ready on their own timeline...

All of these bridesmaids were dressed and ready for the parade! To be showcased around the city. Perhaps this wedding was an important event for them to be seen, noticed, and feel important.

Now, all of these bridesmaids were dressed for the wedding, but not all were ultimately able to attend the wedding. Same appearance, yet half of them were unprepared.

It was not the fact that they were asleep, because both wise and unwise were asleep. That is to communicate the sudden surprise of Jesus coming back... **No, what made them unprepared was the lack of oil in their lamps...**

***DOM: What these bridesmaids lacked was the oil!! They lacked the oil! The fuel that makes fire burn. Jesus said to those who follow and trust in him are the light of the world. And we are the light of the world because we have the oil of God's spirit in us. He is the fuel that awakens our spirit's to be alive. What these bridesmaids lacked was the fuel. Jesus is talking about the person who has not been made alive by the Holy Spirit – the person who has not been born again.**

And so the bridegroom is coming! He's getting closer, and the foolish bridesmaids realize, "OH NO! I have no oil."

So what do they do? They ask to borrow some oil from others... But ultimately, that was impossible.

*Listen: I can benefit greatly from the Holy Spirit working in you... I can be blessed by the gifts of the Spirit you use, the fruit of the Spirit in your life, the words you have to say, by your hospitality, and be encouraged by you exercising your gifts around me. **I can benefit from your faith... But I cannot borrow it.**

I need my own faith, my own relationship with the Spirit, my own oil.

The bridesmaids put us in the face of this really brutal truth - THAT THERE WILL COME A TIME WHEN IT'S TOO LATE.

Too late to really dive deeper, too late to actually take it seriously, too late to respond to the call of God to enter into relationship with him.

And when that time comes... You won't be able to rely on the faith of others...

Are you relying on the Holy Spirit's work in the lives of others? Is your faith dependent on another person? A spouse, a parent? A circumstance? A church?

It is interesting that Jesus uses lack of oil as an example of being unprepared... Because all throughout the Bible oil is used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:13-14 says, "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

To hear the truth, receive the gospel, and believe in Jesus results in God giving us the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee that we are his.

The original language likens it to a stamp or a seal that denotes someone's property. That's the Holy Spirit in our lives. He seals us and continually brings us into the presence of God to experience relationship with him...

And if you have rejected the gospel, or have not allowed it to have its effect on your soul, that means that the Holy Spirit does not dwell in you. NO OIL on your lamp.

Your lamp may look good, you may be in your bridesmaid's gown, you may have your torch, but there is no oil in your lamp. You don't have the Holy Spirit. You may have your bible, you may have the church clothes on, you may know what to say about

Jesus and the right answers to all the Sunday school questions... But your lamp is empty.

When you are surrounded by Christian culture, it is profoundly easy to have the words you say about Jesus be billions of miles away from the actual affect Jesus is having in your life.

No oil in your lamp. **And your lack of relationship with God will result in being shut out from the wedding...**

What these bridesmaids ultimately lacked was a relationship with the groom.

Their unpreparedness with not having oil in their lamps made them unavailable for the precession, therefore making them unavailable to develop a relationship and friendship with the bridegroom.

What we do with the gospel matters...

Jesus continues his point and shifts the emphasis from readiness to faithfulness...

Matthew 25:14-30

14 "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. 17 So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. 18 But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' 21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' 22 And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.' 23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' 24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' 26 But his master answered him,

'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Jesus paints us this picture of a master who gave three of his servants money to take care of while he was away for a while... One servant was given 5 talents, another 2, and another 1.

A talent was worth about 6,000 denarii. Which was about \$1,200. This was more than a servant would make in twenty years back then! So this is a lot of cash! Like, an insane amount... To put this in perspective, the average household income in Ventura is about \$77,000 a year. Let's lowball that and say \$70,000 for math purposes. So let's take that annual income and multiply it by 20 years. That's \$1,400,000.

So imagine your boss comes up to you and says, "Hey, I'm going on a business trip. Don't know when I will be back. Here's 1.4 million dollars. Could you take care of it for me?"

NOTICE: That it was never once about the amount they were given or the amount they accumulated, but about their faithful stewardship of what was given to them.

One servant technically made more money than the other, yet their faithfulness was counted the same. This reveals something about the heart of God. That he measures according to being a "good and faithful servant", not the more "talented and fruitful servant."

EXAMPLE: THE WORST SERMON I EVER HEARD - That pastor had a profoundly inaccurate picture of what heaven means...

Look at the reward these two servants receive - Verse 21 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your Lord.'

Notice how even at the end, the reward for the faithful servant wasn't that he received more money or status... But that he entered into the joy of his Lord...

God has given us all a different measure of gifts, talents, and positions. But at the end, we are not going to compare exploits with one another... In fact, all of the talents are given back to God anyways! The wonderful reality of heaven is that we get to be in the joy of our master.

In the presence of God is the FULLNESS of JOY.

We need to realize two things here before we continue:

1. We will give an account of our lives and what we did with the gospel that was given to us. What we did with the gifts God gave us, but ultimately what we did with the gospel.

2. God is in the business of bringing us into His joy.

This means that it isn't about begrudgingly obeying Jesus because you don't want to be uninvited to the wedding feast.

MARRIAGE ANALOGY

God is in the business of offering joy to us. And our faithfulness to him comes from that place of desiring to enter into the joy of our master.

This is what the third servant was lacking... and was ultimately cast away from.

24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' 26 But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The solution for this servant was to take this spectacular talent that was given to him, and bury it.

Notice here how he doesn't seem to be particularly displeased with this either... I think he was more of the mind of, "Hey, at least I didn't gamble it away or lose you money."

The master, however, uses severe language with a severe consequence attached to it. 'You wicked and slothful servant! Having given his servant a wonderful opportunity to be faithful, comes back to see that he buried his opportunity.

To do nothing... Is something... (Hosea 8:7)

Why is the master so severe?

You may not be antagonistic towards Jesus. In fact, you may love coming to church and learning about him. You love what religion can do for your family or kids. You may have just gone to church your whole life and this is just what you know to be good.

And maybe it's fear, or bitterness, or laziness, or selfishness... But you live your life hearing the gospel yet doing nothing in response.

This servant's sin was similar to the bridesmaids who had no oil... They were given an opportunity to enter into the joy of the wedding feast or the joy of the master, yet lived as though they didn't care.

Think about this for a second... GOD... The creator of heaven and earth. Holy, filled with awe-inspiring power and majesty. Directs the galaxies and causes the instincts of every animal in motion. The God who designed gravity and adorned the mountain range with meadows → Wants and desires you so much that he would set his son a cross and suffered, bled, and died for you.

This is the treasure... And to take that reality and bury it away is ultimately a rejection of the master himself. Who so desperately wants you to enter into joy with him. And not entering into that joy is what we see here in verse 30 **And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'**

The gospel is ultimately entering into the joy of your master. The gospel demands a response... YES or NO

Jesus says in **Revelation 3:15** - I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

Matthew 12:30 - "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."

The gospel is too radical, and Christ's sacrifice too great, for us to not respond.

For those of you who have received the gospel of Christ and said "yes"... Step out! Take risks. Invest in people. Use your talents.

- To those inside and outside the church
- To those at the top and at the bottom
- To those close and far
- BE FAITHFUL

For those of you who have not yet responded to the invitation of Jesus... He is inviting you now. The door is open.

COMMUNION:

Communion lies before you here... And with it, a chance to say yes.

The greatest example of faithfulness and commitment is the cross. God has invested so much of himself so that we may know him. We are here sitting on this invitation. And something so radical requires a response... It requires a YES or NO.

PRAYER TEAM WORSHIP

BENEDICTION:

Philippians 3:7-11

7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the

power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

My exhortation to you is that entering into the joy of your master would surpass anything else hindering you from him.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

"You're welcome to join the Global Prayer Network as they pray for Realities Arab Gulf team up front of the sanctuary. They are praying Eph. 6:17 over the team this week "and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." They're praying that the team would grow in their ability to wield the truth of God's Word in their lives and the lives of people around them and that the truth of God's Word would be revealed to Muslims in the Arab Gulf. Please feel free to join as all are welcome!"