

Title: Wise or Foolish?  
Text: Matthew 25: 1-13  
Date: November 20, 2012  
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

The Lord delivered this sermon teaching believers that as we wait for our Lord's return we must give diligence to trust Christ from a true heart: true faith, true worship, true obedience is a matter of the new heart. Give diligence to keep the heart set on Christ alone.

**Matthew 25: 1: Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.**

The Lord used a marriage custom which was commonly known in the day the Lord walked this earth. The members of the bride's court waited for the bridegroom. At the announcement that he was coming, the bride's maidens all went out, by the light of oil-burning lamps, to meet the bridegroom.

1. The bridegroom represents the Lord Jesus Christ. The true believer is betrothed, engaged, to Christ.
2. The ten virgins represent all who profess to believe on Christ. His elect make up the true church, his bride. The day Christ returns will be our wedding day. We are waiting for Christ the Bridegroom to come to present us to himself. So these ten virgins represent individuals who profess to be the bride of Christ.
3. They are called virgins because the true believer is a saint.
  - Sanctified by God the Father in divine election. This marriage was arranged before the world was made. God the Father chose his elect, his bride, for his Son and betrothed her to his Son, Christ Jesus.
  - Sanctified by the blood of Christ through the word of truth—Ephesians 5: 25:...Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.
  - Sanctified in the new birth by God the Holy Spirit, washed in regeneration, created anew inwardly, in righteousness and true holiness.

**Application:** A true believer is like a virgin engaged to the man she loves, who keeps herself pure for her wedding day. Paul said,

2 Corinthians 11: 2: For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

This fear is real because not all who profess to believe are looking only to Christ. In the visible church—there will always be believers and those who merely have the external form. The Lord sets them both before us in this illustration:

**Matthew 25: 2: And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.**

The five wise virgins represent those truly born of the Spirit, true believers. But the five unwise represent those who have only the outward form but no work performed in the heart.

**Proposition:** Only those made holy in heart by God, robed in the snow white dress of Christ's Righteousness, who wait for Christ in truth faith, shall be kept and shall be ready to meet Christ at his return. Our Lord teaches us the importance of diligently keeping our hearts fixed on Christ alone.

## **I. THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE WISE (TRUE BELIEVER) AND UNWISE (VAIN PROFESSOR.)**

### **They All Had Lamps**

**Matthew 25: 1: Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps.**

The lamp is the outward, the vessel. All who profess to believe on Christ have some things in common externally; all make a public profession of faith, all may be baptized and partake of the Lord's table; all may publicly attend church services, give financial support; all may do good works: maintain moral lives, do works of mercy, be upright and honest in their walk.

### **They Were All Zealous**

**Matthew 25: 1: they all went out to meet the bridegroom--**

Most who merely have a form of religion are truly zealous. But they are zealous for something other than Christ or in addition to Christ...

Romans 10: 2: For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3: For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4: For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Could my zeal no languor no  
Could my tears forever flow  
These for sin could not atone  
Christ must save and Christ alone

### **They All Slept**

**Matthew 25: 5: They all slumbered and slept**

Those with a mere form and profession, unless born of the Spirit of God, sleep the sleep of death—**dead in trespasses and in sins.** But notice, the wise virgins slept, too.

This is not teaching us, as some vainly teach, that if you are an elect child of God, it does not matter whether you ever hear the gospel, are born again and given faith in the Lord, you will still be saved. That is not true! We recognize the exception being those elect unborn or infants who die or the mentally handicapped—which is a mystery, little spoken of in the scriptures—but that is not the norm.

It is good to reject associations and committees choosing missionaries. God alone sends his preachers. And we support them and them only, not by constraint but willingly. But do not let a good motive turn into a bad one by denying the truth that **"it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."**

It is good to stand for the truth that only those regenerated by the Spirit of God can hear the truth but it is not good to deny the truth that **“of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.”**

We must not corrupt the doctrine of divine election for the sake of saying grandmother, who never believed a word of the gospel, is in heaven if she was one of the elect. Or for Mr. Hypothetical--“that poor man on the deserted island” whoever he is, who they tell me if he never heard the gospel is yet in heaven, as long as he was the elect of God. You won’t find that man in scripture.

If God has one elect child in this earth he is of absolute sovereign power to preserve him and send the gospel to him and shall—for this reason: God gave **Christ the Covenant of the people** assuring us that he has the privilege to **“say to the prisoners, Go forth. And to them that sit in darkness, “Show yourselves.”** God will not deny that right to his Son. Will you?

If he has an elect child on an island Christ is able to shipwreck Paul there like he did for the barbarians on the island of Melita. If his elect is on the backside of the desert he will send a Philip to him like he did the Ethiopian Eunuch. Or forbid Paul to go one place and send him to another for one of his Lydia’s; or if he has to he will put his preacher in prison so he can hear the gospel like Christ did Paul for the Philippian jailor. We will not find one person in the scriptures whom God elected unto salvation who God did not call to life by the gospel by grace—not even Enoch who prophesied and is held up as having faith.

**God is in the heavens he hath done whatsoever PLEASSED him—and it PLEASSED God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe—and without faith it is impossible to please God.**

1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 are the scriptures that many corrupt, misunderstanding what the words “wake and sleep” means.

1 Thess. 4: 13: But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, [physically dead] that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words....5: 1: But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.6: Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; [spiritually dead in sins] but let us watch and be sober. 7: For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, [regenerated] be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake [be alive when Christ returns] or sleep, [physically dead as he said in chap 4] we should live together with him.

The good news is that nothing shall be able to separate the believer from the love of God in Christ, not even physical death. When Christ returns those whose bodies sleep in the grave—shall arise and be with Christ the same as those who are alive—awake—when he returns.

So what does our text mean? **Matthew 25: 9: While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.** The Lord is teaching us what Paul was teaching the Thessalonians. The Master shows us to put no trust in our flesh for even the believer slumbers and sleeps in comparison to how watchful we ought to be.

Matthew 26:41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

**Application:** The Lord is teaching us that there is one thing needful—Christ; and one thing that makes the difference—the grace of God working effectually in the heart. The difference is not: in the outward form, not in zeal, not in the flesh. The difference is the Holy Spirit giving the oil of grace in the inner man making our hearts single for Christ our Righteousness alone.

## II. THE DIFFERENCE

**Matthew 25: 3: They that were foolish took their lamps, and took NO OIL with them: 4 But the wise TOOK OIL in their vessels with their lamps.**

### The Unwise Took No Oil

Oil goes inside the lamp—what good is a lamp without oil. We have this treasure in earthen vessels. So oil represents the Spirit, grace in the heart, inward true heart worship—in spirit and in truth. Vain mere professors are only concerned with the outward appearance.

Matthew 23: 25: Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. 26 *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

**Illustration:** It is not difficult to constrain a sinner to take up a form: to walk to the front of the church, to say he wants to give his heart to Jesus, to get him baptized or do good works—but only God the Holy Spirit can persuade a sinner to do nothing and rest in Christ by faith.

You can even persuade a man to believe the doctrine of total depravity, election, predestination, even limited atonement. A man can learn the five points of Calvinism in the letter the same as he can learn the ten commandments in the letter. But to get his mouth shut up in the dust, guilty--to confess he is the one depraved! So depraved that his will can't save him but God must choose whom he will, and make a man willing; so depraved that Christ himself is the only Righteousness God will receive; so depraved it is God the Spirit alone who gives life to his elect, so that sinner has no room to boast; so depraved after conversion that the flesh profits nothing, it is God who preserves his people so that they can never fall away and none can be plucked from his hand.

The problem is the heart. Christ said the outside of the cup may be spotless but within they are full of extortion and excess. Murder, adultery, robbery—these things come from the heart and defile.

### The Wise Took Oil

The wise took oil in their vessels. The true believer is an earthen vessel filled with the Holy Spirit:

Philippians 3: 3: For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Romans 2: 28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Proverbs 4: 23: Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.

If the heart is filled with the oil of gladness by the grace of the Spirit then the outward will follow.

Hebrews 9: 14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Romans 10: 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Matthew 12:35: A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

Keep your heart focused on Christ: Christ and how he satisfied justice for his people; Christ and how he has made you who believe the righteousness of God in him—he is our Righteousness. Study Christ and walk after him who laid down his life in love for God and his brethren making us complete.

### III. WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM CAME IT WAS TOO LATE

**Matthew 25: 6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. 7: Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8: And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9: But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.**

#### The Oil is Free From Christ Only

We cannot get the oil of grace from other believers only Christ: v9: **but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.**

Isaiah 55: 1: Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is* not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is* good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even* the sure mercies of David....6: Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

#### Seek Christ Now

The point of the whole message is seek Christ now! Keep seeking Christ. When Christ returns it will be too late.

**Matthew 25: 10: 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. 11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12: But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.**

Only those made ready in the new heart by the Holy Spirit of life are ready. Only those whose hearts are united to Christ shall be saved. Paul said the one thing he wanted was “to be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ”

**Mark 25: 13: Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.**

**Are you wise or foolish?**

Colossians 3: 1: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Amen!