

The Gospel According to Matthew

Lesson #29 – Ch. 25

Parable of the Ten Virgins – Matthew 25:1-13

Parable of the Talents – Matthew 25:14-30

Judgment of the Gentiles – Matthew 25:31-46

This week's study is about being purposeful about using the goods, gifts, and talents God has given you to grow His Kingdom. It's all about being prepared for whatever the Lord wants to do in your life. It's about being ready and willing for God to move *you* into whatever direction He pleases at any given time. It's about being spiritually equipped and mature as a soldier of Christ to do just about anything He needs you to do for His Kingdom. In living your Christian life in that way, you will be on point for His return. You can leave with no regrets. You will be prepared when that trumpet blows and Christ comes to take you home.

Will you be one of the ones that will be known as the faithful and wise servant, who has faithfully managed the work God has given him? (Matt. 24:45-46) The Lord will come unexpectedly and then there will be no time to get quickly re-group, so as a well prepared soldier, we must be in the trenches, all about the work of God - at all times.

When I was young, we took many vacations up at Bass Lake. We would stay in a rugged, old P.G. & E. cabin for about a week at a time. Those times hold some of my fondest childhood memories. As teenagers, the three of us would beg our parents to each take a friend with us. After much debating and coaxing and promising to be "angels", they would usually oblige. This would then mean they would be taking six teenagers! Now mind you, there were no "suburbans" in those days. Many families only owned one car and we were one of those. We had a small, four door Rambler Sudan. Taking six teenagers with all their stuff was almost impossible in that little rattle trap, but my mom was prepared. She would stuff the car with provisions (and I'm talking enough food for a week, including snacks etc., preparing to cook dinner every night) and my brother would follow up with one or two of us in his car.

I never thought twice about all this until I had my own children and prepared for our own vacations. I don't quite know how she would managed it, but she would get all of us up there in those two cars, with all the food and all the bedding and all the lake equipment, right down to the charcoal for the barbecue. When we arrived, she would instruct us to unload the Rambler and I couldn't believe everything she had packed. It was as if she had the secret ability to vacuum-pack all that stuff in that little trunk. Mary Poppins and her magical "bag" had nothing on my mom. The stuff in there just kept coming!

While we were there, she would cook the best meals and she never seemed to be missing anything. She was prepared. She didn't scrimp on the food, we had delicious meals right down to the homemade fresh berry syrup that she would put on our homemade, fluffy waffles in the morning. She was amazing.

She knew how to be ready. Someone once said, “*I stay ready to keep from getting ready*”, that about sums up my mother. She had the ability it seemed to make something out of nothin’, taking care of the family was her job, and her ministry, her calling and she was dedicated to maintaining her position with diligence and vigilance.

Our job as God’s kids is to be diligent, vigilant soldiers in God’s Kingdom and one of the most important roles of a good soldier is to be prepared. We are to be ready at a moments notice to go wherever our leader (Savior) sends us. That includes being prepared in prayer, in devotion to the Word and being watchful for the Master’s commands.

Let’s pray that he Lord would speak to us this week and remind us of the importance of being prepared and ready, ready to do His will while watchful for His return.

Pray...

“Lord, if we have been unenergetic about spiritual things – we confess our laziness. If it’s been a long while since we have even asked you how You would want to use us in others’ lives, we are sorry for our selfishness and idleness. Change our heart and attitude Lord. Help us to see where we can benefit your Kingdom work and commit our time to join You where you are working” Amen

Parable of the Ten Virgins – Matthew 25:1-13

Read Matthew 25:1-13

1. Jesus will one day set up His heavenly Kingdom here on earth. Scripture says we will have the delight of ruling and reigning with Him. Jesus paints a picture of a Jewish Wedding to make a point about “readiness”. How many virgins in His story went out to meet the Bridegroom? (Matthew 25:1)

2. Out of the ten virgins that were supposedly following Jesus, how many were wise and how many were foolish? V.2 _____

In Jesus’ day, the bridesmaids would stay with the bride until the bridegroom would come calling for her. During the engagement period, you never really knew the exact hour the bridegroom would come calling for his new bride, so her friends would stay around to keep her company. They still do this to this day, and it’s amusing to see how many bridesmaids fall asleep waiting for the bridegroom to come. The bridal party is expected to be ready at any moment, for the bridegroom to come calling. It could be any time day or night. Since they knew this, the bridesmaids would take lamps with them in case the Groom came at dark. If you missed the opportunity to come to the wedding at the time the bridegroom came calling, they shut the doors to the banquet hall and you could not get in.

3. What did the foolish women take with them? What did they forget? (v.3)

a. What did the wise women take with them along with their lamps? (v.4) _____

For the life of me I can't figure out why they wouldn't take any oil with their lamps. What good is an oil lamp without oil? It's of no use, unless you would want to use it as a lethal weapon to beat off a wolf, some other wild animal or intruder! It would be likened to buying a car and never purchasing any fuel for the car. You are proud of your brand new shiny car, but never experience going anywhere in it.

A person who professes to know God, but never spends time in personal devotion to Him can be like that lamp with no oil. In God's Kingdom, they are side-lined - what are they good for? If the light of the Holy Spirit doesn't live inside of them and shine out from their life, they can't be much of a witnessing tool.

“You must be adorned yourself in order to adorn another.”

Scripture says, there will be many professing believers like this in the last days. There will be many that call themselves “Christian”, when in reality they have no idea what that really means. They will look the part on the outside, but there will be no power from within. There is no oil, there is no light.

4. What does Paul tell us about the last days? What will characterize most men and women? 2 Timothy 3:1-4

5. In v.5 of 2 Timothy Ch.3, we find a description of a person professing to be a believer that isn't truly “spirit filled.” How does Paul describe this person's life?

a. What are we called to do as believers when we recognize this? V.5b

That doesn't mean we are to give up on them or quit praying for them, but we can understand that there is no oil in their lamps and that they are without Christ. We are to quit treating them like brothers and sisters in the Lord. *We are to treat them as non-believers.* How do we treat non-believers? That would be the call for us to love them and pray for their salvation, but to not assume they know Christ.

6. In this parable, the bridegroom took longer than anyone had expected. What did the bridesmaids do because they were tired of waiting? Matthew 25:5

7. Have you ever fallen asleep and missed something important? _____

I always seem to fall asleep in the last 15 minutes of a movie or T.V. show. It drives me crazy and Brad loves to keep the ending from me as a joke. I manage to track with the whole story line and then miss the end – the best part. I wake up and say, “Oh shoot – what happened?” And he says, “Sorry, I’m not tellin’ – you gotta stay awake Teri”! Sometimes I don’t find out until days later how the silly thing ended! It’s a silly game we play, keeps me guessing.

We don’t want that to be the case in our spiritual life. I don’t want to “fall-asleep” per say with what God is really doing around me because I’m lulled to sleep with the mundane tasks of life or too busy raising kids, or working, or slowing down with age that I am not involved with the present. In the present – people are dead men/women walking who need Jesus. Every season of life presents its challenges, but God gives us a measure of “duty” that is not too much to bear in the season we are currently in. HE measures our responsibility in direct correlation with what we can handle with the aid of the Holy Spirit. Spiritually it’s a “good-fit”.

8. The disciples were with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His betrayal and crucifixion. Jesus took Peter, James and John there with Him because they were His closets friends and He was deeply distressed. (Matt. 26:36-41) Jesus left them there to stand watch while He went off a little distance away to pray. When He returned He found them – you guessed it – *sleeping*! Wouldn’t it disappoint you out if your best friends knew that you would die a cruel death tomorrow and they couldn’t seem to stay awake to help you through your last evening here on earth? Ouch!

What did Jesus ask Peter when He returned and found Peter drooling on his pillow?
(Matthew 26:40) _____

a. Peter must have been a little embarrassed. Likewise, when the five bridesmaids see the bridegroom coming after His bride, they must have been a little embarrassed too. They would have been all dressed in their wedding attire. Looking at them they looked like they would be in a wedding, but they had no idea what was really happening and when. It was dark and they had no time to go and get prepared. They missed the wedding feast altogether.

Matthew gives us a key to part of the problem as to *why* we seem to be slothful at some of the most important times. What secret does he impart to believers? Matthew 26:41

Israel will know that the King of Kings is coming soon, but they will not be spiritually prepared for it. His coming *will not be what they expected* and it will take them by surprise.

The five foolish bridesmaids without oil come to the five bridesmaids with oil and ask them to give them some of their oil so that they can go and enjoy the wedding feast. The five whose lamps were prepared with oil responded with a “no”. They weren’t being

selfish, or inconsiderate or unwilling to share. The point of the parable is this, “Everyone needs to purchase (ask the Holy Spirit to come into their heart) their own oil.” If the oil in this parable represents the Holy Spirit, then it’s measured to each person individually. You cannot count on the oil of others to save you.

Barclay says, “You cannot borrow a relationship with God when you need one.”

The wise weren’t selfish; they were helpless to help them. The saved cannot become Saviors. It is not within their power to do so.

9. Its so hard not to try and *be the Holy Spirit* to those you know and love, who are without Christ, or to those with Christ that are making poor choices. We want so desperately to try and deposit the Holy Spirit (oil) in their hearts, but the only way they can have the Holy Spirit for themselves, is for them to acknowledge their sin problem and their need for a Savior and ask Him to be apart of their life.

a. Who have you been trying to “save” lately? _____
Is it working? _____

b. Who have you been trying to rescue from the fall-out of a multitude of bad decisions?

(No need to share names out loud.)
Share with your group.

10. What do you think might be more effective? _____

11. Do you think helping them out of a bind works towards making them more responsible? _____

Did you know that when you take responsibility for people, you take responsibility from people.

If we continually take responsibility from people – they will never learn to be responsible for themselves.

12. While the foolish bridesmaids left to go and buy oil, the bridegroom came (v.10) the others went into the wedding feast and the fools were shut out, the doors were closed and that was that. This is a representation of the end of the Tribulation - the end of grace, when Jesus comes to set up His Kingdom here on earth. All those whose names aren’t written in His Book of Remembrance, all those who continued to deny Him through the Tribulation, will be cast into hell for eternity, no more chances; the door to salvation will be permanently shut.

a. When the virgins came back and realized they missed the bridegroom's appearing, "What did they say"? (Matt. 25:11)

b. What was the answer they received? (Matt. 25:12)

I'm sure when the rains came in the time of Noah, the people who had mocked Noah days before for building an ark, rushed there to it, hoping to be let in, beating on the door with all their might. Can you imagine the water rising and the people and their families trying to run to the highest hill or tallest objects to avoid being overwhelmed by the consuming flood waters? While they ran they must have been thinking how wrong they were to deny the Lord and to reject His invitation to come to Him. How long could the weakest one tread water? What a scary thing to be standing in the judgment place of a righteous God.

c. Who shut the door of the ark? Genesis 7:16 _____

I love that little verse in scripture. It's a verse filled with so much expression of the Father's love for His special ones. God knew how hard it would be for Noah to stay in the ark and keep the door closed. He knew Noah would be able to hear the cries of the people as they slid under the waves. God knew that Noah would want to try and save them, but it wasn't his place, so God Himself shut the door

I believe God shut the door for two reasons, so that Noah and his loved ones would be secure and safe and so that Noah couldn't open the door for the unbelievers who wouldn't put their trust in the Lord God of Israel. The hand of God shut the door and no one would be able to open it until the appropriate time. The hand that shut the door was the hand of justice and righteousness. It is the same hand of God that most often shows mercy, compassion, unrelenting love and abundant grace.

13. We never know what day we will face death. One lesson we can take from this parable is the call to be prepared. As believers, we won't have to go through the tribulation, but we still have the same calling to be alert and watchful for the coming of the Lord.

a. Does anyone know when the Lord will come again? Does anyone know when the rapture will take place? (Matt. 24:36; Matt. 25:13) _____

I don't understand people believe that God gave them through a special revelation, a date of His return - when scripture states that no one knows that day except our Father in heaven. That means that Jesus Christ Himself, the Son who is coming to get us, doesn't even know the day or hour! What makes them believe that God would let them in on that revelation when God the Father hasn't even revealed that hour to His only Son, Jesus Christ? Many have made their predictions, but all have been wrong so far.

Parable of the Talents – Matthew 25:14-30

Please read Matthew 25:14-30

In this parable, the Master called his servants together and delivered his goods to them. To one he gave five talents, to one two talents and to the last, he gave one talent. He immediately went on a road trip. The man who received five talents went and doubled his talents, the man who had received two talents went and doubled his talents but the one who received just one talent, did nothing with it, worse yet – he buried the Master’s money.

When the Master returned, those who had doubled their talents were rewarded by their Master.

14. What was the Master’s remark to the servants who were trustworthy with what their Master had given them? (Matt. 25:21)

15. What was their reward for being faithful over the few things their Master had given them? (Matt. 25:21b) _____

(There are two things here)

A faithful servant’s reward is more responsibility. Did you get that? If you do a job well for the Lord, He will reward you with a greater scope of ministry – more to serve – more to care for – more influence.

When you begin to live your life in Christ faithfully, with whatever He calls you to do, He will reward you, not necessarily with more money or bless you with more material possessions, although that may occur but He will reward you with more **opportunities!**

The reward for a job well done for the Lord - is more jobs!

16. What has the Lord entrusted into your care today? What ministry has He trusted you with? How is the job coming along? Can you say you are giving it 100%?

a. If you are a parent today, you have the very important calling to raise your children to know Christ. Are you doing what you need to do *today* to do that? I didn’t ask you if your children have all responded the way you wished they would, because that is not our responsibility. Like mentioned earlier in this lesson, we cannot be their Savior, we can parent and point them to Jesus Christ as the one who can save them. The decision will be theirs personally. We can be encouraged that with a faithful example to follow, they will all claim Him as their Lord one day.

17. What was it that stopped the man with the “one talent” from using what his Master had given him? (Matt. 25:25)

This is a good truth to remember – “What we don’t use for the Lord, we are in danger of losing.” Fear stops people from stepping out and getting involved with ministry. Fear keeps us STUCK. Therefore; fear stops people from walking in the will of God for their lives.

18. What other reason can we see in scripture that might have caused this wicked servant not to use what his Master had given him? (Matt. 25:24)

Many people see God this way. Many people believe that God is a difficult God to live for. They see Him as a hard task-master. In reality – He is the exact opposite! Satan would love to convince people of this, for who would want to follow a God that you are afraid of? Who would serve a God who is cruel in nature? The opposite is true and all believers who have a genuine personal relationship with God can testify of this. He is a God full of compassion and mercy, longsuffering and patience. He is a God of justice and His grace does not go forever, and eventually He will have to judge wickedness and sin, but He will first give people opportunity after opportunity to accept Him as Savior.

19. The unfaithful servant said it was “fear” that stopped him from using the talent that God had given him, but the Master called it something else. What did he call it? (Matt. 25:26)

Vince Lombardi, one of the greatest football coaches of all time, said this, “It’s time for us to stand up and cheer for the doer- the achiever- the one who recognizes the challenge and does something about it.”

To be useful to the Lord, you will have to be willing to go on an adventure with Him.

Let’s cheer for the “DOERS”!

Even the bible challenges us to be “doers of the Word and not “hearers only.

It appears that the Lord isn’t willing to allow those opportunities and talents to be wasted. He will take them from the one not using them and give them to the one who will seize the opportunity.

20. Are there gifts that God has given *you* that you are too afraid to step out and use? What have you been too afraid to let God do in you? What talent have you sentenced “too insignificant” for God to use in you?

Thoughts:

Oh – child of God – don't let divine opportunities pass you by because of fear.

With practice, these gifts and talents will mature and get better.

a. I want you to make a list of God-given gifts that you know God has given you to use.

b. Which ones are you actively using today? _____

c. Which ones have been buried for awhile? _____

Sometimes God will use us in an area of ministry for a season, and then He might bring something else your way to get involved with for another season. The main thing is not what you are doing, but that you are in the right place, serving where He intends you to serve today.

d. Do you feel the Holy Spirit prompting you to move out in faith and use a talent or gift? Share with your group.

Judgment of the Gentiles – Matthew 25:31-46

Read Matthew 25:31-46

I want to be one of the ones on God's right, standing with the other sheep. If goats are to the left, I want to be on the right! Don't you?

Those on His right, He knows by name. Those standing on the right have their names written in His Remembrance Book. Those on the right He calls, sons and daughters...

Scripture says He has been preparing a place for those who will be standing on His right hand side of the throne of glory.

21. Anything God the creator makes is good. How long has he been preparing a place for those He calls His own? Matthew 25:34

Now, if He can create the whole world and all it's beauty, everything that exists in it down to the tiny micro-organism, in just 7 days – can you imagine what He has created in a couple of thousand of years? I can't wait to see it; I think heaven is going to blow our minds!

22. As believers, what are we to do for our brothers? Matthew 25:35-40

We are never to forget the poor, the sick, the ones in prison. When we minister to these, we minister to Jesus Himself. (v.40)

Judgment will come to those who have no righteousness in God's eyes. The believer is righteous only because they have accepted the blood of Jesus Christ and His blood is covering their sin, but the unbeliever has no righteousness in himself and no covering for sin. The sin will need to be judged and for that he will be sent away to everlasting punishment. (v.46)

23. If you have received Christ as your Savior, you are righteous before God. That is the greatest gift we have ever received and never deserved.
Look at these verses and how they describe the righteous children of God.

a. Daniel 12:1-3

b. Matthew 13:43

You will be a shining light in the Kingdom of you heavenly Father! "He who has ears let him hear"! The righteous will shine forth as the sun!

24. The way we serve our king is by serving His people. I don't mean to serve only "saved people" but ALL people. Many come into the kingdom by random acts of love. These acts of love go noticed and then follows a curiosity about the love shown and where it comes from. This is then our opportunity to share a message about a Savior that loved so much he took care of the sins of the world. The gospel shines forth with acts of unconditional love.

Who could benefit spiritually from some of your personal time?

Pray about this opportunity to love in Jesus name. Don't miss this window of divine opportunity.

Wrapping it up and making it personal

The challenge to you this week is to step out and live that life of adventure with the Lord. If every person in the Body of Christ would be brave enough and hard working enough to use the gifts and talents that God had intended them to use, no one in the body would be lacking a thing!

You are the only one that can answer the question posed in the lesson this week – “Are you neglecting a talent or gift that God has given you”? What is your excuse for keeping it buried?

Time is short, eternity is long and needs are great. Decide today that you will throw caution to the wind and go on an adventure with the Master – your creator that understands you better than anyone else in the world – He would never require of you more than you were able to handle or He would never ask of you anything you were incapable of doing!

Sometimes being wise is knowing what to overlook. Overlook the fear and the “what-ifs” and step out and answer the call and challenge that the Lord has placed before you.

May the Lord gently give you the place to begin....Amen

