

Matt 25.1-30 – Ready and Faithful when Christ comes

Clint Le Page

Main Point – Be ready and live faithfully, for when Christ comes there'll be big consequences

If you're preparing and getting **ready for a wedding**, there's always so much to do. Whether you're a parent, groom, maid of honour, or the bride, there's so much to get ready. **(SLIDE)**

From a location, photos, flowers, invitations; catering, cake, cars, clothes; gifts, speeches, rings; on top of preparing for the service and married life together.-----

The word 'Advent' means coming. And the coming of Wedding requires much preparation to be ready.-----

The coming of a **flood** also requires, sadly, so much preparation to get ready too.

We've seen this on our screens haven't we? **(SLIDE)**

But so many Victorians have lived it.

People getting ready with sandbags and levies, trying to move to higher ground; put things higher up, or get to safety.-----

And it's been devastating for so many.-----

Preparing for things, getting ready for things, matters.-----

And it really matters to be ready for the coming of Christ.-----

(SLIDE) Today we finish our series through Matthew 21-25, and Lord willing we'll pick it up again next year in the lead up to Easter.

Next week we'll celebrate his first coming, but today we're continuing to think about how to get ready for the Return of the King.---

We heard last week in Matthew 24.44 that Jesus will come when he's not expected.

And ch 24 finished with a sober warning that those servants who are not found doing what was expected of them, but living selfishly, will be judged.-----

Now we come to the **Parable of the 10 Virgins, and my first point, Readiness. (SLIDE)**

Jesus tells this parable, this story, to teach something about the kingdom of heaven, the Kingdom of God -

Particularly WHO gets to enter God's Kingdom when Christ comes.

Jesus says it will be like 'ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom'.

They're 10 young bridesmaids.

We don't know very much about **first century wedding practices**.

But it seems that after the wedding ceremony the feasting, which could last for days or even a week, was held at the groom's house.

The bride and her bridesmaids waited for the groom to arrive, often into the night. And the bridesmaids were to go out and meet the groom, and with their lamps or torches, form a procession as they come in for the celebrations.-----

In this case the 10 bridesmaids have all got their lamps, but only 5 of them are wise, and have brought jars of oil as well.

Now these lamps could be like torches, **(SLIDE)** where you have rags soaked in olive oil that are wrapped around the head of a stick.

In that case you need extra oil you can soak the rags in, to keep the fire burning.----

Or these lamps are a bit like kerosene lanterns: You have a little vessel, with a wick in it that burns.

Then you need extra oil to top up your vessel with.

However it worked, the point is, **v4**, only the wise virgins took extra oil with them.

Only they were sensible, prudent and had prepared for the future.-----

The foolish virgins were unprepared, with no readiness.-----

The word 'foolish' can mean 'stupid', or totally careless.

They have a, 'It'll be ok', 'she'll-be-right-mate' attitude.

Maybe you're like that when it comes to meeting God one day?-----

But the bridesmaids not preparing for a long wait was short-sighted n' inexcusable.---

And in v5 the groom is long delayed.

We don't know why, but it gives the bridesmaids a chance to sleep.

Jesus does not blame them for sleeping, and seeing the celebrations would go on for days it was likely helpful. And some at least were ready for the groom's arrival.-----

The groom arrives in the middle of the night, n' someone on watch cries out: 'He's here! Come out to meet him.'----

And now we see, **point 2, What results; what happens.**

The bridesmaids arise and ready their lamps.

For the foolish ones, whether their flames are going out or they're trying to light them, the point is, they've run out of oil, and came unprepared.

The fools ask the wise for some of their oil and are told, '**No, there won't be enough' for all of us.**

They're told to head off to get some. Maybe there was 24hr shopping back then. 😊

It's been suggested that the wise virgins should have been kind and shared their oil.

But firstly, the wise virgins knew that they needed to ensure that the procession was finished.

It would be a shameful if all the lamps went out.

Secondly, the point of the parable is readiness, we must be ready.-----

Thirdly, it reminds us, that what brings salvation and entry into God's kingdom, cannot be shared with others.

Our faith, or the obedience that results from it, cannot be shared with others.-----

So the foolish virgins leave to find oil, meanwhile the procession occurs, everyone enters the house for the wedding feast, and the door is shut.

They return when it's too late and cry out "**Master, master**", or "**Lord, Lord**", 'open the door to us.'

Despite the urgency how does the Bridegroom reply?-----

'Truly I tell you, I don't know you'.-----

Their failure to be ready meant they were excluded.

They excluded themselves by not being ready.

What a devastating reply to people who'd expected to be centre-stage at the feast.---

This reply is similar to what Jesus says in **Matt 7.21,(SLIDE)** "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?' ²³ Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!' -----

Jesus says, doing miracles or great deeds doesn't mean you're saved.

Likewise, attending church doesn't ensure you'll be welcomed into the heavenly banquet.-----

Being here is not enough.

Saying you're a Christian isn't enough.

Being nice isn't enough.-----

Even a desire to get to heaven isn't enough.----

Because pleading "Lord, Lord, let me in", is not enough.

We must be ready.

And those who are not ready will be shut out of the banquet; shut out of heaven.---

And experience hell – as we'll see in the next parable.-----

If you wish to enter heaven and be with God and his people, Be ready!-----

V13 the message of the parable is: 'be alert, because you don't know either the day or the hour.'

Being 'alert' speaks of a constant readiness.-----

Imagine if your friend had written-off their car hitting a kangaroo last week.-----

Now you find yourself driving along a road in the country at dusk, and you pass a sign(**SLIDE**) - warning of kangaroos over the next 5 kms.-----

I guarantee you'd have your eyes open, mind engaged, be alert n' ready.-----

And in v10 it was those who were ready who went into the feast.-----

In Matthew 22 we thought about how heaven will be like a wedding banquet, and we need to accept the invitation and come.

Now Jesus is saying we need to be ready for his coming, even if it's a long wait.

The trouble is, when it comes to Jesus returning, some people think there'll always be **more time**, and "it'll be ok".(SLIDE)

I've spoken to 18 yr old's and 30+ yr old's, who think there'll always be more time -

"Jesus isn't coming yet, and I'm not going to die for years, so I don't need to become a Christian now"; "I don't need to follow Jesus yet".

"I'll live for selfish pleasure now / get rich now, and repent later".-----

But Jesus will come when it's not expected; and you can die at 16, 26 as well as 86, we just don't know. So we need to be ready now.-----

You need to turn away from ruling your own life now.

Turn to Jesus to Save you. Trust him in your heart, and live with Him as your Lord.---

For if you don't, and he comes, you'll be told – 'Truly, I don't know you'.-----

We thought earlier about how people get ready for a wedding or a flood.

The last couple of weeks in Matt **24** we were told to be ready for King Jesus' return by persevering in trusting him, even in suffering.

And by being a faithful and wise servant, **24v45**, not living selfishly.

Jesus expands on this, and how to be ready, in the **next parable, Point 3, Responsibilities.(SLIDE)**

Jesus says in **v14**, 'it is just like a man about to go on a journey'.----

And Jesus was about to go on a journey, wasn't he – to the cross. Then back from the dead, and to his Father in heaven.-----

A man was about to go on a journey so he called his servants and entrusted his possessions to them.

'Servants' is literally slaves, so a slave is to obey.

A slave is obligated to fulfil their responsibilities, and isn't free to do as they want.-----

Romans ch6(SLIDE) says believers have been set free from slavery to sin, and that we're now slaves to God; we're obligated to serve God.-----

And yet, in that, in living God's way, is actually perfect freedom, eternal life, and true joy.-----

Back in Matt **25.15**, Depending on their ability one servant got 5 talents, another 2 and another 1.-----

A 'talent' was a weight,(SLIDE) likely about 35kg of gold or silver coins, so it's a lot.

Maybe you could think of this as \$5 million, \$2 million and \$1 million.-----

What we mean by 'talent' - a skill, or gift, comes from this word.-----

So the first servant put his 5 talents of money to work.

Maybe he trades the money, invests it, or starts a business.

He earns 5 more, doubling the amount.

The one given 2 doubles what he has as well.

The third person digs a hole and buries his talent in the ground.-----

These talents represent responsibilities the Lord gives his followers, based on our varied abilities, and opportunities, and capacities.-----

As Christ's servants, our talent, could be the money and wealth God has given us.

It can be our gifts, our energy, our time.-----

Your strength and ability to serve others, maybe cook or clean; speak or share the Gospel; or teach, pray, give, visit, listen, love.

It's what God has given you in your gifts, resources, abilities, that you can serve him with.

So you using your "talent" or fulfilling your responsibilities might include:

Loving your wife and supporting your family.

It might be respecting your husband in your words n' attitudes, even when he's not worthy of it.

Or patience with your child, or obeying your parents.-----

It could be Running your business ethically.

Loving your work colleagues, with your time, or inviting them to Carols.
It might be you hanging in there serving at church, in cleaning, creche, AV,
or music, or leading your group, even when tired.-----

The question is How are we using what God has given us?-----
Are we blessing others with what God has given us?-----
Is it bearing fruit in the lives of people around us?-----
So using our talents is any service of Christ and faithful obedience to him.-----
While we wait for the Master to come, it's a time for service.

Romans 12 speaks about this(**SLIDE**).-----
Notice the words, generously, cheerfully; serving and sharing with zeal & love.-----
Here we see that loving service of others is the mark of how we relate to each other.
Selfless serving is the way Jesus walked, so it is the way that his people walk.
He lovingly served others, even us, so we his body, lovingly serve others.-----
How does Christ want you to serve him?-----
In your circumstances how does God want you to respond?-----

So the Master has gone away, left his servants to get on with the work he entrusted to them,
fulfill the responsibilities given to them.

And 4th point, now we see What Results.(SLIDE)

V19, After a long time, like with the long wait for the bridegroom, our long wait for Christ, the
master comes and wants to settle things.

The servant given 5 talents gives the 10 back to the master.

The servant given 2, gives 4 back to the master.

And look what's said to both of them equally – **v21,23**

'Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things;
I will put you in charge of many things. Share your Master's joy.'-----
Come, Enter into the joy of your Lord.-----

To be faithful speaks of being one who can be trusted.

It speaks of your character, integrity, your diligence and work for your Lord.-----

And so we get ready for Christ's second coming, by serving him faithfully, with what he has
given us now:

Money, gifts, talents, time, energy– all lived to faithfully serve Christ & others.

The varying degrees of gifting, or material blessing, are not the issue.

Don't go comparing yourself with others.

Faithfulness with what you've been given is what your Lord seeks.-----

And I hope that the prospect of hearing those words, "Well done good and faithful servant"
from our Master, will motivate you in living for Christ.-----

Pleasing our Saviour & Lord will be a glorious reward.-----

I don't know what the differing responsibilities will be in heaven. (cf. Lk 19.11ff)

But we'll all be sharing in and experiencing the joy of the Lord.

Experiencing JOY in God's presence, forever, will be wonderful & make it all worth it.-----

But there's a **different result for the third servant**, with his 1 talent.

For his behaviour all flows from a different heart attitude.-----

See how in **v24&5** he mixes insults with excuses - I know you're a harsh man, gathering
unjustly, taking what you didn't work for.-----

Remember how in **Exodus ch1**, the Egyptian Pharaoh, forced the slaves to make bricks,
then make bricks after gathering straw, and ruled ruthlessly.

But the Lord Jesus, is nothing like that.-----

God is not harsh or unjust.-----

But maybe honestly, you're angry at God too, and feel he's not been fair with you?---

Or you're afraid of God and his punishment?-----

In **v26** the master says, if you really feared my harsh response, you'd have done what I'd
asked, and at least earned interest from the bank.

This man refuses to serve the master, and use what he'd been given.-----

And the result is, he's declared to be an evil and lazy servant.-----
 So the real problem is with the servant not the master.
 He'd not trusted n' obeyed his master's word, not been faithful.-----
 So sin isn't just disobeying God's laws n' doing bad things, it's not doing the good you should have done.----- Can you see that here?-----
 In **v28** this man loses what he had.
 And that good-for-nothing or useless servant is thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 Same consequence and punishment as at the end of ch24.-----
 Being shut out of heaven, being in hell, will mean weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 That describes an experience of horrible pain and torment and sadness.-----
 And what a contrast with the faithful servants.
 It's a total contrast – joy vs pain, happiness vs sadness, being fulfilled vs grieved.-----

This evil and good-for-nothing servant reminds me of the hypocritical Pharisees.
 Or some people today who say they're Christian but don't live like it at all.---
 We are saved by faith alone, but our faith is shown by our works, our lives.-----
 Jesus wants us to hear this warning and get ready for his return by living faithfully.---
 That will look different for different people.
 As Neil said last week, the work God asks us to do will depend on where we are in life, whether single or married, sick or well, the health of our dependents, our energy or schedule.
 Many factors affect our ability to serve God.
 We have different roles at church and different gifts.
 But we're all called to love our neighbours, and to live godly lives, not selfish lives.
 We are to be faithful in this.-----
 Maybe you're a person who is serving faithfully, as you're able, to the glory of God.
 And may God sustain and encourage you.-----
 Or maybe some of us are lazy.
 I think there's too many teenagers, and adults, who don't serve faithfully cos it takes effort.---

Similar to the lazy, good-for-nothing servant, maybe, you're serving Christ sometimes, but also living lots for your own **comfort**.-----
 Some church-goers spend money they have, or don't have, to buy cars, clothes, houses, handbags, trips, trinkets, machines, massages – all to make them more comfortable.
 Some are sleeping in on Sunday mornings because their beds are more comfortable than the seats at church. Some are avoiding difficult but necessary conversations because conflict makes them uncomfortable.
 Some are dodging volunteering because it's outside their comfort zone.
 It's hard to find a person who isn't struggling with the heart-idol of comfort.
 I'm guilty too.-----
 But(**SLIDE**) if we're looking for True comfort, we will only find it in Jesus Christ.
 It isn't the same comfort you feel soaking in a bathtub, napping on the couch, or munching on a donut. This comfort is better. Richer. Deeper.
 It's a soul-permeating, heart-soothing and lasting sense of comfort.
 It doesn't depend on your circumstances. It doesn't depend on your living conditions.
 It doesn't depend on your health, wealth or relationships. It doesn't depend on anything in this world.
 It depends on what happened over 2000 yrs ago. Because Christ lived a perfectly sinless life and died an infinitely uncomfortable death on a cross, we can experience comfort from above in the midst of our uncomfortable lives now.
 And it depends on Christ. You must believe in Christ and surrender your life to him.
 [Steve Hoppe, Sipping Saltwater]
 Then because we've been deeply comforted, and loved and blessed by Christ, we keep surrendering to him.
 And we express our surrendering, in serving him.-----

We do well to remember **1 Cor 15:58.(SLIDE)** ‘Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.’-----

The fruits that result are up to the Lord.

Whatever talents and responsibilities you’ve been given, Be faithful.-----

There’ll be great or grievous consequences for everyone when Christ the King returns.

So be ready by living faithfully, so that you may hear, ‘Well done good and faithful servant.---

- Come and share your master’s joy.”-----

Let’s pray.