

Sunday, January 14, 2018

Matthew 25:1-13

## KEEP AWAKE AND WATCH

I. The fateful contrast

II. The faithful character

## INTRODUCTION

You know, there is a beautiful song that should characterize us Christians & it goes like this.

- “I am waiting, I am waiting, /For the star that brings the day: When the night of sin shall vanish, /And shadows melt away.
- “I am waiting, I am waiting, /For the beauteous King of the day: For the Chiefest of 10 thousand, /For the Life, the Truth, the Way.
- “I am waiting, I am waiting for the morning, /When the beauteous day is dawning. I am waiting for the morning, /For the golden spires of the day.
- “Lo He comes! See the King draws near; /Zion, shout! ‘the Lord is near!’”

Well, we have now gone through another advent season to properly prepare for **Christmas**.

- & we have celebrated it again for another year, & have been reminded that Jesus Christ has come to be our Savior & Lord.
- now that must also cause us to look forward in eager anticipation, in total trust, & in life-encompassing obedience to His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.
  - for after all, the fact Jesus came 1<sup>st</sup> time, as God promised, surely means He will come again a 2<sup>nd</sup> time, as God also says in Bible.
- &, we if have properly celebrated Christmas by receiving in faith & obedience as our only Savior & Lord at His 1<sup>st</sup> coming.
  - then we will be ready for Him when He comes back to take us to eternal glory to be with Him.

Th'fore our Lord command in **Matt.25:13**: “Keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour” when He will return.

- & with the parable He told in this chapter about 10 girls, He commands us to be ready.
  - & He informs & instructs us on how we must do that.
- we consider then Jesus’ command to KEEP AWAKE AND WATCH.
  - & to see what that means we 1<sup>st</sup> consider the fateful contrast regarding Jesus’ command.
  - & 2<sup>nd</sup> the faithful character in the way we must do what He says.

## I. THE FATEFUL CONTRAST

Well, Jesus concludes His sermon in **Matt.24** about His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming & the indicators God has put in history to prepare us for it with the story of **10 girls** who were invited to a wedding.

- now to understand what He is saying we must see it was the custom in those days that bridegroom would go to bride's home for the wedding feast.
- the 10 girls, friends of bride, were to wait near her house for the coming of the groom.
  - & when they saw him coming, they were to go & meet him with brightly burning lamps to escort him with fanfare & honor into bride's home.

And so the **10 girls** took their lamps & went to where they were to wait for the groom.

- now it seems 5 of them got so involved in the festivities of the day that they forgot that their primary duty was to welcome & honor the bridegroom.
  - th'fore they didn't bring sufficient oil to keep their lamps burning through the long wait.
- & so after awhile their lamps went out &, with no more oil, they couldn't light their lamps when they heard the bridegroom was coming.
  - & while they were away trying to find more oil, the groom came.
  - & they were locked out of the wedding feast.

But the other **5 girls** had remembered their duty: that they were to meet & escort bridegroom.

- th'fore they came prepared with sufficient oil for the long wait.
- & when the groom finally came, they were ready with burning lamps & went with him into the feast.

Well, Jesus uses this **parable** as a practical application to His teachings about His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

- that we must be faithful in our Christian faith & life, & in His work so that we are constantly ready for His return when His kingdom of grace will come with all its glory.
- & when He makes that final distinction between His own & those not wanting Him.

Now to get that point across, He tells this **parable** to indicate that is the way it will be when He comes again at the end of time.

- Jesus will be like a bridegroom, who will come & take His bride, the Church, to His home in heaven.
  - & there in eternal glory it will be like a marriage feast when heaven & earth are perfectly united in that renewed universe described in Rev.21.
- & so, with this symbol of a marriage feast, our Lord is picturing His return as a time of great joy for those who faithfully believe in Him & live for Him.
  - but for the rest, it will be a time of despair; being shut out from God's presence eternally.

Well, it is those 2 types of people that Jesus is pointing out with His **parable**.

- you see, the 10 girls represent the Church here on earth & indicate it is made up of 2 kinds of persons:
  - the wise & the foolish; the prepared & unprepared.
- & yet both, as we see with those girls are the same in so many ways.

For they all regard & claim themselves to be friends of the bride & groom or followers of Jesus & members of His Church.

- they all have lamps & intend to meet & escort the groom as they look for His coming.
- they all expect to participate in his marriage feast.
- & they all fall asleep as they wait & watch for a long time.

Now it should be noted here that the sleep of the **10 girls** emphasize the fact that we don't know how long the Lord will delay His return.

- but it will come someday, Scripture says, when everybody will have to meet Him, either as those ready in true faith & godly obedience to welcome & honor & praise Him.
  - or else as those without real love for Him.
- th'fore Lord is telling us we had better not sleep with a false sense of security thinking we are ready while we are still in sin.
  - for then we will be caught off guard when He comes back & we will be lost eternally.

Instead, because we don't know when that will happen, we must always live for Him.

- & have done & be doing all there is to be prepared to meet Him.
- then with nothing more to do, when we do fall asleep we are still ready when the shout finally comes: "He is here!"

But note too another very important truth: the **10 girls** weren't the same in everything.

- for Jesus points out they were different in a real, basic sense that counts for eternity so that in the end what happens to them isn't the same.
- 5 of the girls He says were foolish because they thought they were ready so that they slept with a false sense that everything was a-okay.

For after all, they had brought the necessary lamps, however there wasn't enough oil to keep them burning to be able to meet the bridegroom.

- & so He when did finally arrive, they woke to find their lamps going out with no more oil so that they couldn't meet the groom.
- instead they had to hurry away to find oil, but then it was too late.
  - the bridegroom came, & they weren't there to enter the wedding feast with Him.
  - the door was closed, & they weren't allowed in.
- all because the groom didn't really know them, for they weren't in His marriage procession that showed Him honor with brightly, burning lamps.

Now these **5 foolish** girls picture those who confess they are followers of Christ, but really aren't because they aren't exercising genuine faith & loving obedience & heart-felt praise to Him.

- to be sure, on outside they look & act the same as authentic Christians.
  - they have the lamps of a Christian profession of faith & obedience to Jesus.

- that is, they have all the right forms of a Christian faith & an obedient life with regular church-going, Bible-studies, a correct knowledge of Scripture, the right doctrines & an earnest defense of the truth & are even very active in the Church's worship & witness & work.
- & often they even put true Christians to shame by doing many works “in the Lord's name.”

But that's all their Christian profession is, for they have no oil.

- they only have an outward show of religion.; there is no inner religion by divine grace & the HSpirit.
- they are only sporting an external, empty pose of piety because they haven't really & entirely surrendered to Lord in sincere repentance & faith & obedience.

Th'fore their faith & religious words & works aren't from hearts filled or controlled by HSpirit so that they influence all their character & conduct to be & do only what Christ wants.

- & because their so-called Christianity isn't authentically alive & active, it won't endure through the long watches of life & death to the very end when their earthly days are done or the Savior comes.
- but their outward believing Jesus will only die out & they will be unprepared for the end.

No wonder then, the **wise girls** told the foolish ones to go & buy oil from the sellers.

- indeed, you see, one will only be ready to meet Savior at death or at His return, when they have gone to God & gotten the oil of His grace & HSpirit fills us.
- only then, by a life of true faith & loyalty to Him, will we receive salvation & eternal life.

And so, unless we are ready with a genuine faith & life lived totally for Lord now while there is still time, it's going to be too late.

- we will be caught off guard with no oil of a brightly burning profession of faith in Jesus when the cry comes He is here.
- & we won't be able to enter His eternal kingdom, for the door will be finally shut.

You see, the Bible says **NOW** is the time of grace so that is no 2<sup>nd</sup> chance when we die or Lord returns if we are refusing Him & His will in this life.

- & notice too: these foolish girls couldn't get the necessary oil from the other girls.
- in other words, no one else, not friends or families, can help us.
  - for the lamp of a true profession of being Lord's & its oil of repentance & faith are a personal matter that each of us is responsible for in this life.

Th'fore how foolish & fatal to fritter away this present time of God's grace on the things of this world that will soon perish & pass away.

- to sleep with the false idea that all is well because we are doing so great with a lot pious activities., but we haven't ever really & personally received Jesus as our only Lord & Savior now in faith & obedience.

- for, rest assured, the lamps of just an outward Christian profession will go out so that it will be too late when the cry echoes throughout the universe Lord is here.
  - & then the door into His joyful, eternal presence will be shut forever to those He never knew.

## II. THE FAITHFUL CHARACTER

Instead we must be like those **5 wise girls** whose **CHARACTER WAS FAITHFUL & vigilant.**

- you see, they obeyed command be alert & always ready for the return of the bridegroom.
- & so, no matter when he came, they were always prepared with enough oil to keep their lamps burning bright to welcome & honor & escort him.

These then are true Christians who have taken full advantage of God's time of grace & salvation in Jesus Christ.

- they have lamps of a real Christian profession with the oil of divine grace & H Spirit.
- they have a new heart & character & inward piety that continue to feed their Christian faith & life so that they always burn bright for Lord all over this planet.

Th'fore in real humble sorrow for sins, they have turned in faith & trust to Lord.

- & in complete obedience to His will & ways, they keep their faith alive & active with a whole-hearted life of love to Him & others.
- they are His faithful servants working for His Church & Kingdom as they wait & watch for His return & the day of complete victory & eternal glory.
- they don't get so entangled in earthly things that they forget they are on the way to eternal glory.
  - & they don't live as if they don't want Jesus to come again.

And, even though we don't know when He will come back, it doesn't really matter.

- for we walk with God with heaven in our heart & lives directed only by faith & love to Him so that we are always ready to receive & serve Him on His return.
- & when Christ does come the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, then He will find us ready with lamps of true a Christian faith & a life blazing for Him so that He will know us.
  - & He will welcome us into the joys of the eternal marriage feast forever.

And so, **Christians**, our constant desire & drive must be to eagerly & earnestly work & watch & wait for that great & glorious day when Lord comes again to judge & reward all peoples.

- our whole life must be geared to & guided by that fact; focused on Jesus.
- for after all, we know we Christians are only pilgrims passing through this world.
  - we look & live only for that city whose builder is God—the new, eternal universe.

No, that doesn't mean we must get out of this world & shut ourselves off from society.

- for, as we live for eternity, we must be in the world to work hard to defeat sin & to bring the gifts of divine grace & salvation to everyone everywhere.

- &, as we watch & wait for Christ's coming again, we must make every crook & cranny of our lives & the universe be touched by His saving blood & influenced by His sovereign lordship.

But, in doing that, we must never forget we are here on earth only for a time.

- th'fore we must keep from all & every kind of worldliness.
  - from getting so enmeshed in material pleasures & possessions that we lose sight of God.
  - & why we are here & where we are going that we began to want stay here forever.
- instead, as Jesus concludes His parable, we must be awake & alert always watching for His return because we don't know when that time will be.

## CONCLUSION

And so we must receive Him now as our only Lord & Savior if we haven't really done that yet!

- & we must walk & work in this world for Lord as we believe His word, obey His will, go His way, & are devoted to prayer, to worship, to witnessing & working for Him.
- then, when Jesus comes the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, He will know us by these brightly burning works of true faith in Him, & He will let us into His eternal home.

Well, to which group do you belong?

- among the foolish sleeping with the erroneous idea you are safe & secure & ready for Lord with just a mere, outward Christian profession?
- or are you among the wise with a true Christian faith & life so that you always prepared to meet Him?

You see, **Israel** of old wasn't ready for Christ 1<sup>st</sup> coming on **Christmas**, as many aren't either today.

- they refused Him, & people still refuse to receive Him in trust & obedience to Him only.
- & the results were fatal for Israel, as will be for many today, because they weren't ready for His 1<sup>st</sup> coming, & neither are many today for His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.
  - th'fore they will be shut out of His eternal kingdom of real joy & peace & life.

May God give us the grace to continue to celebrate **Christmas** correctly by living for Jesus now & always.

- & are truly looking & living for Him to return.
- then we will be ready to meet Him when the cry goes up: "Behold He is here!"
- & then ours will be the song of the redeemed, as Rev.7&19 say: "Hallelujah! Salvation & glory & power belong to our God. For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice & be glad & give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, & His bride has made herself ready. Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, & to the Lamb. Praise & glory, wisdom & thanks, honor & power & strength be to our God forever and ever!" AMEN