

Text: Matthew 24:42—25:46

Introduction

Everything said about Christ's return makes a claim on how we live today.



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LIVE THE STORY

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- Prayer practice: Take each one of these parables as a group and take time to pray around the room using pieces from each of them.
- What do bridesmaids, lamps, oil, and staying awake have to do with our Gospel witness as a church?
- Can you think of themes that runs through all of these parables?
- What focus in each of these parables is different than the focus many bring to Scriptures about the return of Christ?
- What unique contribution to the call to be ready does each of these parables make?
- What do the bags of gold in the 3rd parable represent and how does that relate to our readiness?
- Do you think the picture of the judgment seat of Christ in 25:31-46 is a parable or a more straight-forward description? Explain.
- How do the responses of the two groups of people (sheep/goats) differ? What might these subtle differences reveal about them?
- Which of our missional priorities can you identify in these parables?

I. Faithful or Foolish? (24:42-51)

- A. When will the temple be destroyed and the end happen?
- B. Who is the faithful and wise servant?
 - i. Disciples are not owners but servants.
 - ii. Giving food to the other servants in the household (Acts 6).
- C. Where is grace in this parable?

II. Lit or Unlit? (25:1-13)

- A. Difficulty with Parables

The whole point of the 10 bridesmaids going out to meet the groom with lamps, the whole point of needing oil, is to stay awake and watch so that they can then escort the groom to the wedding banquet.

B. *The Parable of 10 Bridesmaids Sent to Watch with Lamps*

- i. Lamps in Matthew 5:14-16
- ii. Keeping watch in prayer (Eph. 6:18)

Falling asleep means prayerlessness, and prayerlessness means we live in the darkness and our lamps, our witness, goes out!

C. The wise virgins were in need of grace as well as the foolish! (7)

D. How does this parable call us?

This parable calls us to attend in prayer to our deeds that they would shine light in a dark world, preparing the way for our King.

III. Lavish or Loath? (25:14-30)

A. Parable of the Ten Bags of Gold!

B. The meaning.

- i. The bags of gold themselves represent the glorious grace of God, the forgiveness of God.
- ii. Luke 7: The one who has been forgiven much, loves much.
The one who has been forgiven little, loves little.

What one does with the lavish grace they have received dramatically impacts how they will be judged.

IV. Sheep or Goats? (25:31-46)

A. The clearest descriptions of the judgment of Christ available.

- i. 2 Cor. 5:10

- ii. Those who did and those who did not

B. The Early Church

Preaching in the mid-3rd century during a severe outbreak of the plague, Cyprian said, “it is crucially important that Christians treat desperately ill people by providing practical help” such as “entering the houses of sick people, touching them, feeding them bread and giving them water, and loving them even when they are outside the Christian community, even when Christians view them as persecutors and enemies.” And that when they are doing this, “they are doing more than the pagans, who love only their own friends and family.” To the question: “Why should believers do this? Why risk infection? Because God is generous and acts generously, and God wants his children to imitate him.” (Alan Kreider, *Patient Ferment*, 203)

- i. Their prayers were often rooted in the teachings of Jesus.
- ii. Consider using the “parable” of the sheep & goats to pray.