



THE TEN VIRGINS

THE POWER OF THE OIL



“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.’ Matthew 25:1-2

During His earthly ministry Jesus taught many lessons about the kingdom of Heaven. This series we are looking at the parable of the ten virgins. All ten set out on a mission, yet only five were successful. What was the point of the mission? What differentiated the five wise ones from the five foolish? How do we position ourselves so we can be counted as wise?

Our prayer is that the Lord will grant us wisdom and enable us to live as wise ones.

Stay connected as we explore these and more over the next few days.



Day 1 The Goal

'Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.' Matthew 25:1

This parable illustrates a wedding procession that would typically take place at night where friends of the bride would follow the bride from her home to her husband's home. Lamps were needed to light the way as there wouldn't have been streetlights at this point in time. It's interesting to note that all ten set out on a journey from the same starting point, they were all on the same level to begin with and they all had the same goal – to meet the bridegroom. This parable speaks to our quest to seek the Lord and the impact of the different paths we take after our salvation experience.

'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.' Psalms 119:105

And He said to them, "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them?" Luke 5:34

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning;" Luke 12:35

All ten set out to meet Jesus, who identified Himself as the bridegroom. All ten had lamps, which means they all had some desire for knowledge of the word of God. These weren't unbelievers – they had heard about Jesus and had begun some form of walk with Him. They would have started taking time to get acquainted with Jesus through the Bible and through prayer.

'Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.' Matthew 25:2

Note that there came a distinction between one half and the other. Which means that from Jesus' perspective there was a fundamental issue that the foolish ones failed to address.

Question: What separated the wise from the foolish and how do we ensure that we don't fall into or remain in the group of those termed foolish? We will go into this in more detail tomorrow.

Day 2

The Fire

'Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them' Matthew 25:3

The lamps then were usually fairly small so they could easily be carried and often contained some form of fabric (the wick) which was typically dipped in oil located at the base of the lamp to keep the fire burning longer. Without the oil the wick would burn out fairly and the fire would go out. In this parable, Jesus was telling us that our lives are meant to bear some semblance to the lamps.

'let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us' Hebrews 12:1b

When we start our journey of getting to know the Lord, we must understand that it's a lifelong marathon and not a sprint. It's a race that requires endurance as distractions will come and storms will blow, all in attempt to put out the fire you carry. We need to be equipped for the long term so we can sustain the fire in our lamps.

"The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood and arrange the burnt offering on the fire and burn the fat of the fellowship offerings on it." Leviticus 6:12

'So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.' Revelation 3:16

Fire in itself is not self-sustaining and cannot burn endlessly. It must always connect to something to keep burning. The same principle applies to our spiritual lives. For us to remain 'on fire' and not become cold or lukewarm we must connect to the things that will keep kindling the fire in us. And as the example given in Leviticus shows us, our fire must be kindled deliberately on a daily basis.

Reflect: Is your fire still burning strong or is it beginning to wane a little?

Day 3

The Oil

'Five of them were foolish and ill-prepared, for they took no extra oil for their lamps. Five of them were wise and sensible, for they took flasks of olive oil with their lamps.' Matthew 25:2-4 (TPT)

The Bible tells us in this parable that foolishness isn't not having oil in the lamp, but not having extra oil for the lamp. In the context of this scripture 'oil' represents the indwelling (empowering) of the Holy Spirit. The fact that there was some oil to begin with means that all the virgins had encountered the Holy Spirit. So why would extra oil be needed?

When we receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, we receive an indwelling of the Holy Spirit – meaning He comes to take residence in our lives. As we walk with Him on a daily basis we receive an infilling of the Holy Spirit. It's this infilling that empowers, guides, transforms and enables us to be conformed to the image of Christ.

'And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.' Acts 2:4

'Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel..." Acts 4:8

'And the disciples were continually filled [throughout their hearts and souls] with joy and with the Holy Spirit.' Acts 13:52

Peter was one of the believers gathered together in a room on the Day of Pentecost when they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. A few chapters into the book of Acts, the same Peter was again filled with the Holy Spirit, and this happened over and over. Acts 13:52 clarifies that the infilling of the Holy Spirit is meant to be continuous and not a once and for all event. We are meant to have a relationship with Him and it's in the course of this relationship that we begin to receive more and more of Him as He continuously transforms us.

Reflect: Your relationship with the Holy Spirit is not meant to be a one-off encounter, but a daily, intentionally cultivated relationship.



Day 4

The Extra Oil

Yesterday we looked at the fact that we need to be intentional about cultivating a walk with the Holy Spirit. It's this walk that provides us with the 'extra oil' – the continuous infilling of the Holy Spirit in our lives which prepares us for a victorious life here on earth and for eternity. Let's now look at how to get this extra oil.

'Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.' Mark 1:35

It is impossible to have any kind of relationship with the Holy Spirit without prayer. Prayer is to your spirit what breathing is to your body – you can't survive without it. Jesus embodied this as we see throughout His earthly ministry prayer was always His priority. But let's note that the key focus for prayer shouldn't be about what we can get, but who we can become.

As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. Luke 9:29

In Luke 9:29 we see that Jesus was transformed as He prayed. The same thing happens to us when we give the Holy Spirit time in the place of prayer to cleanse and transform us. It's in the place of consistent prayer that we learn to submit to the ways of God and begin to see things from the perspective of heaven. It's from a life of consistent prayer that we begin to exhibit the fruit of the spirit and function at a higher level here on earth. We can't afford to ignore prayer or make it the last option.

'Every Scripture has been inspired by the Holy Spirit, the breath of God. It will empower you by its instruction and correction, giving you the strength to take the right direction and lead you deeper into the path of godliness. Then you will be God's servant, fully mature and perfectly prepared to fulfill any assignment God gives you.' 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Another key to getting extra oil is consistent Bible study. We cannot know God if we don't start with the word He has given us. As we study the word of God, the Holy Spirit begins to reveal new dimensions of God to us that draws us even nearer to Him.

Reflect: Without a vibrant prayer and personal study life, the oil will dry up. You can't make progress with the Holy Spirit with a closed Bible and a non-existent prayer life.

Prayer, Bible Study, personal consecration, consistency and diligence.



Day 5

The Slumber

“But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.” Matthew 25:5

All ten virgins had some form of idea about when the bridegroom should come, so they waited. However the bridegroom didn't come when they expected, so they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. There's something important we should take note of: they ALL grew drowsy and slept. Which means at some point in time in your journey, there's a high probability you'll get tired and maybe even fall asleep. Here the scripture isn't talking about being asleep physically but spiritually.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

When we're asleep spiritually, we stop being vigilant and let our defenses down. We reduce the time spent in fellowship with God and begin to lean more on ourselves and our understanding than on God. When we're asleep, we miss critical signals the Holy Spirit is sending us about what to do and open ourselves up to error and possibly danger. And the most scary thing about being asleep is that we may become so distanced from God we get used to functioning without Him. But the reality is that anyone running a race continuously will get tired at some point. Thankfully our Father in heaven who knows us so well understands this and made provision for our help.

“For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.” Psalms 103:14

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” Acts 1:8a

“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthener, Standby) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you].” John 16:7 AMP

We weren't designed to run the race alone in our own strength. That's why we need the help of the power from the Holy Spirit. He's the one who comforts us when we're down, energizes us when we're tired and wakes us up when we fall asleep spiritually. It's the Holy Spirit who helps us stay hungry for more of Jesus which helps us run the race and finish victoriously. We can't do without the Holy Spirit.

Reflect: Don't shortchange yourself by depending on yourself. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you in every area of your life and commit to being obedient to His guidance.

Day 6

The Examination

'But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! The bridegroom [is coming]! Go out to meet him.' Then all those virgins got up and put their own lamps in order [trimmed the wicks and added oil and lit them].' Matthew 25:6-7

When the bridegroom eventually arrived the first thing all ten had to do was put their own lamps in order. This was not the time to start checking what someone else was doing, how they were living their lives, how much oil they did or didn't have. Essentially what the virgins were doing was a self-examination: was their spiritual life in order or had things gone wrong?

'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Consider your ways and thoughtfully reflect on your conduct!" Haggai 1:7

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?" 2 Corinthians 13:5

"I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes. I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands." Psalm 119:59-60

The Bible is clear on the need for us to frequently examine ourselves and our spiritual health – are we walking in line with the Lord's principles or have we turned to our own ways? If we don't deliberately and intentionally engage in periods of personal reflection and evaluation asking the Holy Spirit to take charge of the process, we could very easily go astray.

'Therefore let the one who thinks he stands firm [immune to temptation, being overconfident and self-righteous], take care that he does not fall [into sin and condemnation].' 1 Corinthians 10:12 AMP

'Search me [thoroughly], O God, and know my heart; Test me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there is any wicked or hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.' Psalms 139:23-24

God deals with us based on the condition of our heart and not outward appearances or activities. So as the psalmist prayed, we too should set aside periods where we genuinely ask the Holy Spirit to audit our walk with Him and the state of our heart.

Reflect: It's better to do this proactively now than wait until when it's too late to take corrective steps of obedience.

Day 7

The Maturity

'But the foolish virgins said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'No, otherwise there will not be enough for us and for you, too; go instead to the dealers and buy oil for yourselves.'" Matthew 25:8-9

All ten started off the same way, all got tired and slept, all had to trim their wicks and get their lamps ready. But what separated the foolish from the wise was the extra oil. The ones termed foolish tried to get extra oil from those that already had. However, the wise ones made a very critical point: don't depend on what we have, go out and get yours too. You see the wise ones had paid the price for extra oil earlier, while the foolish depended on what they had in the lamp alone.

'Then [with a deep longing] you will seek Me and require Me [as a vital necessity] and [you will] find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.' Jeremiah 29:13

'that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death' Philippians 3:10

The 5 wise virgins would not have restricted their interaction with the Lord to just weekly Sunday service attendance but would have paid the price to seek the Lord for themselves. Jesus makes it clear that a walk with Him cannot be something that is an afterthought. The same way we plan to progress in our education, businesses, careers, we must also be intentional about maturing spiritually and drawing nearer to Him. It's not about the number of years one has been a believer, but how much of Christ we reflect in our daily lives.

'that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ' Ephesians 4:14-15

If we don't mature in the things of Christ, we increase the likelihood of being deceived and more dangerously, downplaying the importance of a personal walk with Jesus. Will the price to pay for the oil be easy? Perhaps not, but the reward of a life of intimacy with Jesus will certainly be worth it.

Reflect: Growth requires deliberate, intentional planning. What's your spiritual growth plan?



Day 8

Relationship

'Later the others also came, and said, 'Lord, Lord, open [the door] for us.' But He replied, 'I assure you and most solemnly say to you, I do not know you [we have no relationship].'
Matthew 25:11-12

Imagine having to say to someone – “I do not know you”. For that conversation to happen in the first place means the person must have approached you in a manner that would suggest some form of familiarity on their part and you had to correct that impression. What would have made the person think it was okay to act in a familiar manner with you? Perhaps the person had heard about you from several sources and even knew the names of your close family members. The person could even have been present at the same events/functions you attended. Maybe you even worked in the same organisation. But regardless of all the things the person knows about you, he/she can't really claim to have a personal relationship with you.

“If you [really] love Me, you will keep and obey My commandments.” John 14:15

“Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'” Matthew 7:21-23

The verses above are some of the most frightening in the Bible in my view because it shows that a person performing signs and wonders does not necessarily mean the person has a relationship with the Lord. God's definition of love isn't focused on our emotion but our acting in obedience.

Imagine singing I love you to the Lord all day and night yet still disobeying Him. His word shows us that as far as He is concerned, you don't really love Him. Will God still use people to perform miracles and the like even if they don't love Him? Yes, for the simple reason that He loves us too much to let someone's disobedience get in the way of Him reaching His people. Therefore, our focus should never be on the vessel He is using, but on God Himself.

Reflect: A relationship with the Lord starts from the place of obedience.



Day 9

The Return

'Therefore, be on the alert [be prepared and ready], for you do not know the day nor the hour [when the Son of Man will come].' Matthew 25:13

Jesus ended this parable with a word of caution for us – be prepared and ready because we don't know the specific day/hour He will return. But this presents a bit of a challenge: how do we stay ready for something we don't have a fixed date for?

"Be on guard and stay constantly alert [and pray]; for you do not know when the appointed time will come....'What I say to you I say to everyone, 'Be on the alert [stay awake and be continually cautious]!" Mark 13:33,37

So then let us not sleep [in spiritual indifference] as the rest [of the world does], but let us keep wide awake [alert and cautious] and let us be sober [self-controlled, calm, and wise]. 1 Thessalonians 5:6

We have been guided that we have to live in a constant state of readiness because Jesus doesn't want us to lose sight of the fact that as believers, we cannot afford to live carelessly. We either have a walk with Him or we don't. Yes, we are imperfect and make several mistakes on the way, but He is faithful to forgive if we confess our sins and turn away from them. Yes, we will get tired or distracted at some point, but the Lord has made provision for that eventuality by giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us daily.

'He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will remain secure and rest in the shadow of the Almighty [whose power no enemy can withstand].' Psalms 91:1

The world is in a state of disarray right now with one crisis after the other. The Bible tells us to expect these things as the return of the Lord draws near. How do we respond? First, we need to determine if we really want to have a close walk with the Lord and ask Him for the grace to know how to proceed on this journey. Second, we need to ensure we are part of those who have a personal relationship with the Lord and dwell in the secret place, because that's the only place where there is direction, guidance and complete safety.

Reflect: It's time to take our walk with God serious.

Thanks for completing the study. We'll love to hear from you, so please connect with us on:

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