

November 19, 2023
The Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Matt Duerr

“Let the Reader Understand-Expectation”

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, men. We follow up last week’s sermon on preparing for Christ’s return with a new word today and its one that has special meaning to me. When I was student teaching, at the end of my time at Saint John’s in Oxnard, they had a special going away dinner for me. And after that, my master teacher Kent Schlictemeyer, took me aside and he said, Matt, I’m going to give you one word. If you remember this one word and follow it, you will be a successful teacher. That word was “expectations.” And then he followed it up with very brief instructions, if you expect it, you’ll get it. If you don’t, you won’t.

So, this week, where are we going with Jesus and His return? Going back to last week, prepare because preparation is what is expected by our Lord and Savior. And you might say, “Really?” And I would say, “Absolutely.” Consider what Jesus went on to teach towards the end of Matthew chapter 24. He taught at that time, that of that day and that hour no one knows. No one knows, not even the angels of heaven, when He is going to return. Therefore, and again I’m quoting Jesus here, “therefore you *must* be ready.” Consider what the word must means. This must be done. Why? Because He expects it. And then He lays this on His disciples and us; “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time?” So, what is He expecting? Well, that we’re going to feed people at the proper time. We’re going to provide for the people at the proper time.

When we put that into the context of the Old Testament, the prophets in Israel, we look to Hosea. And he singles out where that expectation lies. God expected the priest to retain knowledge and to make intercession on behalf of the people, both through prayers and the sacrifices of atonement. He expected the kings to lead the people in the

way of His word, which was preserved by the priest, and he expected the fathers to build up faithful families following the lead of the king, and in accordance with the teaching of the priests, according to the word of God. And then what does Jesus say about that? Consider this. Blessed is the servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. He expects it and He blesses it! And He immediately follows that up with judgment, those who don't meet His expectations.

That now opens the door for chapter 25. And the first word of chapter 25 is then. Well, when's that? Now it follows. Then the Kingdom of heaven will be like... so he's referring to Judgment Day. That's what all of chapter 24 is about. And then it will be like. Well, two parables. This is what it will be like. The first is about the ten virgins, and the virgins are representative of His servants. These parables, their earthly stories with heavenly meanings.

And what do we read about those ten virgins in our gospel reading this morning? Well, they took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. I bet you know who the bridegroom represents? That would be Jesus. Jesus, coming back or coming to this world. Now we read that those servants, those bridesmaids, those virgins; five were foolish and five were wise. Why were the foolish ones foolish? Well, because they took no oil, no reserve oil with them. If you look at the front of the bulletin, you can see what a lamp would have looked like and there's not a lot of oil there. And the wick is going to, you know, pull that oil out. You better have some. But you see there was poor planning. There was no contingency. They expected that everything was just going to go fine according to plan. And how often does that hold true?

I think a better expectation is that's what was shown by the wise they took their flasks, plural. They took a lot of oil. Why? Because they were wise. They expected, you know, everything's not going to go according to plan. There's probably going to be some problems. We better prepare. And it turns out that, yes, the bridegroom is delayed. In fact, he's seriously delayed to the point that they had no idea when he was coming. Just like Matthew or Jesus said in chapter 24 of that day and

that hour no one knows. But he was so delayed that well I quote, “they all became drowsy and slept.” There's nothing wrong with that. Even the Wise fell asleep. But then at midnight. The day is warm over. He was seriously dying, delayed. But at midnight there's a suddenness. Here is the program! He's there! That's the way it's going to be on Judgment Day.

And there's an expectation come out to meet him. He's here! Come out. Light the way. Let's go! And the foolish? Listen to what they say and see if this does not sound kind of like today. “Give us some of your oil for our lamps. They're going out.” And there's a massive lesson here, the foolish, they have expectations. They expect the wise to give what they had; what they had planned for, what they had paid for. This is a “what's yours is mine and what's mine is mine. You owe me. You pay me. You give me yours. I deserve it.” And notice what the wise do. They don't give in to that. It's not enough for us and for you. Go buy for yourselves. You see the wise, the prudent, they planned. But they also hold others accountable and say, ‘you are not my responsibility, and your poor planning is not my fault.’ After all, it's the loving thing to do because then the person can learn from their mistake.

But the foolish did not plan. They were held accountable. At that hour you're not going to find many oil merchants. And when they finally get the oil, they come back to the wedding feast. They cry out. “Lord, Lord;” see, they know him. “Open to us.” And what does the bridegroom Jesus, say? “Amen. Yes, it is so, truly I say to you, I do not know you.” Scary, isn't it? If you're not prepared. And if you're not prepared, you're not meeting God's expectations.

We then have a focus shift, and we go to parable #2, which is one of faithfulness. We move from wisdom to faithfulness, and it's another one where there's a master, it's the parable of the talents. And Jesus, the master is leaving, so what's he do? He calls his servants. He divides up his estate, and his business and well, this is just what Jesus had said in Matthew 24. The master has set over his household. And what did he set? Well, parable wise he leaves them his financial resources. To one He gives 5, to one he gives two to the other, he gives one talent. What's a talent?

6000 denarii. What's a denarius? A day's wage. So, 6000 days' worth of work is 24 years approximately. And if you take the average US salary for the first half of 2023. A talent would be worth roughly \$1.42 million, almost one and a half million dollars. So even the guy who was given one talent, he was blessed! He was given a lot of money!

But what was he given that for? Well. They were to take care of the Masters estate. And what do we read? "Now after a long time again?" There's a message here to us, and it was to the disciples back then. His return wasn't going to be quick. It's a long time away. But he's coming back.

Now after a long time, the master came and settled accounts with them. That's Judgment Day! He had expectations of what he had given to his servants! And the servant who had five talents comes forward. Here's the five talents you gave me. Here's five more. And the one who had two. Lord, here's the two talents you gave. Here's two more. And what does he respond? "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much." When you consider the talent and what it's worth and they've doubled it, and Jesus refers to that as little, he's going to give you much; wow heaven is beyond our comprehension. But you see, they were wise. And they had seen their master's work. And they knew what he expected because they were wise and watched him. So, they followed in his footsteps. They followed his example, and they increased the business. And He says, "Well done, You've met my expectations."

Then there's the one who gave back one? And he says, (and listen to this) 'I knew you to be a hard man.' Does a hard man give away \$1.5 million and entrusted to somebody? I don't think that's the definition of hard. I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. In other words, it's your fault. And you have to ask that question, "really, this masters' dishonest?" Take a look at the other two. They faithfully served him. They followed his example. They expanded the business, the estate. Would they have done that if he was dishonest and corrupt?

And what we see is that this servant was not interested in expectation. No, he was interested in excuses, in blaming. And he's literally saying I'm more righteous than you. Here, and I quote, "here you have what is yours." In other words, 'how dare you have expectations of me? You have no right!' And how does Jesus describe that person who looks at him as being wrong for having expectations? "You wicked, slothful, worthless servant. Cast him out into the outer darkness (now listen) to where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Weeping, crying. Poor me, I don't deserve it. Gnashing of teeth. Gritting the teeth together so hard that the teeth begin to chip. Gritting your teeth together so hard in. How dare God have expectations of me?"

You see, these two parables are a reality check for Christianity and Christians today. Christ expects us to be wise, and he expects us to be faithful with His Kingdom, His Church, His Gospel, and He expects results. And if He expects it, will He get it from us? And how? How will we know those expectations? And how will we know how to do that unless, like those faithful two servants and those five wise virgins, we actually study Him? Get to understand Him, and mimic Him, follow His footsteps.

Because when we do that, we see that He does have expectations. But He's also given us all the answers on how to meet those expectations. Let the reader understand. God has entrusted us with the Kingdom of Heaven. With the message of the Gospel, He expects us to do what He would do with it. When you consider that He went all the way to the cross to die for us. He expects that kind of commitment from us too. In our Saviors name, Amen.