

Sunday, November 8, 2020

## What a Day!

As we enter into November, we can certainly say the end is near. The end of the church year is just two weeks away and in these last three Sundays, that is the focus of our readings. We're going to be dealing with three eschatological parables. Eschatology, it comes from 2 words *eschatos* which means last; and *ology* which means the study of. So like biology comes from *bio* which means life and *ology* which means study; it's the study of life. Well eschatology is the study of the last days or the end times. We're still dealing with Jesus in His last days here; His last days of ministry prior to His crucifixion. We have been dealing with what Jesus said during Holy Week. Now here's something that might interest you. Everything we've talked about going back through September and all of October; all of those teachings, all of those parables were pronouncements of woe and judgment. All of that teaching happened on Tuesday. Now how do we know that? At the end of chapter 25, which is where we're going to be dealing today; at the end of chapter 25 going into chapter 26, Matthew records it was two days before Passover. So, all of these teachings occurred on that Tuesday. Our last account was Jesus pronouncing judgment on the scribes the Pharisees as hypocrites and saying woe to them seven times.

Chapter 24, I've got to be honest, I'm kind of glad that the assigned readings skipped over it because it's a very difficult chapter and it's one that is better suited for Bible study. Chapter 24 in a nutshell deals with prophecies concerning the end of Jerusalem, prophecies concerning the end of the world, eschatology. And it's from here that we hear about; there will be wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes and that these are but birth pains; are just the beginning of the process leading to Jesus's return. From there, Matthew records, that Jesus says, and I quote in 24:12 "because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold." I think if you just stop for a moment and you ponder on the year we have been in or even the last four, six, eight years; I think you'd agree with me that there has definitely been an increase of lawlessness. And at the same time, hearts growing cold; not feeling bad for those who are suffering as a result of some of the lawlessness. Matthew also tells us in 24:14 that this gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

So, the gospel must first go out to all the world; then we're going to start to see lawlessness increasing and we're going to see the hearts of many growing cold. Here's the big message. It's from Matthew 24 verse 40; it really sums up the intent of the previous 43 verses. Jesus says, 'therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.' You must be ready. Because when he comes well the very last verse of chapter 24 sums it up; Christ will judge. And Jesus says, "in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This is why Amos the Prophet; in Amos chapter 5, literally says "woe to you desire the day of the Lord." He is saying quote, "certain destruction to the people that are looking forward to the day of the Lord coming," because they were not ready. They were forsaking mercy, forgiveness, grace, justice and they were self-centered; there was lawlessness at the time; and their hearts had grown cold. Amos warns them, 'you don't want the day of the Lord' because it's going to sweep you up, and you'll be judged.

So how do we get ready, since Jesus says we must be ready? We look to what He says and that's where chapter 25 begins with the first parable. The very first word of chapter 5 is that. So, it ties it right to that verse immediately before where it says, in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Christ has judged then ties what He's going to say now to judgment day. Then it will be like; or you could translate it like this; "it may be compared to judgment day; it may be compared to 10 virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Now let's just explore what is said there very quickly. First of all, there's 10, so we've talked before numbers mean a lot in the Bible, and 10 is the number of completion or wholeness. We have 10 commandments and still holds so; this is the whole compliment shall we say of these virgins or we could say bridesmaids. These would be friends and family of both the bride and the groom much like we have in weddings today. They were waiting. Where were they waiting? With the bride and where was the bride? Well she would have been at either the groom's parents' house, or if he had purchased a home for them to live in, they would be waiting in the groom's house. Either way, that house represents heaven. The groom always in the New Testament represents Jesus; and the bride always represents the Church. The virgins, the bridesmaids, these were family and friends of the groom, the bride, Jesus, the Church. They are to go out to greet the bridegroom and enter with Him into the house. Now think about what that's talking about. It's talking about joining the bridegroom, Jesus in His house, heaven. But it's also about another joining. It's also joining the body that Christ raises from the dead and brings into the house to be with the soul that is there.

This is a very important event. What do we notice? Five of them were foolish. Why? Because they took no oil. Now oil is what is used in a lamp or put on the end of a torch. It's what burns and provides light. I'd like you to think about that for a moment. The scripture says, "your word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path." The oil is God's Word. It is what can burn within us and make bright to shine. How? So, they don't extra oil, the groom is delayed they are not ready. They're not ready to wait. This is something that's caught them off guard. Five of them are wise. Why are they wise? They took oil with them. They prepared, they were ready, for what they didn't expect; the delay of the bridegroom. I mean let's be honest how many grooms are late to their own wedding? It's quite rare. They're usually there on time. But no matter what, these bridesmaids would have light because they brought it with them, they were ready. And at midnight, this would be much later than expected; at midnight, the cry goes out, here is the break did the time you just would not expect the groom to show up. Scripture is very clear on that; when it comes to judgment day, of that day, in that hour, no one knows. It is going to catch people off guard.

If we read some of Paul's writings, it's a time when people are saying peace, peace, among the world. And when we literally would not expect it, we are to expect it. These bridesmaids they were ready. They had prepared for this wedding. They had been waiting and they started to doze off, they started to sleep. But when that cry went out, they were ready to go. At least the five wise ones. Jesus tells us that when they went to trim or light the lamps there was a problem and the problem is pretty obvious. Those who had oil in their flask were able to put oil into the container where the wick was dangling into it, light it, as the oil burns it draws more oil up and you've got light. Those who trimmed, lit their wick, but there was no oil in the lamp; the wick has oil in it once that oil burns out the flame starts to sputter and go down and it burns the wick up. It's over, it's gone, it's done. You can't get any light from it whatsoever. So, those unwise virgins say give us some oil. Notice, they don't say, 'oh we'll go and buy some; will buy some off you; or could you please share? No, it's a demand. 'Give us some of your oil.' And the response, 'go buy your own. It's a big message. You can't get in based on the work and preparation of others. They go off to buy the oil, the groom comes, is met by the five wise virgins. They go with Him, they enter, the door is shut.

Again, this is very much like what we read in the book of Revelation; when it comes to judgment day, there will be a separation. In this case we see the wise and the unwise. The wise are those whose names are found in the book of life. If their names are found in the book of life, they enter. When you

look at it, their names aren't even read. Jesus just knows their name is in the book of life. He raises them from the dead, they go with Him into His house and they began the wedding celebration; the joining of body and soul, the joining of believer with Savior.

Meanwhile, the others are left, and they come to the door and they knock. "Lord, Lord, open to us." This is so critical that you understand this. This is part of 'you must be ready.' They knew the groom, they address Him properly, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' Who are they? The ones who were not prepared. There was a little oil on them, a little bit of the Word of God. What is the Lord's response? Truly, in the Greek; it is amen. Yes, it is so. Truly, I do not know you. They knew Him, He doesn't know them. How does Jesus end it? Watch therefore, for you know neither the time, nor the hour.

Today dear brothers and sisters, there are many things we can go into on this error, but let's just think about this year we're in. We're talking about a potential drought again, pandemic, illnesses. We hear about how China is amassing troops and ships and everything and looking to take over Hong Kong. Meanwhile there continues to be strife in the Middle East, and issues with Russia, wars and rumors of war. There will be fulfillment of prophecies, lawlessness will increase. We're seeing them too and it's our responsibility to now take what we have learned from scripture and look at that, and go you know what? We are getting closer to the day Jesus will come. We don't know when. It could be today, it could be tomorrow, it could be 1000 years from now, but we know this. It is getting closer because the prophecies are being fulfilled.

If we look to the Book of Revelation one way of reading it; the first beast and the second beasts are the government and higher education. Higher education tells the people, 'you can trust the government to take care of you.' And the government says to higher education, or to the second beast, we will take care of you, we will give you the money to keep on teaching what you're teaching that points everybody back to us. Does this sound familiar? We must be ready! We must be ready to fulfill what Jesus said to spread this gospel message throughout the kingdom and then the end will come. Then we will bring the oil, we will shine bright. We will meet Him because He will take us to be with Him, body reunited with soul and together with our Lord and He will take us into our new, forever home, His house for all eternity. Amen