

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

by Albert N. Martin

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For a long time I've had a desire to expound at greater length this portion of the Word that I've used in a mini exposition on one or two occasions at the wedding of one or two of you present here. And I believe this is the occasion that it would be proper to take this portion and to expound it in greater length and in greater depth because it speaks so simply yet so profoundly to one of the most fundamental areas of Biblical truth. And the passage to which I refer is Matthew 25:1-13:

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there is a cry, Behold, the Bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet Him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you: go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage feast: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour."

As with all of the parables of our Lord, this parable was not spoken in a vacuum. The Lord Jesus was not simply gathered somewhere with His disciples and suddenly He got an impulse to tell an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, for that is the oft repeated phrase of what a parable is. Rather, our Lord here, as in every situation in which He spoke in parables, was concerned with one great central truth. And we do not need to use our imaginations to know what that truth is which provoked this parable. For in the previous chapter, our Lord is recorded as speaking very explicitly concerning this great Biblical doctrine of His coming again in power and in glory, that which we commonly call the second coming or the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the Scriptures everywhere teach that the same Lord Jesus who first of all came by way of a virgin's womb to dwell amongst men as the God-man. (He is Immanuel, God with us.). That same Jesus will also come again, not in humility, not to be infleshed in a virgin's womb, but He will come in power; He will come in great glory. He will come to gather His saints to Himself and to bring judgment upon the wicked. And it is these truths that our Lord has been enunciating in the ears of His disciples.

A sampling of this teaching is verse 31 of chapter 24: "And He shall send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." When He comes, it will be gathering home time for all of His people. He at His return will gather His own to Himself, the truth that is wonderfully taught in the parallel passage, 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 13 and following. However, the coming again of Christ will not only be the

consummation of redemption and the pinnacle of bliss for His own, for His elect, as they are called in this passage, but the next paragraph in chapter 24 reveals that it will be a time of judgment upon the ungodly. He tells us that the return of Christ will be to the ungodly what the coming of the flood was to ungodly of that day. Verses 36-40:

"But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man."

There will not only be the gathering of the saints to their Lord, there will be the taking away, the banishment, the judgment of the ungodly. In fact, that's the note upon which that chapter closes. Verses 50 and 51: "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." So then, the context, the setting in which this parable was spoken is very clearly a setting of explicit concern with the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, a coming that will be bliss and glory for His own and judgment and eternal destruction for the ungodly. Now in that the setting, our Lord says "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins."

Having spent these few minutes to put the parable in its proper setting so that in attempting to extract from the parable the message of God, we will not get bogged down with what is the trimming of the lamps, what does it mean to go buy, and all the rest. For the meaning of the parable is not found in finding some significance in every detail of the parable, anymore than when the preacher gives an illustration, you are to find the thrust of his illustration by a hidden meaning in every single ingredient of the illustration. And so the great thrust of this parable has to do with events that surround the returning of Jesus Christ in glory and in power to gather His own to Himself and to crush the wicked with everlasting destruction.

Now then, what are the basic facts of the parable itself? Having ascertained the basic facts of the parable, we shall then seek to discover the meaning of those facts as they relate to us. Fact number one is this: all ten virgins went out to meet the Bridegroom. Look at your Bibles: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom." All ten virgins were concerned with this coming and this encounter with the Bridegroom. The second fact of the parable is this: all ten virgins were divided into two classes, those called the wise and those called the foolish. Verse 2: "And five of them were foolish, and five were wise." Fact number three is this: the thing which constituted them wise or foolish was the presence or absence of oil. Verse 3: "For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." In other words, the Lord Jesus calls them wise or foolish not on the basis of their IQ, not on the basis of any other factor than this: some had oil; some had no oil. Fact number four is this: only the wise actually entered into the marriage feast. Verse 6 and following: "But at midnight there is a cry, Behold, the Bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet Him." All of the virgins arise and trim their lamps. All of them are aware of the coming of the Bridegroom, but only the wise actually enter into the marriage feast. Verse 10: "And while they went away to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they

that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast: and the door was shut." All ten were aware of the return of the Bridegroom, but only the wise entered into the place of festivity. Fact number five: all of the others were shut out and wished they could enter when it was too late. Verses 11 and 12: "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." The others were shut out but wished desperately that they could enter. But all of their wishing and all of their entreaties and all of their tears and their desperate pleas could not prevail upon the Master of the feast to open the door and to admit them.

Well, those are the simple facts of a simple story having to deal with a common occurrence, especially if you belong to Trinity Church, a wedding. Now then, what does this say to us? Particularly, what does it say to us concerning this great event which triggered the parable? What is there in the great Biblical doctrine of the second coming of Jesus Christ that is enunciated by this parable? Well, let's look at those five facts and see the significance of them, the message of God in them.

The first fact of the parable that we established was this: all ten virgins went out to meet the Bridegroom. And this tells us that all mankind shall meet the heavenly Bridegroom at His return. Whom do the ten virgins represent? Well, the answer to this passage if we read it in its context is, they represent all mankind. For our Lord had said in plain, non-parabolic language in chapter 24 and verse 30, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." All the tribes of the earth shall be aware of the returning Bridegroom. Then shall the Son of man appear. And in the words of the book of the Revelation, "Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him." And so the first fact of the parable is a pictorial assertion of this great fact, that all mankind shall have to deal with the heavenly Bridegroom at His return. God is not going to consult the tribes of the earth. God is not going to take consensus. God is not going to ask that this issue be put on a public referendum for the next election day: "Would you like to have dealings with My Son at His return? Do you choose to have a reckoning with My Son when He comes in power and glory?" Concerning this event, God does not consult the creature. The hour, the day, the moment of His return is fixed in the counsels of heaven. And though no man knows that day or hour, every man should know this about that day and hour: when He comes, you will see Him; when He comes, you will reckon with Him; when He comes, you will have dealings with Him.

Well, the second fact of the parable is this: all ten virgins were divided into but two classes, the wise and the foolish. And what does this tell us? It tells us that all mankind will be found divided into two classes at the return of Christ. And the Bible knows only two essential divisions of mankind. And it has nothing to do with male and female, rich or poor, black, white, yellow, or any color in between. The Bible knows only two divisions of mankind. And to describe those divisions, it uses such simple words as just, unjust, righteous, unrighteous, saved, lost, sons of light, sons of darkness, sheep, goats, children of God, children of the devil. In the words of our text, there are the wise; there are the foolish. They are in Christ, or they are in Adam. They are justified; they are condemned. They are believers; they are unbelievers. And we could multiply words right from the Scriptures--and that's all I've done is quote Bible terms which categorically teach us that there are but two divisions of mankind that really count in God's eyes. That means sitting here tonight, there are

but two divisions. There are but two categories of people amongst us. And everyone of us in the reckoning of God is either wise or foolish. No middle ground, no neutral position, no halfway house, no co-mingling. There were wise; there were foolish.

The third fact of the parable is this; the thing which constituted them wise or foolish was this whole matter of oil. Look again at verses 3 and 4: "For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." Now it's obvious, then, that they were wise or foolish based upon this commodity of oil. What is the message of that to us? Without having to go into a complicated proof or anything else, I think it should be quite obvious to us what the symbolism of the oil is, not only because throughout the Scriptures oil is often the symbol of the Holy Spirit, but because the context itself indicates that the difference between these people was that some were prepared to enter into the presence of the Bridegroom and the marriage feast and some were not. And therefore, even if there is no essential symbolism in the oil referring to the Spirit, we know from other Scriptures that that which constitutes a man or woman prepared to enter the kingdom of heaven or not prepared is whether or not he or she has been born of the Holy Spirit of God. And so we are safe in asserting that that which constituted them wise or foolish was the presence or the absence of saving religion, which is just another way of saying the presence or the absence of the indwelling of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. For saving religion, if it is anything, is religion in which the sinner has been brought into vital living relationship with the Son of God and has been made a partaker of His Holy Spirit in His person, in His graces, and in His gifts.

Does not the Word of God say in Roman 8:9, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His"? Did not our Lord say to Nicodemus, one who certainly considered himself wise (and if Nicodemus was ever to access himself, I'm sure he would come to think he was constituted a wise virgin), "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." It is the presence or the absence of the life-giving principle, the life-giving power that makes the difference between being wise and being foolish. And now whenever the Spirit of God has come to indwell a man or woman, mark it, He never comes as a dormant, hidden principle. He comes as the life-giving, life-transforming power of God. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. The old is passed; the new has come."

And what do I mean when I say we must have the Spirit? Am I talking about some kind of mysterious experience of the Holy Spirit in which we hear the fluttering of angel's wings and profess to be caught up in rapturous ecstasies and have visions and hear voices? No. Am I speaking about some experience in the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion called a baptism in the Spirit or some other such thing? I say again emphatically, no! I'm talking about nothing more or less than that gift of the Spirit that is always attendant upon a believing response to the Gospel of the grace of God. Paul could say in Ephesians 1--and I direct your attention to that portion--writing to the Ephesian Christians who were blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, he says in verse 13 of chapter 1: "in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the Gospel of your salvation,--in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Now see the three things that he brings together. "Having heard the truth of the Gospel, ye believed; ye were sealed." And that is an inseparable trilogy of spiritual reality. They heard, they believed, they were sealed. No man has any valid experience in the Holy Spirit who does not believe. And no man truly believes who does not hear the Gospel, which is the truth

concerning God and sin and Christ and forgiveness. "Having heard, ye believed; ye were sealed."

And so when we come to this parable of the virgins and see this third fact that that which constituted them wise or foolish was the presence or absence of oil, we are facing this very simple fact as we sit here tonight. Do you know what constitutes you wise or foolish in God's reckoning? Whether or not you are indwelt of the Holy Spirit, whether you have heard the word of the truth of the Gospel, and having heard, you believed, and having believed, you've been sealed with the Spirit. And if you've been sealed with the Spirit, the Spirit is producing in you the fruit of His own presence. And what is that fruit? Tingles and trills up and down the spine? The ability to speak in an unknown heavenly language? No, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us." The evidence of the Spirit's coming to indwell you is that He is producing in you that nine-fold fruit. It does not say, "the fruits (plural) of." It is "the fruit of." Wherever He is, the fruit will begin to be manifested. Some dimensions of it more quickly than others, some dimensions more fully developed than others. But that nine-fold fruit is produced in all of its dimensions to some degree in everyone in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.

You might approach it from this standpoint: what is the great ministry of the Spirit? Well, the great ministry of the Spirit is to testify of Christ. Jesus said, "When He is come, He will take the things of Mine and reveal them unto you. He shall not speak of Himself, but He shall speak of Me." And if you're indwelt by the Spirit, the evidence will be that you've been given an estimation of Jesus Christ that parallels what the Word of God declares about Him. This Word says He is altogether lovely. And if the Spirit has come to indwell you, He has convinced you in your heart of hearts He is indeed altogether lovely. The Word of God says He's altogether trustworthy, worthy of the confidence of the vilest of sinners. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And when the Holy Spirit comes to indwell a man, He convinces him it is so. Christ is worthy of my trust; He is worthy of my confidence. The Scriptures say of Jesus Christ that He is worthy of obedience and love and devotion that far exceeds the love and devotion to husband, wife, father, mother, friend or any human creature. And when the Holy Spirit comes to indwell a man or woman, He convinces him Jesus Christ is indeed worthy of that. And so the heart runs out to Him saying, "Lord Jesus, I do gladly give you a place beyond that of husband, wife, lover, friend, sister, brother, mother, father. Lord Jesus, I give myself to you." That's the evidence that the Spirit has come in the belief of the truth. That's the work of the Spirit, to make Christ in His person and work as revealed objectively in the Word, subjectively real in your own heart and life. And so to ask what is the evidence of the presence of the Spirit is simply to ask, what is the ministry of the Spirit with reference to the Lord Jesus? And His ministry is to show us our need of Him. When He is come, He will convince the world of sin to show us that Christ alone can meet that need, to show us that Christ is able and willing to meet that need. That's the ministry of the Spirit. And then when we have embraced the Lord Jesus as revealed by the Spirit through the Word, the evidence of His presence will be a growing love for and trust in the Lord Jesus, beginning to manifest in our character likeness to Jesus. You see, you must never divorce the ministry of the Spirit from the revelation of God concerning His son.

Now let me ask you, are you wise or are you foolish? I'm not asking, do you carry about a very well, beaten out, beautifully hammered, ornate lamp of Christian

profession. You say, "Look at my lamp. Doesn't it look nice--all gold plated, silver plated." That's lovely, my friend, but have you got oil in your lamp? O yes, you do everything a Christian is supposed to do. You're a very well polished, tooled lamp. But do you have oil? As you sit there tonight, is Jesus Christ precious to you? Not as precious as you want Him to be--that's your great grief, that He's not as precious as you know He ought to be. But it's your grief. That's the difference between the grieving believer conscious of his sin and the false lamp holder with no oil who's content that he's got a pretty lamp. Do you have the oil? Is Jesus Christ precious, Christ as He's revealed in the Scriptures? Do you count Him worthy of your trust, worthy of your confidence, worthy of your loyalty? Do you see Him beginning to subdue your lust and your passions and your pride, and beginning to work in you something of likeness to His own character? Now my friend, those aren't profound questions, are they? I mean those aren't obtuse and difficult and involved. But that's what constitutes you wise or foolish--the presence of oil. It's not enough to have the lamp of profession; it's not enough to have the lamp of respectability. God says if you do not have the Spirit, you're a fool. The foolish took no oil. And if you're content with religion and external conformity to the Christian faith and you are devoid of the Spirit, God says you're a fool.

And may I remind you that the Spirit is not given hereditarily. You can't get the Spirit because you have a mom and dad who have the Spirit. We are "born not of blood." Your earthly bloodlines won't help you. The Spirit is not given sacramentally. If only the Spirit were given through the sacraments, how simple our task as ministers would be. I almost wretched when I went into a church and saw over the baptismal font the carved figure of a dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, as though the Holy Spirit was there in a baptismal font. He is neither in baptismal font nor baptismal pool, running water, standing water, or a mixture of any kind of water. For then we would be born of man and the will of man. We'd just have to have His will over power ours if we're adults, and if not, exert His will upon us as infants and get us into the water. If the Spirit is given sacramentally, then men are born of the will of man. But the Scripture says, "who were born not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh."

Well, if we don't get the Spirit hereditarily, sacramentally, traditionally, or decisionally, how do we get the Spirit? He's given sovereignly: "who were born not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God." But He's always given evangelically. Paul says in Galatians, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" The Spirit is given evangelically, that is, He is always given in conjunction with the preaching of Christ and the believing reception of the message of Christ. And he's always given personally. You see, that's the wonder and the mystery. Sitting here tonight, someone may sit in the pew and the oil is within that vessel. And less than two inches away, a husband, wife, son or daughter, friend, visitor, whoever you be, there's no way in which the Spirit indwelling that person there can pass from you to them. There must be personal dealings with the Living God who alone can implant His life within the soul of a sinner. So the third great fact of this parable with which we need to reckon is, the difference between the wise and the foolish was the presence of the oil.

Now the fourth fact is this: only the wise enter with the Bridegroom into the feast. So only the true Christian will enter the presence of Christ and the glories of heaven when He returns. The wise and the foolish were aware of His return. They couldn't escape it. Look at the text again (Matthew 25:6): "But at midnight there is a cry, Behold, the Bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose...."

My friend, when the Son of God comes back, there will not be a foot to drag when He summons the whole universe into His presence. We read that vivid picture in the 20th chapter of the book of the Revelation in which it speaks of the sea and the earth giving up its dead. At the voice of a returning Lord Jesus Christ, all the wise and the foolish shall go forth to meet Him, but only the wise will enter with the Bridegroom into the feast. Look again at the vivid language (v. 10): "And while they went away to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage feast [and these next words are frightening]: and the door was shut." O, how vivid are those words! "They that were ready went in with Him." That's heaven in a nutshell. What's heaven? With Him! When Jesus would describe heaven to His disciples in John 14, what does He say? "If I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." And at that point, all silly questions about streets of gold and how many mansions and how many rooms in a mansion--I tell you, it borders on sacrilege. All I need to know is that I'll enter in with Him. "Well, is it going to be before or after the Tribulation?" My friend, listen, can you even think a thought like that with these words ringing in your ear? They went in with Him! And if I must be brought through blood and persecution, of what concern is it to me if I know at the end I shall be brought in with Him? Isn't that the heart of the issue? It was only the wise who went in with Him. And they went in with Him to all the privileges that He prepared for them. This elaborate wedding feast into which hundreds of dollars had been poured and hours of planning and preparation is but a little figure of all the glories that God has prepared for those that are constituted as wise by His grace. Only the wise enter with the Bridegroom into the feast, so only the true Christian will enter heaven.

You say, "Pastor Martin, that's a very simple statement. We've heard that all our lives." Yes, you've heard it, but has it really gripped you? One of the things that I need constantly to remind myself of as a Christian and as a Christian minister is that I'm trafficking in eternal issues. And though as a Christian and a body of Christians, we cannot be indifferent to social, economic, sociological issues (our hearts must bleed for the downtrodden and the oppressed; our spirits must be stirred with anger at injustice and inequity), my friend, listen, when it's all boiled down, the issue of greatest concern is this: in a few short years, time will have taken its toll upon everyone of us. And though the Lord should allow the course of human history to go for another twenty millennia, which I doubt, but if He did, it still is but a tick in the clock of eternity. And heaven and hell is where everyone of us is going to land forever. We need to come back to that basic perspective again and again and again. The Bridegroom is coming; only the wise are going to go with Him into the feast. "That's pretty narrow." My friend, Jesus uttered this parable. He put in the parable these sobering words. You can almost hear the door, can't you? "And the door was shut." Can you hear it? "Shut."

And that brings us to the last fact of the parable, the frightening fact of the parable. The foolish were shut out. Even though they sought admission earnestly, fervently, they sought it in vain. Again, the words of our Lord: "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." That's all. All He had to do is to say, "I recognize no intimate, personal, loving acquaintance with you." That's the end of the debate. "Lord, Lord, open to us." Is our Lord intending to teach here that there's a time coming when every man will wish he had been wise? Is our Lord teaching there's a time coming when everyone will be dead in earnest about getting into heaven? It seems that there's a strand that flows through our Lord's teaching. Remember Luke 16, the

parable or the story of the rich man in hell. But the desires were framed too late. O my dear people, this is a sobering text before us tonight. The time is coming for everyone of you who lives and dies a fool according to this passage, that is, who lives and dies devoid of the Spirit, when with everything in your being, you will wish that it were otherwise. And you will say, "Lord, Lord, open to me." And He will say, "I know you not. The door has been shut." Entrance is sought, but too late.

I know of few things that sober more as a minister of the Gospel, especially when I face either a mocking, sneering response to the Gospel or a spirit of indifference to the Gospel. When I look into the face of the man or woman who says as much, "Preacher, come off it now. Don't you know I'm no kid. I've heard preachers who preach much more fervently and frighteningly than you could ever do, and that hasn't bothered me. Preacher, you're not going to move me." When I see such a person, my heart bleeds because I realize the hour is coming when a voice more powerful than my voice will shake every last ounce of sneer from his whole being, the voice that says, "I know you not." And when I meet the person who is indifferent, who may even give lip service to the reality of the things of eternity but who says, "I can't be bothered," I cannot think of the time when that indifference will give way to earnestness, to fervency, to importunity ("Lord, Lord, open to us!").

My friend, do you sit here as a mocker tonight. I tell you, it's frightening to see mockery on the faces and in the attitudes of young people. It's bad enough when you see it in a hardened old sinner, but when I see it on the faces and in the attitudes of some of you that aren't even out of your teens, it scares me to death. Are you the mocker? Are you the person who sits indefinitely to all the fervent Gospel appeals that go forth from this place, that go forth from the prayers and the lips of your Godly mom and dad, uncle, aunt, sister, neighbor. O my friend, listen, the hour is coming when all the indifference will go. And these words will rise up in that hour to mock you.

O, may God grant that you will recognize that this night the word of salvation is sent to you. The word of salvation comes to you because--blessed be God--the shutting of the door comes after the return of the Bridegroom, never before. The door was shut when? After the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom!" And my friend, that cry hasn't come yet, and it's not going to come secretly or in a corner. It's going to be the voice of the archangel, the trump of God, the shout of a returning Lord. And when He comes, then the door is shut. But blessed be God, as when omnipotence shuts that door, nothing can open it; while the hand of gracious omnipotence holds it open, none can shut it. And thank God, that door is held open by the hands of omnipotence, but not naked omnipotence--infleshed omnipotence. Pierced hands hold the door open. And standing at the door is Him who said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This is what turns preaching from a frightening, awesome responsibility into one of the most blessed privileges a sinner here on earth can know: to say in Christ's name to everyone here tonight, that door is open. Gracious omnipotence, crucified, buried, risen omnipotence holds the door open and says, "Come." And in Jesus Christ, there is welcome, there is pardon, there is the gift of the Spirit. All of those blessings that you need to be wise are in that One of whom Paul spoke when he said, "Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom." How can He be made to be wisdom? Because in Him is the gift of the Spirit as well as the gift of forgiveness, the gift of pardon. All of the blessings of grace are in Him. And if you embrace Him, you are blessed with all

spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. And the gift of the Spirit is yours in Christ. You now have oil in the lamp prepared to live, prepared to face Him.

You say, Pastor, "Why were you silent on the last text?" Well, because I wasn't ready to finish. Now I am; I'll read it. Verse 13: "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." Our Lord returns to the great theme that has occupied His mind throughout this whole section, the theme of His coming again. And the call to all of us is to be watchful. It's a military term. It brings into its orbit the whole concept of conscious, deliberate wakefulness, feeling something of the awareness of the great issues at state. As a soldier sits at his post in time of warfare, feeling something of the frightening responsibility that is his to protect the ammunition or the persons of his fellow soldiers while enemies lurk unseen in the darkness, so our Lord says we're dealing with issues of tremendous moment and concern. "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour."

Blessed be God, by faith, every Christian can hear the voice of his returning Lord. Can you hear it tonight? Can you hear it? By faith, can you shrink whatever amount of time is between His coming and your sitting here tonight? Can you by faith shrink that time and hear Him saying, "Behold, I come quickly"? Can you respond and say, "Even so, come Lord Jesus"? Can you respond in the confidence that you have something more than the mere lamp of profession and notion and tradition, but that you do have oil. You're born of the Spirit. And your proof of that is your estimation of Jesus Christ, your confidence in Jesus Christ, the beginnings of moral and ethical likeness to Jesus Christ.

I cannot close without exhorting my fellow Christians who can answer in the affirmative, "Yes, by the grace of God, I do have the Spirit; I have been born of God. I am a new creature." O dear fellow believers, we live in the midst of fools. God calls all who are devoid of the Spirit foolish. But it's a folly that should break our hearts. But you and I can be instruments in God's hands in communicating the Gospel to see them transformed from fools into wise. Isn't that an amazing thing? I can't give my children the Spirit, but I can give them the Gospel which, under the blessing of God, can be the instrument of the Spirit being given. I can't give the Spirit to my fellow workers in that shop, in that office, in that college, in that high school, but I can give them a consistent example of what a true Christian is and then explain to them what makes me tick and then plead with God to bless that witness of His own saving mercy to bring them into the knowledge of Himself.

May the Lord take the message of this simple parable of our Lord and burn it into our hearts and by His grace make us the wiser, the more diligent. And if we are not His children, make us those who will seek the Lord while He may be found.

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