

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
12-6-23

Matthew 25

The Parable Of The Ten Virgins – Verses 1-5

¹ “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. ⁴ The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

25:1-5 Jesus told the following parables to clarify further what it means to be ready for his return and how to live until he comes. In the story of the 10 virgins (25: 1-13), we are taught that every person is responsible for his or her own spiritual condition. The story of the three servants (25: 14-30) shows the necessity of using well what God has entrusted to us. The parable of the sheep and goats (25: 31-46) stresses the importance of serving others in need. No parable by itself completely describes our preparation. Instead, each paints one part of the whole picture.

25:1-5 This parable is about a wedding. On the wedding day the bridegroom went to the bride’s house for the ceremony; then the bride and groom, along with a great procession, returned to the groom’s house, where a feast took place, often lasting a full week. These 10 virgins (bridesmaids) were waiting to join the procession, and they hoped to take part in the wedding banquet. But when the groom didn’t come at the expected time, five of them were out of lamp oil. By the time they had purchased extra oil, it was too late to join the feast. When Jesus returns to take his people to heaven, we must be ready. Spiritual preparation cannot be bought or borrowed at the last minute. Our relationship with God must be our own.

The Parable Of The Ten Virgins – Verses 6-13

⁶ “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ ⁷ “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ ⁹ “‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. ¹¹ “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’ ¹² “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’ ¹³ “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

25:6-7 At midnight a cry was heard: “Behold, the bridegroom is coming”... “It is a warning addressed specifically to those inside the professing church who are not to assume that their future is unconditionally assured; all ten are expecting to be at the feast, and until the moment comes there is no apparent difference between them — it is the crisis which will divide the ready from the unready.”

25:8 Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out: The foolish virgins were unprepared because they lacked oil for their lamps. In many Biblical passages oil, is an emblem of the Holy Spirit (such as Zechariah 4:1-7). Without oil the wedding party was not ready for the bridegroom. Without the Holy Spirit, no one is ready for the return of Jesus.

25:8-9 Olive oil is a good representation of the Holy Spirit for many reasons. Oil lubricates when used for that purpose — there is little friction and wear among those who are lubricated by the Spirit of God. Oil heals and was used as a medicinal treatment in Biblical times (Luke 10:34) — the Spirit of God brings healing and restoration. Oil lights when it is burned in a lamp — where the Spirit of God is, there is light. Oil warms when it is used as fuel for a flame — where the Spirit of God is, there is warmth and comfort. Oil invigorates when used to massage — the Holy Spirit invigorates us for His service. Oil adorns when applied as a perfume — the Holy Spirit adorns us and makes us more pleasant to be around. Oil polishes when used to shine metal — the Holy Spirit wipes away our grime and smooths out our rough edges.

25:10-13 “When that door is once shut, it will never be opened. There are some who dote and dream about an opening of that door, after death, for those who have died unrepentant; but there is nothing in the Scriptures to warrant such an expectation. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming: The point of this parable is simple — be ready. The price for failing to be ready is too high.

The Parable Of The Bags Of Gold – Verses 14-18

14 “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. **15** To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. **16** The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. **17** So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. **18** But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

25:14-18 The master divided the money among his servants according to their abilities. No one received more or less than he could handle. If he failed in his assignment, his excuse could not be that he was overwhelmed. Failure would indicate only laziness or hatred toward the master. The bags of gold represent any kind of resource we are given. God gives us time, gifts, and other resources according to our abilities, and he expects us to invest them wisely until he returns. We are responsible to use well what God has given us. The issue is not how much we have but how well we use what we have.

The First Two Servants Are Judged – Verses 19-23

19 “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. **20** The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ **21** “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ **22** “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’ **23** “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

25:19-23 Jesus is coming back, we know this is true. Does this mean we must quit our jobs in order to serve God? No, it means we are to use our time, talents, and treasures diligently in order to serve God completely in whatever we do. For a few people, this may mean changing professions. For most of us, it means doing our daily work out of love for God.

The Third Servant Gives Account – Verses 24-30

²⁴ “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ ²⁶ “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. ²⁸ “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹ For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

25:24-28 This last man was thinking only of himself. He hoped to play it safe and protect himself from his hard master, but he was judged for his self-centeredness. We must not make excuses to avoid doing what God calls us to do. If God truly is our Master, we must obey willingly. Our time, abilities, and money aren't ours in the first place— we are caretakers, not owners. When we ignore, squander, or abuse what we are given, we are rebellious and deserve to be punished.

25:29-30 This parable describes the consequences of two attitudes toward Christ's return. The person who diligently prepares for it by investing his or her time and talents to serve God will be rewarded. The person who has no heart for the work of the kingdom will be punished. God rewards faithfulness. Those who bear no fruit for God's kingdom cannot expect to be treated the same as those who are faithful.

The Sheep And The Goats – Verses 31-33

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

25:31-33 God will separate his obedient followers from pretenders and unbelievers. The real evidence of our belief is the way we act. To treat all persons we encounter as if they were Jesus is no easy task. What we do for others demonstrates what we really think about Jesus' words to us: Feed the hungry, give the homeless a place to stay, look after the sick. How well do your actions separate you from pretenders and unbelievers?

The Judgment And Reward Of Those On The Right Hand – Verses 34-40

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ ³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ ⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

25:34-40 This parable describes acts of mercy we all can do every day. These acts do not depend on wealth, ability, or intelligence; they are simple acts freely given and freely received. We have no excuse to neglect those who have deep needs, and we cannot hand over this responsibility to the church or government. Jesus demands our personal involvement in caring for others' needs (Isaiah 58: 7).

25:40 There has been much discussion about the identity of the "brothers and sisters." Some have said they are the Jews; others say they are all Christians; still others say they are suffering people everywhere. Such a debate is much like the lawyer's earlier question to Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10: 29). The point of this parable is not the who, but the what— the importance of serving where service is needed. The focus of this parable is that we should love every person and serve anyone we can. Such love for others glorifies God by reflecting our love for him.

The Judgment And Condemnation Of Those On The Left Hand – Verses 41-46

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' ⁴⁴ "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' ⁴⁵ "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' ⁴⁶ "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

25:41-46 Eternal punishment takes place in hell (the lake of fire, or Gehenna), the place of punishment after death for all those who refuse to repent. In the original languages of the Bible, three words were used in connection with eternal punishment.

(1) Sheol, or "the grave," was used in the Hebrew Old Testament to mean the place of the dead, generally thought to be under the earth. (In the Hebrew, this word occurs in Job 24: 19; Psalm 16: 10; Isaiah 38: 10.)

(2) Hades is the Greek word for the underworld, the realm of the dead. It is the word used in the New Testament for Sheol. (In the Greek, this word occurs in Matthew 16: 18; Revelation 1: 18; 20: 13-14.)

(3) Gehenna, or hell, was named after the Valley of Ben Hinnom near Jerusalem, where children were sacrificed by fire to the pagan gods. This is the place of eternal fire (Matthew 5: 22; 10: 28; Mark 9: 43; Luke 12: 5; James 3: 6; Revelation 19: 20) prepared for the devil, his angels, and all those who do not believe in God (25: 46; Revelation 20: 9-10).

This is the final and eternal state of the wicked after the resurrection and the Last Judgment. When Jesus warns against unbelief, he is trying to save us from agonizing, eternal punishment.