

Matthew 25:1-13

What is important and urgent now

Jesus tells a parable about 10 bridesmaids waiting for the groom – but are they ready? Half of the bridesmaids have oil for their lamps, the other half do not. When the groom arrives, those with no oil go to buy some, but miss their moment.



Bible notes



In Matthew's arrangement of Jesus' last days, Jesus has spent some time speaking out against the religious leaders who are leading people astray, lamenting the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which is God's dwelling place, and talking about the 'end of the age', noted elsewhere in today's readings as the 'day of the Lord'. Having spoken of persecution, war, famine and earthquake, he warns his hearers to be ready for what will come. Today's parable of the bridesmaids illustrates the need for this.

The role of bridesmaids in weddings at that time was to escort bride and bridegroom to the place where the wedding and feast would take place. Following the feast, which would last well into the night, the bridegroom would take his bride to his parents' house, where the bridesmaids would await their arrival and escort them, with lamps, to the bridal chamber. At a surface level, then, this parable tells of the bridesmaids who prepared to carry out their role by ensuring they had plentiful oil to wait for the end of the feast, and those who were unprepared, ran out of oil and so missed out. Oil is sometimes used to symbolise righteousness, or living in keeping with the kingdom. In this picture of the kingdom of heaven, there is a great celebration of God's kingdom. Jesus, the bridegroom, arrives (returns) for the celebration, and only those who have lived fruitful lives as God's people are ready for him. For the others, it is too late.

Jesus tells several stories highlighting that the timing of his return is unknown: like a thief in the night, like a master returning from a long trip, like the wedding party after a feast, the timing is not made clear. It is necessary to always be ready.

Pray 



This week, many countries mark the end of World War I hostilities. Find a map of the world that shows where there is conflict today: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>. You may want to print out a copy and write your prayers for each country or, as you explore the online version, allow what you learn to fuel your prayers for peace and resolution.

Write

Make a to-do list of all your tasks for the week. Divide another sheet of paper into four quadrants. Create a priority grid labelling the boxes: Important and Urgent; Important/Not Urgent; Urgent/Not Important; Not Urgent/Not Important. Populate the grid with items from your to-do list. Aim to have things in all four quadrants. What are your priorities for the coming week? How does your spiritual life fit into this grid? What is important and urgent in your relationship with God? What might God's priority grid look like?

IMAGINE 

Close your blinds or curtains. Switch off all lights. Make the space as dark as you can. Can you remember a power cut or a fuse blowing after dark? What did that feel like? What did you do? How long do you think you could survive without electricity? Somewhere in the world today, people will have no artificial light – perhaps as a result of a power cut, or perhaps because they never had any to begin with. Think about what a Christian response might be. What does God want you to do with your light?

First impressions

- Describe what you see; what needs to happen?
- How do you make sure you are properly prepared for things?
- What do you need to do to be prepared for Jesus' return?



A prayer for others

Loving God,
we pray for those who have run out of the oil of hope:
fill them with courage.
For those who have run out of confidence:
fill them with encouragement.
for those who have run out of happiness:
fill them with comfort.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

WATCH



Watch the video to learn the BSL sign for 'ready': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ev2nYfaLnw4>
Pray: Lord Jesus, help us to be ready for you. Amen.