

Don't Be A Moron!

Matthew 25:1-13

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps^[a] and went to meet the bridegroom.^[b] ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶ But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' ¹⁰ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹² But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

My story is in Matthew chapter 25. Your pastor thought of giving me a name like Marsha, but it's better that you just remember me as "moron" because that's what Jesus called me, and that is what I am.

Because of my short-sightedness and sloppy preparation I wound up missing a fantastic wedding banquet. You might not think that's such a big deal. People miss wedding receptions all the time! But if you're short-sighted and unprepared in regard to spiritual matters, you'll miss THE BIG banquet of eternal happiness that Jesus is preparing. That would make you an even bigger moron than I am. Don't be a moron like me and miss THE EVERLASTING banquet!

Listen carefully to my story. It should have been the best wedding I ever attended. I was even asked to accompany the groom to the wedding reception and light his way with my lamp. Have any of you ever been a member of the bridal party, maybe even as a flower girl or ring bearer? It's an

honor isn't it? It means that the bride and groom consider you to be one of their closest friends. But it also means that you have responsibilities.

Your pastor tells me that today it means that you'll need to rent a tux or buy a special bridesmaid dress, so you'll have to make time to get fitted. You'll also need to set time aside to help decorate the hall for the reception. I guess it's not unusual to spend a night or two in a hotel room near the church and wedding hall so you won't be late for the big event. Still, I understand that the bride and groom are often late for their own wedding, especially to the reception afterwards. It was that way in my time too. Your pastor says that's why parents stuff the diaper bag full of snacks. They know they better have some food on hand to tide the kids over because it will probably be late before the reception starts and the meal is served.

If only I had been so prepared! Do you know what I forgot to do? I forgot to bring oil for my lamp. OK, I didn't "forget" the oil; I just didn't think I would need it! I know, I know. I deserve to be called a moron. I don't suppose any of YOU would go for a midnight hike with a flashlight that had no batteries. What's the point of even bringing a flashlight then, you ask? Well in my defense, I would have made it to the banquet hall with the little oil that was in the bottom of my lamp if the groom had been on time. We morons ALWAYS finds somebody else to blame!

I should have known that the groom would probably be late. That's just how things go at weddings. And as a member of the bridal party it was my business to be prepared for the delays, but I wasn't. I even fell asleep with the others as we waited for the groom. Then, like the piercing call from a ram's horn, someone startled us with the shout: "The groom is here!" Do you know how my heart sank as I fumbled to get my lamp lit only to realize I was out of oil? Your pastor said that it must have been the same pit-in-the-stomach feeling you'd get if you were rushing to an important appointment only to run out of gas miles from your destination.

Well, I thought that perhaps one of the other gals would give me some of their oil. That was stupid, wishful thinking. There wouldn't have been enough for both of us. So I ran as fast as I could to the oil merchant - yes, in the middle of the night -- even though we don't have 24-hour stores like you

do. But I was desperate and was willing to drag someone out of bed to get some oil. I didn't want the groom to see how thoughtless and self-centered I had been.

Yes, that's what was at the root of it all. If I had really cared about attending his wedding banquet, I would have been prepared. Purchasing enough oil to last me through a delay should have been at the top of my to-do list the week before the banquet. Your pastor suggested it's the same reason you leave the house early for a job interview. You plan for travel delays on I-80 or I-5, because if you're late, you'll give the impression that you don't really want the job, no matter what excuses you might give for your tardiness.

By the time I found oil for my lamp, the rest of the wedding party had gone into the banquet hall. Of course I banged on the door to be let in. I was stunned when the groom looked me in the eyes and said: "I tell you the truth, I don't know you."

"Don't know me? But you're the one who asked me to be in your wedding party!" But before I could protest and give him the excuses I had rehearsed, he shut the door and locked it, leaving me standing out there in the dark...

But this story could have a happy ending yet. You have been invited to the everlasting banquet that Jesus is preparing. When everything is ready, he will come for you. Will you be ready for him? Will you have oil in your lamp? The oil in this parable represents faith in Jesus as your Savior, and although you may have that oil in your lamp today, what about tomorrow? What about next year? Just as we didn't know exactly when the groom was coming, YOU don't know either when Jesus will come. That's why Jesus told this parable. He loves you and doesn't want you to be caught unprepared, for if you are caught without oil in your lamp, if you die without faith and trust in Jesus you will be shut out of THE BIG banquet forever.

Satan doesn't want you to think that's such a big deal. He'll suggest that you can just party with him instead. But there will be no celebrating for those who have been shut out of THE banquet. Don't let Satan fool you. Come Judgment Day, his party days are over...forever.

Jesus also wants you to understand that hanging out with Christians is not the same as being a Christian. Look at my story. I had a lamp just like

the wise bridesmaids. And I was eager also to go to the wedding banquet and I knew that the groom was coming to get us. But it didn't mean that I was prepared. It just meant that I deserve to be called a moron for knowing these things, but not making sure I was ready!

Likewise you have been told again that Jesus is coming back. You may even really WANT to spend eternity with him in heaven. But that doesn't mean you will. Only those who continue to have the oil of faith will enter THE banquet. So CHECK YOUR OIL! Do you really believe that Jesus is the Son of God who gave his life to forgive your sins? That means that you won't make excuses for how you have been lazy with your prayer life. Nor will you shrug your shoulders when someone speaks to you about the grudge you're refusing to let go of. Are you missing out on chances to strengthen your faith by continuing with your lame excuses for not receiving Holy Communion? Don't be a moron!

What other sins have you become comfortable with? Pride? Greed? THIS is a wake-up call. "The groom is coming!" Don't put off repentance saying that you will get around to it later. Jesus may return, and he may be doing it SOON!

And then again, Jesus may not return for another 2,000 years. Will your faith be deep enough to outlast the long "delay"? Your pastor was telling me about one strategy for surviving Minnesota winters: never let the tank fall below the half-way mark during winter. That way if you get stranded, you have enough fuel to keep warm until help arrives.

Of course that means frequent trips to the gas station to top off. That takes some extra effort but it would seem worth it for the peace of mind it provides. Likewise, take every opportunity to top up your faith through the study of God's Word and by receiving the Lord's Supper. Oh, I know that you're busy. I know that your pastor doesn't always deliver exciting sermons. There may even be people right here that rub you the wrong way, making it easier for you stay aay on a Sunday morning. But let me be clear: none of these reasons will serve as adequate excuses for why you ran out of oil. There is NO acceptable excuse for not being ready for Jesus. You're either prepared or you're not. You're either wise or you're foolish. You'll either be in or you'll be out. There is no third option.

You've listened so attentively to my story this morning and I thank you for that. But may ask you to do two things? First, put your Savior's warning into practice. Jesus once said that those who hear his words but don't put them into practice is like a man who built his house on sand. That house came crashing down when the storms came. It's no wonder Jesus called such a man a moron – the same thing he called me! So don't just THINK about topping off your faith frequently, do it!

The second thing I want you to do is to share this story with someone you know – especially with a family member who thinks that because he or she lets YOU come to church on Sunday morning and lets YOU take some of the family income and put it in the offering plate that this will count for something on Judgment Day. It won't. Explain to that person how I thought I could borrow oil from the wise bridesmaids, but found it impossible. You can't believe for your spouse, your parents, or your grandchildren any more than the Apostle Peter could repent for Judas the traitor and save him.

That may be a tough conversation to have but this is why you should have it: love. YOU not only love that individual, Jesus does too. Jesus loves you all so much that he not only died to take away your sins, he's also preparing an eternal home – a heavenly home -- with no tears -- for you. Don't get shut out of that heavenly banquet. Don't be a moron like me. Keep topping up your faith as you look forward to Jesus' return. Amen.

I guess this is when you gather your offering.
Ready? Of course, I'M NOT, but I'm a moron.
Don't be like me!

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