

Sunday School Lesson for the Month of August, 2021

The Deciding Factor

(Matthew 25:1-13)

(Sundays, August 1 & 8, 2021)

The fact that time does not stand still, that all of life is moving toward a climax, a consummation, is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in Jesus' parable of the ten virgins. In this parable, the sense of urgency is evident. Everything hinges on preparation – preparation before a great event takes place.

In this instance, Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a wedding. Specifically, the elaborate procedure in a Jewish Wedding. A Jewish Marriage had three stages: the engagement, the betrothal and the marriage itself. This parable is set during the third stage of Marriage, when the bridegroom goes to the house of the bride to bring her in marriage to his own home. It is this event that takes place in the parable, and the ten virgins are friends who have joined the celebration.

It was customary for girls to keep the bride company as she waited for the bridegroom and to celebrate by dancing along the road with their lamps or torches. In this story of Jesus, the ten virgins are two types: five were wise and brought lamps and oil for the lamps: five were foolish and brought their lamps but were without oil. From all outward appearances, the ten young women were alike! When the story is over, however, we discover that five of them were really impostors. They had not been serious about attending to the bride and waiting for the bridegroom. Let's take a look at the story more closely.

I. The Cover Up! (vs. 1-5)

Here we see the tactics used by these five foolish young women, who, for whatever reasons, wanted to participate in the wedding without making the proper preparation.

- A. All of these ten young women looked alike. Each had a lamp; Each were dressed in such a way that her attire would pass for that of one who was part of an Eastern Wedding party; Each claimed to have been invited to be a participant.

- B. To be a part of such a wedding party was an honor indeed. Why? When the bridegroom came, these young women would be in the social limelight for at least one week. Note the expertise of the foolish young women's devious plan. The invitation was perfect; they had dressed themselves like true bridesmaids and had trimmed their lamps like the others. After a while, when everyone grew weary, they laid down to sleep just as the five wise young women did. What a deceptive sight they made. No one could tell them apart.
- C. There are many ways in which a person can hide their unrepentant souls and appear to be devoted believers in Christ. The simplest and most popular way to do this is through local church membership. Some people do not join a church do declare their personal faith in Christ and to be in an atmosphere where they can grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead, some join for social reasons, for business reasons, or to gain a sense of security or belonging.

(Sundays, August 15 & 22, 2021)

II. The Exposure! (vs. 6-9)

- A. The moment of truth had come when the five foolish young women could no longer keep up their false appearance. Suddenly without warning, their cover-up was exposed. They could no longer maintain their deception. The bridegroom came at midnight, and the wise bridesmaids, who were ready for him, calmly trimmed their lamps, which burned brightly.
- B. The foolish virgins looked at their lamps, and they could pretend no longer. They knew they had no oil. They cried out to the wise young women, "give us some of your oil." But they replied, "No, go and buy some for yourselves." While the foolish ones rushed madly to purchase oil for their lamps to thereby prepare for the feast, the door was shut.
- C. The remarkable aspect of this parable is the ease with which, almost up to the very end, the foolish young women were able to keep the appearance of being thoroughly prepared and genuine as invited bridesmaids. Some borrowed clothes, and a little clever acting and everyone seemed convinced, even the other bridesmaids. The problem with pretense is that every time one is successful in effecting a ploy, their confidence increases. Soon they are sure that nothing can keep them from fooling everybody, even God.

(Sunday, August 29, 2021)

III. The dismissal!

- A. This is the tragic, horrible moment when the bridegroom revealed to the five foolish virgins their true state (**vs. 11-12**). At this point, the women searched hard for oil. But it was too late. Their lamps were dry.
- B. The great crisis that will reveal all false imitation in the midst of the church and society is the coming of Jesus Christ. That day will be a day of revelation. How will you stand when that day comes? The Christian will always pray the prayer of the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

The picture Jesus paints in this parable is that there may come a time when it is impossible for people to repent. In the two descriptions of the day of judgement given in the New Testament, it is clear that the judge has no recourse to last-minute pleadings or sudden changing of mind. Jesus speaks here of a door that closes, separating the true from the false and separating them forever.

We must face the fact that one day it might indeed be too late to do what we might have done to have eternal salvation. I have heard some people say in all sincerity, “well, it’s never too late to repent and to mend one’s ways.” Jesus says here very plainly. That one day it will be too late to do so!

“Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh!”