

Title: TEN VIRGINS; DELAYED BRIDEGROOM, MATTHEW 25:1-13
(Chatham, NJ; 11/09/14, AM) [Pc – Cause and Effect]

Theme: The bridegroom's delay is what brings out the character flaws and strengths of the ten virgins.

Purpose: To examine the root causes of the reaction by both the wise and foolish virgins.

Introduction:

1. In Matthew Jesus' earthly ministry ends with stories about the end times.
2. Other Gospels give us the Parable of the Talents, but no others relate this parable and the last one portraying the ultimate judgment scene.
3. Possibly Matthew's audience needs a reminder that the Second Coming may not come as soon as they'd like.
4. Paul has to address the same thing in 1 Thessalonians 4 & 5.
5. Delay drives the conflict and determines the outcome in this story.
6. The effect on the wise and foolish provides the lesson.

I. The Parable of the Ten Virgins

- A. The bridegroom is delayed
 1. Consternation among the bridal party
 2. Delay is the problem also in 24:48 & 25:19
 3. This becomes a matter of how to deal with the unexpected and with the passing of time
- B. The effect on those who must wait with patience
 1. Delay is the cause; exclusion is the effect
 2. The foolish virgins cannot enter into the wedding feast
 3. All fall asleep, but turmoil results only for those who have not been diligent ahead of time
 4. Watchfulness involves active preparation not just passive waiting

II. The Foolish Virgins

- A. Delay is the trigger, not the real cause
 1. The delay only reveals the differences between the two groups
 2. The flaws in their behavior surfaces when a difficulty arises
 3. Neither the foolish virgins nor we can blame bad circumstances for our troubles
 4. We must look more closely at our response to those circumstances
 5. Blaming everything but ourselves creates a pattern of irresponsibility
 6. Building projects must account for unexpected delays and outlays of money
 7. Boy Scout motto should also be ours: "Be prepared."
- B. Underlying causes: why weren't they ready with extra oil?
 1. Other concerns: busyness, distractions (even before cell phones, texting, and Twitter)
 2. They just didn't "have the time"
 3. The Parable of the Sower reveals people who are distracted by the "cares of the world" (Mt. 13:22)
 4. Some people just can't think beyond the moment and momentary feelings, like Esau who was so hungry that he couldn't see just how much he was paying for a mere bowl of soup
 5. People give in to impulses of the moment
 6. Attributable to the inattention to one's spiritual life:
 - Sloth described as "hatred of all spiritual things which entail effort"

- And “faintheartedness in matters of difficulty”
 - It will “endure no hardship nor any penance,” (Fairlie, *Deadly Sins* 123)
 - “The sin of sloth consists in our submission to the natural human tendency to avoid our obligations when they demand effort and sacrifice.”
7. The foolish virgins committed this sin long before they experienced the delay

III. The Wise Virgins

A. Wisdom revealed in watchfulness and preparation

1. Luke 12:35-40, like servants waiting for the master to come home: dressed and ready for his return
2. Since you don't know the hour, be ready, 1 Thessalonians 5:6 – keep awake
3. “Since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found in him,” 2 Peter 3:14
4. Good soil bears fruit with patience, Luke 8:15
5. This demands patience, forethought, and effort
6. It also demands the experience of delayed gratification (emphasis on delayed)

B. The Outcome

1. The wise virgins are welcomed into the celebration; the foolish are locked out
2. Why not help the foolish virgins by giving them some oil?
3. In that case the bridegroom would have had no lamps
4. Furthermore, the lesson here is the importance of individual responsibility for the care of one's spiritual well-being
5. At the judgment we won't be able either to blame or depend on someone else
6. Why does the bridegroom say, “I do not know you”?
7. A Jewish idiom for “I don't want anything more to do with you.”

Conclusion:

1. The judgment is severe for those who don't endure the necessary effort and perform the necessary diligence to be a Christian.
2. The way is hard and the gate is narrow that leads to eternal life.
3. Let us be diligent in our efforts now before the sudden coming catches us unaware and unprepared.