

## Week of October 17, 2021

### Matthew 25

<sup>1</sup> “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten young bridesmaids who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. <sup>2</sup> Now five of them were wise, and the other five were foolish. <sup>3</sup> The foolish ones took their lamps but didn’t bring oil for them. <sup>4</sup> But the wise ones took their lamps and also brought containers of oil. <sup>5</sup> When the groom was late in coming, they all became drowsy and went to sleep. <sup>6</sup> But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Look, the groom! Come out to meet him.’ <sup>7</sup> Then all those bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. <sup>8</sup> But the foolish bridesmaids said to the wise ones, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps have gone out.’ <sup>9</sup> But the wise bridesmaids replied, ‘No, because if we share with you, there won’t be enough for our lamps and yours. We have a better idea. You go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup> But while they were gone to buy oil, the groom came. Those who were ready went with him into the wedding. Then the door was shut. <sup>11</sup> Later the other bridesmaids came and said, ‘Lord, lord, open the door for us.’ <sup>12</sup> But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ <sup>13</sup> Therefore, keep alert, because you don’t know the day or the hour.

<sup>14</sup> The kingdom of heaven is like a man who was leaving on a trip. He called his servants and handed his possessions over to them. <sup>15</sup> To one he gave five valuable coins, and to another he gave two, and to another he gave one. He gave to each servant according to that servant’s ability. Then he left on his journey. <sup>16</sup> After the man left, the servant who had five valuable coins took them and went to work doing business with them. He gained five more. <sup>17</sup> In the same way, the one who had two valuable coins gained two more. <sup>18</sup> But the servant who had received the one valuable coin dug a hole in the ground and buried his master’s money. <sup>19</sup> Now after a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> The one who had received five valuable coins came forward with five additional coins. He said, ‘Master, you gave me five valuable coins. Look, I’ve gained five more.’ <sup>21</sup> His master replied, ‘Excellent! You are a good and faithful servant! You’ve been faithful over a little. I’ll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.’ <sup>22</sup> The second servant also came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two valuable coins. Look, I’ve gained two more.’ <sup>23</sup> His master replied, ‘Well done! You are a good and faithful servant. You’ve been faithful over a little. I’ll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.’ <sup>24</sup> Now the one who had received one valuable coin came and said, ‘Master, I knew that you are a hard man. You harvest grain where you haven’t sown. You gather crops where you haven’t spread seed. <sup>25</sup> So I was afraid. And I hid my valuable coin in the ground. Here, you have what’s yours.’ <sup>26</sup> His master replied, ‘You evil and lazy servant! You knew that I harvest grain where I haven’t sown and that I gather crops where I haven’t spread seed?’ <sup>27</sup> In that case, you should have turned my money over to the bankers so that when I returned, you could give me what belonged to me with interest. <sup>28</sup> Therefore, take from him the valuable coin and give it to the one who has ten coins. <sup>29</sup> Those who have much will receive more, and they will have more than they need. But as for those who don’t have much, even the little bit they have will be taken away from them. <sup>30</sup> Now take the worthless servant and throw him out into the farthest darkness.’ People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth.

<sup>31</sup> Now when the Human One comes in his majesty and all his angels are with him, he will sit on his majestic throne. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered in front of him. He will separate them from each other, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right side. But the goats he will put on his left. <sup>34</sup> Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who will receive good things from my Father. Inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world began. <sup>35</sup> I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.’ <sup>37</sup> Then those who are righteous will reply to him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink?’ <sup>38</sup> When did we see you as a stranger and welcome you, or naked and give you clothes to wear?’ <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ <sup>40</sup> Then the king will reply to them, ‘I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.’ <sup>41</sup> Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Get away from me, you who will receive terrible things. Go into the unending fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> I was hungry and you didn’t give me food to eat. I was thirsty and you didn’t give me anything to drink. <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you didn’t welcome me. I was naked and you didn’t give me clothes to wear. I was sick and in prison, and you didn’t visit me.’ <sup>44</sup> Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and didn’t do anything to help you?’ <sup>45</sup> Then he will answer, ‘I assure you that when you haven’t done it for one of the least of these, you haven’t done it for me.’ <sup>46</sup> And they will go away into eternal punishment. But the righteous ones will go into eternal life.”

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## What Waiting Means

This chapter of Matthew is the whole reason for our year-long dive into Matthew and the reason we've claimed the title of a "Matthew 25" congregation, so it's particularly important for us. Due to the importance of the passage, this devotion will look a little different.

Matthew 24 came with a dire warning - stay alert until Jesus returns! Matthew 25 gives specifics on *how* we should stay alert and what is required of us as we wait. The problem, however, is that the *how* isn't very clear, especially for people who live more than 2,000 years after the fact. The first two parables are not particularly helpful from the outset. Our wedding customs are vastly different, for instance, so we get lost in those details of the first parable before we can understand its meaning. And then the second parable's focus on money and growing wealth makes us too distracted to hear anything other than a story about money, which isn't the point of the parable. There's an additional problem unique to this particular devotion - short form devotions aren't the best format to dive into such deep parables, especially when multiple are stacked together. Each would be better off as an hour long bible study, but that's okay. It's worth pointing this out now so that expectations can be managed, but there's still an important lesson that is fitting for the format.

Waiting makes most of us irritable. When I have trouble with online orders and have to call or use chat features to get help, my blood pressure goes through the roof. It's that kind of situation that tries every bit of patience I can muster. I'm constantly reminded that being rude helps no one, which I fervently believe. But, when I'm in the midst of waiting, angry that I have to wait and frustrated that it's taking so long and the person I'm speaking with doesn't understand my problem, sometimes I forget that being rude isn't helpful. What's sad is that I can get so bent out of shape so easily, and sadder still is that I'm not alone. It's a common problem for all people, and it can expose the very worst of our sinful nature. When it comes to our faith, and our waiting for the fulfillment of the coming of the Kingdom, the problem is a little different. We're not necessarily frustrated and angry at having to wait so much as we have forgotten what we're waiting for. We're waiting for Jesus to reign. And the proper way to wait for Jesus to reign is to act like he already is (hint: because he is). The answer of how we act as though Jesus is already reigning is simple - treat others as Jesus treated them. He even issued a very basic way to get us to understand, "I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me ... I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me." This is a model that is replicable. Where there is need, fill that need as if you were doing it for Jesus. No other questions need to be asked. Obviously there are limitations as to how much a single individual is capable of doing, but when we orient our lives so that we are receptive to the idea that our job is to provide aid, dramatic changes occur. And that is what it means to wait, because in our waiting and in our loving as Jesus loved, we build the kingdom.

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*Instead of getting antsy waiting for your reign, O Christ, may we trust that you already reign in power not only in Heaven, but in our hearts and lives. So help us to live into the power and grace you've demonstrated. Help us to see need and not scoff, but see need and reach out with love. It is in our love for others in the same way that you loved us that the transformation you hope for us occurs. Amen.*