

Monday Morning Rewind – October 27, 2008

Good morning! On Sabbath we considered the third of five parables Jesus told regarding His second coming—the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). Because Jesus started the story by saying, “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom” (vs. 1), we know that the story is about the church. “The kingdom of heaven” refers to believers, not unbelievers. This story is directed to those who are waiting for Jesus to come—you and me!

The story teaches one central lesson—what it means to be prepared for Jesus’ coming. And yet the story also presents us with at least three surprises:

Surprise #1--The girls all looked the same, but were not. All received an invitation to the party, responded positively, had some affection for the bridegroom, confessed Jesus as “Lord,” believed in, and were waiting for Jesus to come, and all slept. But the crisis of the Bridegroom’s unexpected arrival at midnight after a delay revealed the true difference among them.

Surprise #2--Some things you just cannot borrow. The parable reveals that when Christ returns, each person must stand on his or her own. You can’t borrow character. You can’t borrow experience. You can’t borrow the Holy Spirit. You’ve got to know Jesus and trust Him for yourself.

The foolish virgins are not hypocrites, they are half-hearted. They accept only part of the good news, not all of it. Forgiveness, as good as it is, is only half of the gospel message. The other half is transformation. Holiness. Being made new again. The gospel goes beyond water baptism, which is a symbol of death and rebirth. After baptism in water, comes baptism in fire--the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is when Jesus comes to live inside of us through the Holy Spirit and He does an extreme makeover from the inside out. He rewrites our “program” and gives us new attitudes, new desires, new tastes, and new hearts.

Half-hearted Christians accept religion but resist regeneration. They are willing to follow rules but unwilling to follow the Lamb. Willing to be cultural Christians instead of allowing their Christianity to change their culture.

Surprise #3 – There are some times when it is just too little, too late. This comes as a surprise, even to many Christians. God’s Spirit will not always strive with man. There is a limit to God’s patience and He does have a cut-off time. Character is not developed in a crisis, it is merely revealed in a crisis. And the time to develop a godly character is now, not tomorrow.

How can you know today if you’re ready for Jesus to come? After all it was the coming of Jesus that revealed the difference between the wise and foolish. It was impossible until that moment of crisis and joy to tell them apart. How can you know weather you are in one camp or another? Here’s a hint. *You can anticipate the results of the final judgment by the way you react to the problems that come into your life day by day.* In other words how you respond to Jesus’ coming today is a fair gauge of how you will respond to Jesus’ coming tomorrow.

Every time you are tempted to lose your temper, hurt someone who has hurt you, lie, or make an immoral choice, *that’s when Jesus comes* and tells us to follow His example. How do we respond to Him then? If we’re not ready for Jesus when He comes to us now in the small crises of life, it’s a pretty good bet we won’t be ready for Him when He comes in glory at the crisis hour of human history.

The answer is to have “Oil” in your lamps.

How to get the oil of the Holy Spirit.

- Ask for it. God is more than willing to give it (see Luke 11:13). We need to be ready to receive it.
- Accept the whole gospel. Justification *and* sanctification. Forgiveness and Transformation.
- Say Yes when Jesus comes. He comes to you on a daily basis to make changes—to finish the work He started in you. Let Him do His work, and you’ll be ready.
- Keep your “lamp” trimmed and burning. Keep the dust off your Bible and you’ll keep the rust off your soul.

When Jesus comes—today and in the future, be ready! –Pastor Randy

p.s. Don’t forget the teleconference tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m. (MST). The topic is “Politics and Prophecy” and will surely be of great interest to many. The call-in number is 1-518-825-1400. The access code is 83634. Tell a friend and be sure to join the conference yourself.