

**Lesson 25. . . Parables of the Coming King**  
**Gospel of Matthew**



**Notes From the Podium**

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***These notes are intended to augment your own reading and study of the lesson. Please use as an aid to help document the main message of the lecture.***

**Matthew 25:1-46**

- I. Review: Matthew 24
  - A. The Olivet Discourse or “the little apocalypse”.
  - B. Descriptions of cataclysmic events surrounding the second coming of our Lord.
    1. The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem is the foreshadowing of the end of the world.
    2. The new temple, the heavenly Jerusalem is described as adorned like a bride meeting her husband.
- II. Our Behavior in the “Last Days”
  - A. The last days began at the moment of Christ’s resurrection and will continue until His second coming. We are living in the end times.
  - B. We are now living in that time of grace, the interim period of preaching and gathering the people of God into one family that they might be with Him in heaven.
  - C. We know from Matthew 24 that we are not going to know when the end will be.
  - D. Vigilance is the key.
- III. The 10 Maidens
  - A. “*Then* the kingdom of heaven shall be....” (“*then*” as if to say after my death and resurrection)
  - B. Ten maidens “who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.”
    1. Five “Foolish” Maidens
      - a. “Foolish” = “moronthe”
        - i. Previously Jesus described salt that had lost its flavor as “moronthe” (moronic or a moron), meaning the salt had become forgetful.
        - ii. In this instance, “foolish” means to lose one’s purpose, to forget why one is doing what they’re doing,
      - b. The very purpose of the maidens waiting outside at night is to wait for the bridegroom and to bring a lamp with which to see His face and for Him to see theirs in recognition.
    2. Five “Wise” Maidens

- a. These maidens not only brought their lamp with oil in it but also brought flasks of oil.
  - b. Church fathers will see in this action relevance to the theological virtues.
- C. "...the bridegroom was delayed"
- 1. Our Lord has mentioned a delay before and despite His warning of this we often think His coming is taking too long.
  - 2. Because He delayed "they all slumbered and slept." (both the wise and the foolish took a nap)
- D. "At midnight there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ....the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil'...., the wise replied, 'Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.'"
- 1. This is a seemingly ludicrous statement on the part of the wise maidens.
    - a. It is midnight; there will be no merchants to buy from at that hour.
    - b. There is no time to go buy oil and return; the bridegroom is near.
  - 2. This also seems to be a selfish response by the wise maidens.
- E. The Church fathers see in this parable the theological virtues, those virtues that are infused into our souls; they are not acquired but are given as gifts from God.
- 1. Hope
    - a. The lamp is like a soul that is waiting through the night for the bridegroom with expectation.
      - i. The theological virtue of hope roots us in God himself.
      - ii. Like an anchor that holds a boat in rough waters, hope lodges in heaven and anchors us.
    - b. If the bridegroom is delayed, there is a heightened sensitivity of vigilance, because it is Christ, Himself, that is near and that gives us hope (tiqvah).
      - i. "tiqvah" – (Hebrew) to stand underneath; to bear someone up.
      - ii. This hope bears us up through the long watch of the night, as we anticipate the coming of the bridegroom.
  - 2. Charity
    - a. If the lamp is like the soul then the oil is like the Holy Spirit.
    - b. "That sweet unction", "that holy unction", "that holy oil", the Holy Spirit is charity itself; it is divine love.
    - c. Divine love fills the lamp of the soul; it is poured into our hearts.
  - 3. Faith
    - a. That divine love for our Lord waits with expectation and hope through the darkness to see Him and it burns with the fire of faith.
    - b. By the light of faith, He knows us and we know Him; by the light of faith, there is recognition.
    - c. Faith is a light in the darkness.

4. The object of the theological virtues is God, Himself.
    - a. Faith should be shared with others.
    - b. The fruits of divine love should be poured out on others.
    - c. We should try to draw others into that hope.
    - d. But we cannot give these things away to others, their object is God.
    - e. It would have been wrong for the maidens to spend the charity directed toward the bridegroom on the foolish virgins.
      - i. To have done so would have meant that they would not enter into the kingdom of heaven themselves.
      - ii. That charity (divine love) is precisely what draws us to Him.
  5. This all happens in the middle of the night before the dawn.
    - a. The dawn will break and shine on us who dwell in darkness, in the shadow of death.
    - b. If we are with the bridegroom, the light of dawn will guide us to freedom.
    - c. In this life we welcome Him, and receive Him with hope.
      - i. In the darkness, we wait and watch in the kingdom of heaven on earth (the Church).
      - ii. We receive him with hope in the sacraments by way of faith (the light that burns from divine charity).
  6. The Door to Heaven
    - a. No one goes inside without the bridegroom.
      - i. We wait outside for Him to usher us in.
      - ii. No one goes into the Father's house without the Son for he is the only way to the Father.
  7. So the wise maidens do not give their oil to those who had forgotten the reason that they're waiting in the first place.
    - a. The foolish maidens' hope had been lost; their faith had gone out because there was no longer love.
    - b. Our Lord says, for many in the last days love will grow cold and in the cold watch of the night, they will wait for nothing.
- F. "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.'"
1. There are no more frightening words in scripture than those.
    - a. When your own maker looks at you and doesn't recognize you, what recourse is left?
    - b. What do you do when the Son of God in whose image you have been created, by whose blood you have been redeemed, does not know who you are?
    - c. To not be known by God is to not be that which He created.

- i. Now is the time for divine love to grow in us, for that holy oil to fill us and to burn with faith so that we can see Him and He see us and there be recognition.
- ii. The theological virtues transform us, elevate and perfect our nature, such that we become what He created, what he knows.
- iii. He does not know evil.
- iv. If we have become the creation of ourselves, molded into our own image, fashioned by our own hands, lessened by sin, then He can rightly say I don't know you, I did not create this that you have become.

G. "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

#### IV. The Parable of the Talents

- A. "...a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability."
  - 1. Note that it does not make any difference how many talents he gives to any of them.
  - 2. A single talent is quite a large sum of money.
  - 3. Each servant is only responsible for what he has been given.
    - a. "He who had received the five talents ... made five talents more."
    - b. "...he who had the two talents made two talents more."
    - c. "...he who had received the one talent...hid his master's money."
- B. The first two "immediately" go off an trade. (they invest)
  - 1. Our Lord is speaking about the nature of divine love and divine grace.
  - 2. As is with Trinitarian persons: the Father keeps nothing for Himself, He eternally generates the Son, all that He has He gives to the Son.
  - 3. The nature of the Divine Persons to give Themselves one to the other.
  - 4. By revealing the nature of the Divine Persons, the nature of persons is revealed.
    - a. We as persons do not have the capacity to live, to thrive, to be entering into joy, if we act as contrary to our nature.
    - b. The nature of personhood is to give it away, if we hold on to it, we will lose it.
    - c. Example: a soldier receives a love letter from his girlfriend and reads it with eagerness. He rejoices because she expresses her love and at that particular moment he is assured of her love. In the weeks that follow, he reads it several times and he receives no others. Shortly, the letter no longer has the same effect on him. The reason for this is that love is not a gift that is given and kept, it must be *constantly* given.
      - i. The Father is constantly generating the Son, and the Son is constantly receiving that love and returning Himself.
        - This is a given because God is constant; He is outside of time.

- We as creatures are time bound and need attestations of love; because we know that if love is genuine it must have an eternal character.
  - ii. So the soldier waits for the next letter, if he receives it his joy is renewed because he knows that the woman still loves him.
  - d. Human love is fickle, divine love is not.
    - i. You need not fear of Him ever removing His love.
    - ii. You can invest everything He gives you with the knowledge that it will be renewed constantly (“give us this day our daily bread”)
- C. “Well done, my good and faithful servant.”
1. Words that we want to be able to hear, the master speaks to the 1<sup>st</sup> two servants.
  2. The good servants are then commanded to enter into their master’s joy.
    - a. The fruit of love is joy.
    - b. As Aristotle says, “every man seeks to be happy”.
    - c. True happiness is a perfected state that is constant and is therefore not possible in this life but we do have joy, the fruit of love.
    - d. When you love and love well, it puts a smile on your face because you get to participate in the fruit of that love.
    - e. Mother Theresa would always say, “do it with a smile”.
- D. To the servant that coveted that grace, because he was afraid to lose it, and be given nothing more, the master says, “take it from him and cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.”
1. Grace cannot be locked up.
  2. This servant is now out in the darkness with the foolish virgins.
- V. “When the Son of man comes in his glory, ...Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate ...the sheep from the goats”
- A. Sheep will graze where they’re told to, where they’re led. Sheep are not driven; they are led by a shepherd.
  - B. A goat is relatively good for nothing, they eat anything in their path, they get out of fences, they break through houses, they are very unruly. (Recall the parable of the prodigal son - Goats were not very well thought of by the Jews.)
  - C. Our Lord says the sheep will be on his right, and the goats on his left.
    1. Note that in this passage, every goat is going to think that he’s a sheep and every sheep is going to think he’s a goat.
    2. You want to be in the kind of humble position where you say “what did I ever do for you” and you will be called a sheep.
    3. Faith and Works
      - a. A distinction but not a separation.
      - b. St. James says, show me your faith without works and I’ll show you a faith that is dead.

- c. A person is a totality, not just a mind, not just a will.
  - i. The body has the ability to act and incarnate the will, just as the Son of God became flesh.
  - ii. Faith pours itself out in love, such that deeds are seen.
- D. “Come, O blessed of my Father,” (How we are going to long to hear this)
  - 1. Particular judgment - Immediately upon death, we will stand alone before God.
  - 2. This parable describes the general judgment of all of the nations
- E. “Father” - because we have become sons, the children
- F. “O blessed of my Father.”
  - 1. “Blessed” because “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”
  - 2. Our Lord takes the greatest commandments, the love of God and the love of neighbor and unites them.
    - a. He hides Himself in His little ones.
    - b. He has so assumed our human nature that he can be identified with us.
    - c. For the baptized soul He lives in that soul by sanctifying grace and so can literally say, “If you did it to these little ones ...you did it to me.”
    - d. The righteous (the sheep) say, when did we see you and do these things?
    - e. The unrighteous (the goats) also say, when did we forsake you in your needs, we never saw you.
    - f. He so unites these commandments that the love of neighbor is the way in which we manifest our love for the Lord in a very concrete way.
    - g. He’s placed Himself now right underneath our eyes in all of the suffering servants of his mystical body.
      - i. Where ever there is suffering now there is the Son of God.
      - ii. We can become those little ones, blessed of the Father, by loving the Son. “Come blessed of my Father.”
    - h. To the others, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.’ And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”