

When the Door Shuts

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[0 : 00] Turn to Matthew chapter 25, Matthew chapter 25. I'm just going to tell you up front that anybody who has a problem with a preacher speaking of hell, speaking of its certainty, speaking of the need for an individual to make a decision because of its reality would have a hard time with the teaching of Jesus because he's very clear.

He speaks and refers more to hell than he does to heaven and he warns folks of it often. He wanted folks to clearly know the need to make a personal decision to follow him.

This morning I just want to share one story that he told and to share with you the applicable truths that go along with that. It's found in Matthew chapter 25.

Begins in verse 1 and it says this. Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them.

[1 : 36] But the wise took flask of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.

But at midnight there was a cry. Here's the bridegroom. Come out to meet him. Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered saying, Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.

And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came. And those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast.

And the door was shut. Afterwards, the other virgins came also saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered, Truly I say to you, I do not know you.

[2 : 45] Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. Everybody loves a wedding.

Except for maybe an ex-fiancee. Or a previous spouse. Or a discontent child in the midst of the ceremony.

Or a paying parent. Maybe everybody don't love it. But at least for some, it is a grand occasion. Whether it's a big one, or whether it's a small one, the couple likes to make it right.

There's no difference in that in the ancient Jewish world. As a matter of fact, it was a bigger, more grand occasion in that world than it is in ours. There are similarities to us, as well as differences to us.

It's important, I believe, to understand those differences, to understand the story. The bride was accompanied by her bridesmaids. Just like today.

[4 : 00] In America. But here they're called virgins. Virgin is a term here that is used, that's spoken of sexually, as well as maritally.

Speaking of their status. One and the same was the thought. And I'm not going to say some couples didn't try to act married, but it was never condoned, and a lady was marked by it if she was caught.

These virgin bridesmaids help the bride prepare herself and celebrate with her before the wedding. Very similar today that when the bridal party takes all day to get dressed together, do all those things together.

Fellows try to do that as well, but they put their britches on about five minutes, and they leave, and they're ready. And so they don't know what to do with the rest of the day. But the bridegroom would then come and receive his bride at her house.

And he would take her to his house if he had one.

[5 : 06] If he did not, he would take her to his parents' house. And there the celebration would take place among the invited guests. The festivities could last a week and be filled with dances and feasts and receptions.

And therefore, when the bride was ready and waiting, the bridesmaids would all go out into the streets to watch for the groom coming. Often he took his time to build anticipation.

Seems somewhat the opposite today of sorts because if you go to a modern wedding in a church, you'll see that when the rest of the party is waiting, everybody's waiting for the bride to come down the aisle.

And everybody stands to welcome her as she comes down the aisle. Well, in that day, in that culture, it was one where they were waiting on the groom to get there, and he would sometimes be a little late to build that anticipation.

I'm just going to tell you, men, I encourage you, don't try that today, okay? Don't make them wait today. It no longer builds anticipation. It builds animosity, and that's not the best way to start.

[6 : 27] When he arrived, his arrival was repeatedly announced. The bridesmaids would have lamps, torches made from oil-drenched rags with catched dishes under them.

And so that they could proceed through the part of that present, as they proceed through town, excuse me, there would be no streetlights for the most part.

What they had were made with oil rags, and by midnight, many of those would burn out if they hadn't rewrapped them. They didn't have phone lights in that day. If they didn't have a lamp, they wasn't a part.

So extra oil was to be carried for the lamps because once they'd lit, they would only stay lit about 15 minutes. So you didn't light them early. You made sure you had enough oil in case the procession was long or in case the anticipation was a little longer than expected.

At the end of that procession, the wedding party went into the courtyard in the center of the home, and they would shut the gate to keep any intruders out.

[7 : 41] And once that gate was shut, it typically was not opened again to keep those uninvited out. Those that were late were left out.

Jesus told this story to speak to people about a cultural event that they were familiar with, to speak to them in their language about things that they would understand.

He always spoke to people about what they were familiar with. And I thank God through the power of the Holy Spirit. He still speaks to us at the level in which we need to hear it. The Holy Spirit works that way.

Most people understand the wedding customs of their environment. Therefore, Jesus tells a story that points, that speaks of weddings, but it points to the return of the Lord.

And he often spoke of his return. And when he spoke of his return, and when he spoke of our arrival in heaven, he spoke of it as a wedding, with him being the groom and the church of Jesus Christ, being the bride of Christ.

[8 : 52] And that our engagement, as it is now, will be consummated when he returns to receive us unto himself. He illustrates that through this story.

And what he tells, the message in this story is simply this. You better be ready for it. Now, much can be said about this story, but I'm not going to keep you long.

I want to share three applicable truths with you today about this story. The first one is this. The wait does not change the reality.

The wait does not change the reality. Some had prepared so they could participate. Some had intended to prepare, and they didn't get it done. They put it off in prep.

They got lax. Possibly because he didn't come till midnight, they fell off to sleep. When the bridegroom came, they were not ready, and they were left.

[9 : 52] Those without oil represent those who never have surrendered their lives to the Lord. It is often those that think about spiritual things, but they put them off for a time.

They're not quite ready yet. Or possibly there's a time in their life when they thought about that and it became something important to them, but they didn't really do anything about it. They didn't really act on it, so they got lax about it spiritually.

Or either they just spiritually went off to sleep. Never really dealing with it. The prepared ones here are those who have dealt with it.

And there's a lot of symbolism here because he talks about an oil-filled lamp or an oil-drenched lamp. Oil is often used in Scripture as an illustration for the Spirit of God. You see that in the Old Testament. You see it here in the New Testament. Oftentimes, it speaks of the Holy Spirit of God. And when somebody gives his or her life to the Lord Jesus Christ, Scriptures tell us that he immediately will save us, change us, and empower us with the Holy Spirit of God living within us.

[11 : 08] So those who live for the Lord Jesus have the Holy Spirit and they are ready to meet the Lord. And those who do not have the Holy Spirit because they've not surrendered their life to the Lord are not ready to meet the Lord.

You receive the Holy Spirit when you surrender your life to Christ. And if you share your faith, people will often tell you they're not ready yet. That sounds good, but I'm not ready yet. People can be on the verge of making a decision for Christ in a conversation or in a worship hour and fail to respond. And as they leave, sometimes urgency leaves them as well. They go back, leave that worship hour, leave that conversation, go back to their lives knowing that they're still incomplete.

And thank God the Holy Spirit continues to nag somewhat at them. But over time, that may dissipate. That may not be there.

[12 : 15] Time passes, too much time. Opportunities come, opportunity goes. And then the bridegroom comes.

What does it mean when the bridegroom comes? It means it's too late. I have a friend I had the opportunity to pastor his family.

He grew up in Pickens. Served the Lord faithfully as a minister for many years. And just this past week, when he went to pick his wife up at the airport on the way home, they were in a tragic car accident.

And she went home to be with the Lord. Never anticipated that. Never knew that was going to happen. It was suddenly that it took place.

Dear lady in my previous church this past week, she had some health problems, nothing serious. But something turned on Thursday. Something quickly turned.

[13 : 22] And on Friday, those dear fellas said goodbye to their mother and their wife. It was quick. It came unexpected. They didn't anticipate it.

That could be what he's talking about when he talks about when the bridegroom comes. He could also be talking about the return of the Lord. The second coming of Christ. Who I believe can come at any moment.

I don't believe we're waiting on something to happen. No, I believe he can come at any moment. Whatever it is, the wait does not change the finality of it, folks.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I've had to wait so long for something I just kind of gave up on it, you know. I don't want to get personal here, but I live in a house of ladies. And sometimes it's just time to go back in the house and make a sandwich instead of going to eat, you know.

You just get tired of waiting. Don't let the wait change the reality of the finality.

[14 : 46] I'll make you two promises. One is, the Lord's going to return. I promise you. And number two, it's sooner than it's ever been.

And so we need to be ready. Whether it comes for us individually or whether it comes in the sky, we must be ready. Second thing is this. The unprepared cannot get ready fast enough.

The unprepared cannot get ready fast enough. The procrastinator slogan is, why do it today when you can put it off to tomorrow? And if that's mowing your grass, that's okay.

It'll just grow a little bit and be a little longer the next day. But if it's your soul and your eternity is at stake, you better be careful with that. I'm not telling you that.

Jesus told you that. He spoke in Luke chapter 12 with the parable of the rich fool. He was a man who had a field that produced a good crop. As a matter of fact, he grew so much crop and had so much intake that his barn wouldn't hold it anymore.

[15 : 53] And so he invested in the farm and he decided to build his barns bigger and store it more and so he could retire and take it easy once he got it all in. He had his plan complete on earth, had his profile all set up.

He was ready. But then God said in Luke chapter 12 verse 20 and 21, you fool! This very night your life will be demanded of you. Then you'll get what you have prepared for yourself.

This is how it'll be when anyone who stores up things for himself but's not rich toward God. We can invest so much of ourselves in this life and forget the most valuable thing we have is our own soul and it is incomplete and hopeless outside of Christ.

when we get so wound up about our life be careful. We'll lose our own soul. You must be ready for we have no idea.

Concerning the return of the Lord Jesus says no one knows not even the angels in heaven. I want you to listen to what he says in Matthew chapter 24 verse 40 says this then two men will be in the field one will be taken and one left.

[17:10] Two women will be grinding at the mill one will be taken and one left. Therefore stay awake for you don't know on what day your Lord is coming but know this that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.

Therefore listen to what the Lord says you also must be ready for the son of man is coming at an hour you don't expect. You see once it's too late you can't get ready fast enough.

In an instant life is gone. The unprepared can't get ready fast enough.

Third truth is this I want you to hear me clearly. The door will never be opened again. It'll never be opened again.

I believe two of the most horrifying pictures of heaven for me is one the separation and the second is the finality. And once the door is shut you're left out.

[18:30] all the times you could have but now you can't. It's final.

One of the difficulties of doing a funeral and visiting with that family just like I did on Friday was knowing as I stood before that casket this is final.

Whatever's been said has been said whatever's been done has been done whatever decision has been made has been done this is final. whatever you say about death whether you're afraid of it or not it is final.

Now I'll tell you I have no fear of dying itself but I'm kind of like Will Rogers when he said I want to die like grandpa who died peacefully in his sleep not screaming like the passengers in his car.

The transition and the difficulty before can be dreadful but death in itself I don't dread. Each day God gives me an undeserved blessing and what horrifies me honestly is the death of others.

[20:16] Some folks are scared to die and someone without the Lord ought to be afraid to die.

Christians if you know that you know I'm not talking about by your church affiliation I'm not talking about by your doctoral education I'm not talking about by your baptism or by your confirmation I'm not talking about by your family heritage I'm talking about by your personal decision to say Lord I am a sinner and have no hope outside of you today I ask you to forgive me of what I've done wrong and what I'll do wrong and to come into my life and change me empower me to rise above the temptation that comes into my life and save me Lord for all eternity

I am thankful that the Lord says everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved if you've done that you have no reason to fear death many do even though Christian and I understand that it's common we ain't been there you know new experiences are scary don't feel bad about that it's the fear of the unknown whatever you say about it afraid or not though it's final there's no turning back and I want to be clear today there's theological discussions about all this stuff I want to be clear today what I see in scripture tells me that once the door of opportunity is shut it's gone it's gone there is no second chances after this life let me go a step further and say this I believe the door can be shut spiritually before one dies and this is why the Bible is clear that we only come to God because the

Spirit of God draws us it is God that does the initiation it is God that does the knocking and on some hearts doors it may only be once and in other people's lives it may be multiple times but there comes a time either in your death or possibly before your death when God no longer initiates that and without his initiation we're not awake enough spiritually to follow his lead God has a deadline you don't know what that is I don't know what that is I had a man tell me one time he said I don't think I can be saved I think I passed God's deadline I said that's blasphemy you don't have a clue how God works in your life and what he'll do in you there comes a time when the

Spirit's conviction does not come hardness sets in there comes a time when the message is not heard the knock does not come and so if God is speaking to your heart today respond the door may never be opened again I don't understand all that I'm not saying that definitively for your life I'm just telling you that if you slip out of this life or he interrupts our life by his return you will miss the

opportunity and I want you to hear me today Jesus is clear the door will not be opened again I'm not sure how to stress the urgency and I know when I do that somebody will say it sounds manipulative and you know what I'll tell them to do I'll tell them to go back and read Matthew 25 because what Jesus says is you need the oil of the Holy Spirit of God in your life before it's too late and I thank God today that today is the day of salvation he provides us that opportunity when God calls come when he leads go and every time you deny him understand your heart grows harder toward his truth now that speaks to us in several ways today for one if there's any uncertainty in your life about your salvation and a lot of people teach different things

[25 : 43] I truly believe that scripture says that unless we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised him from there we won't be saved I mean that's the only way we can be saved is to acknowledge that you can learn all the theology you want to you can go through all the steps of any church affiliation you want to but if you've never surrendered your life to the Lord if he's not Lord of your life you're not ready for his return you're not ready to leave this life and I don't want anybody who has the responsibility of hearing that message because you've heard it to be left with the guilt of it by not responding if your house was on fire at 2 a.m.

in the morning I'm not going to sit in your driveway and wonder should I knock on the door should I tell them I sure don't want to wake them I'm not going to do it I'm going to knock on your door I'm going to bust out a window I'm going to do whatever I can to make sure that you hear the message that it's almost too late that may not be for you I don't know and if you know you're a Christian today and you can rest in that fact you're certain of it thank God you have a story to tell and the Christian church in America has went to sleep and that is why our world is in the mess that it's in you say well what can I do it ain't about what you can do it's about what God can do in you and through you when you're willing to do something for him he took a ragtag bunch of 11 men added a 12th one when the one wasn't good and they changed the world and if it wasn't for them we wouldn't have this gospel today we have a job to do folks and I don't know how much time we have to do it but I know we don't have a day to waste if you don't know the

Lord today let's talk about it let's pray about it together Lord Jesus I love you I thank you Lord for your word I thank you Lord for your message I thank you Lord that you loved us enough to give us an adequate warning and Lord I've tried today to be true to what you've shared to not overdo to not underdo to not play off of it but to be real God I ask that your Holy Spirit is working and moving in hearts and lives today and giving folks the boldness to step up and step out to do what it takes to honor you with their lives thank you

Lord that I can share a gospel message with anybody and let them know the Lord will save them he's willing and able to if they'll respond to him lead us right now oh God I pray whether it be a public decision about a previous private decision whether it be one who's felt led to be a part of this congregation whether it be one who needs to get saved today or one who needs to let their salvation shine through their lives God whatever it may be lead us Lord today and help us to be obedient as you speak in Jesus precious name amen stand together amen yes people Half of do never ex without majesty earth garden y são l e val r moons love Everyone est to beat me PlayStation shot spirituality marca lit hit ring