

## **Matthew 25:1-13 – "Readiness for the Kingdom"**

**Text: Matthew 25:1-13 (CSB)**

**1 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they didn't take olive oil with them; 4 but the wise ones took oil in their flasks with their lamps. 5 When the groom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. 6 In the middle of the night there was a shout: 'Here's the groom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all the virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 But the foolish ones said to the wise ones, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.' 9 The wise ones answered, 'No, there won't be enough for us and for you. Go instead to those who sell, and buy oil for yourselves.' 10 When they had gone to buy oil, the groom arrived. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut. 11 Later the rest of the virgins also came and said, 'Master, master, open up for us!' 12 But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.' 13 Therefore be alert, because you don't know the day or the hour."**

### **Key Background:**

- **Wedding Customs:** In first-century Jewish culture, wedding celebrations lasted several days. The bridegroom would come to claim his bride, often at an unexpected hour, and the wedding party would process to the celebration with lamps or torches.
- **Virgin Attendants:** These were young unmarried women who served as honor attendants for the bride, similar to modern bridesmaids. Their role was to welcome the bridegroom with lighted lamps.
- **Oil Lamps:** Small clay lamps burned olive oil with a wick. They required regular refilling and maintenance to keep burning brightly. Extra oil was essential for extended use.
- **The Delay:** Bridegrooms often came later than expected, sometimes very late at night or early morning, testing the preparedness and patience of those waiting.
- **Purchasing Oil:** Oil merchants would typically close their shops at night, making it difficult or impossible to purchase oil during nighttime hours.
- **"I Don't Know You":** This phrase indicates complete rejection and denial of relationship, not just lack of recognition.
- **Kingdom Context:** This parable follows Jesus's teachings about his second coming and the end times, emphasizing the need for constant readiness.

### **Questions from the Story:**

- **What does Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven to in this parable (v. 1)? What does this wedding imagery teach us about the nature of God's kingdom?**
- **How many virgins were there, and how were they divided (v. 2)? What does this equal division suggest about the mixed nature of those who appear to be waiting for the kingdom?**

- What distinguished the foolish virgins from the wise ones (vv. 3-4)? What does the oil represent in terms of spiritual preparedness?
- What happened when the bridegroom was delayed (v. 5)? What does this show about the natural human response to waiting?
- When did the announcement of the bridegroom's arrival come (v. 6)? What does the timing teach us about the unexpected nature of his coming?
- What did all the virgins do when they heard the announcement (v. 7)? What does this immediate response show about their desire to participate?
- What problem did the foolish virgins discover when they trimmed their lamps (v. 8)? What does this crisis reveal about the importance of prior preparation?
- What request did the foolish virgins make to the wise ones (v. 8)? What does this show about their expectation that others could supply what they lacked?
- How did the wise virgins respond to the request for oil (v. 9)? What does their refusal teach us about personal responsibility in spiritual preparation?
- What advice did the wise virgins give the foolish ones (v. 9)? What does this suggestion reveal about the nature of spiritual readiness?
- What happened while the foolish virgins went to buy oil (v. 10)? What does this timing teach us about the consequences of being unprepared?
- What did the foolish virgins find when they returned (vv. 11-12)? What does the closed door and the bridegroom's response reveal about missed opportunities?
- How did the bridegroom respond to the late arrivals (v. 12)? What does "I don't know you" teach us about the relationship required for kingdom entrance?
- What is Jesus's concluding command based on this parable (v. 13)? What does being "alert" mean in practical terms?
- What does this parable teach us about the difference between appearing ready and actually being ready for Christ's return?
- How does the inability to share oil illustrate that spiritual preparedness is a personal responsibility that cannot be transferred?
- What warning does this parable give about assuming we have time to prepare for Christ's coming at the last minute?
- How should the reality of not knowing "the day or the hour" affect our daily spiritual lives and priorities?