

May 17, 2015 AM

KINGDOM STORIES:
XI. “The Parable of the Ten Virgins”
Matthew 25:1 – 13

Introduction:

We’re in a series studying of Jesus’ parables entitled: Kingdom Stories. The truth of His kingdom on earth: Heaven is invading the human arena!

The major theme of the series: It has always been in the heart of God to create a kingdom of **A**_____ **S**_____ and **D**_____. Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:3, 4; Revelation 13:8

He created human beings with this Covenant of love in His mind. He would have a family of people who love Him and respond to Him in faith.

Of all creation we alone are made with the ability to **C**_____ with God from our **S**_____ to His spirit.

This morning we are looking at a “Priest of God” named Jethro. He is Moses’ father-in-law. He is “Priest of Midian.” The story about Jethro leading Moses, Aaron, and the 70 elders of Israel in a worship rite: Exodus 18:5 – 12. Do you see what he represents? He is part of the priesthood of the believing!

What matters most is a simple answer to a simple question: Do you and I know Jesus personally as Savior and Lord?

This is a picture of our spiritual adoption by God; this is not an afterthought. You and I are priests of our own lives solely on the basis of having **S**_____ to His life-changing **W**_____. We now have **D**_____ **A**_____ to the presence of God!

I. The Parable of the Ten Virgins:

Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like a bridegroom who is engaged to be married to the woman he adores.

Jesus uses the cultural picture of a bride selecting ten maidens to light ten lamps lighting the way of her bridegroom as he came to get her.

The virgins served as the welcome to the groom on behalf of the bride who lovingly awaited his arrival. Only five of the lamps were lit.

Jesus chose the picture of the wedding night to point to **S**_____ **T**_____.

II. Jesus Invites Us to Share in His Joy:

The picture of the wedding feast is another picture of what His kingdom is like: It is reason for festive and joyous celebration.

The groom gave only generalities of his arrival. It was a sign of great love if he found her lovingly expecting him to come for her. The ten lamps were vital to the picture.

The points of the parable should be clear but let's state the obvious: The virgins represent **B**_____. The lamps represent the **L**_____ of the Gospel. The oil represents the **R**_____ of the **S**_____.

Matthew 5:14, 16

III. We are All Responsible to Be Prepared for His Glory:

The truth this story tells is the **P**_____ is **P**_____.

Those who make adequate preparations are called **W**_____. We make preparations for His glory as the five wise girls did:

They had **S**_____ of heart.

They had **S**_____ of devotion.

They chose a life of **S**_____ -**D**_____.

Those who make inadequate preparations are called **F**_____. There was only one thing that was needful and they missed it. There are some things that cannot be borrowed:

A R_____ with the Lord

C_____ of heart and mind

S_____ **R**_____ in Christ

There are some things that can't be obtained at the last minute.

IV. When the Doorway is Shut:

The picture of the feast: Right now the **D**_____ of God's **G**_____ stands wide open, but a day is coming when it will be shut!

The word for the foolish girl's lamps is "extinguished." Paul wrote to the Thessalonians to not extinguish the fire of the Spirit!

The oil of His Spirit in you and me is purchased from Him as we:

Long to **K**_____ Jesus more intimately

Engage in heartfelt **P**_____

R_____ and **A**_____ His Word daily

S_____ to His **W**_____!

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

1. We have studied the truth that before creation God created a way for us to know His presence in our lives. What does knowing this truth mean to you personally for your journey in life?
2. We looked at a man named Jethro whose priesthood predates the Israelite priests. What does his life represent to us as we live in the kingdom of Jesus today?
3. Jesus tells us a parable about the ten virgins. In your opinion, what is the central message of the parable?
4. Jesus' parable indicates that the way the wise virgins acted was commendable in the eyes of God. Why is it commendable?
5. Jesus' parable indicates that the foolish virgins' actions were not acceptable. What was so bad about running out of oil?
6. The bottom line in the message was that with Jesus the doorway to grace is standing wide open. What are some ways that you and I can know for sure that we have walked through that doorway into God's grace?
7. At the conclusion of the message there were four points made about having hearts that are engaging in His kingdom. Discuss insights you have regarding being prepared for the glory of Jesus.
8. Read together aloud John 14:15 – 26 and discuss insights you have regarding the important tie between our love for God and our obedience to His commands.
9. Read together aloud I John 3:11 – 24 and discuss insights you have regarding demonstrating our love by our obedience to His will for our lives.
10. What do you need to understand, apply, and take away from this message in terms of your own walk with Jesus, especially your personal spiritual disciplines?

May 17, 2015 AM
Pastor Ken Hepner

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Introduction:

This morning we reengage in a series of messages that is a study of the parables of Jesus. I sensed the Lord’s leadership to entitle this series “Kingdom Stories” for a specific reason. There is a reason why these two words are chosen for the title of the series.

First, it is a study of the truth that the long-awaited Kingdom of Heaven is **Invading the Earth**, as the true and rightful king Jesus, enters into the human arena. Matthew tells us that the opening word of Jesus to His would-be-followers was, “*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.*” Something of heaven is here on earth and is available to everyone who chooses to open his or her heart to believe in and receive Jesus as Savior and Lord.

The second word is the word story. The truth is that our Lord Jesus was a marvelous story teller. He told stories that illustrated things about this kingdom of heaven invading the human arena. The fact is that story telling is a marvelous way to communicate truth in a way that people can remember. Jesus wanted His followers to be able to remember the truths He taught about His kingdom of the heart.

The truth of God that is burning in my heart and what compels me in this series of messages is a powerful Biblical revelation. **The Eternal Purpose of God Almighty** has always been to have **a Kingdom of Sons and Daughters**, a people who belong to God, a royal priesthood, and a holy people. He has been working at this since before time began. So when Jesus says: “The kingdom of heaven is like,” in the parables, those words have powerful meanings behind them!

We are not an afterthought, nor is His kingdom touching the earth an afterthought. Listen to the powerful truth revealed in the following Scriptures:

Matthew 25:34 “*Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’*”

Ephesians 1:3, 4 “*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*”

Revelation 13:8 “*All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.*”

Before human beings are created God makes a covenant with Himself that He would have a kingdom of sons and daughters. “Father when we create them and they sin, I will go and redeem them at the price of my own blood!” He created humankind with this in His mind. He would have a family, who would be able to choose to love Him and walk with Him by faith. God’s framework for the creation of human beings is a **Covenant of Sonship to God.**

In the fullness of time what God had already decided to do before He created humankind, was brought to completion in what Jesus did to redeem us. What took place in time on Calvary ratified what God had decided in eternity! Because of what Jesus has done for us we are adopted into that family of God that has been in His heart forever.

We have been working with a significant Biblical principle regarding this covenant of sonship and daughterhood to God that has been in God’s heart forever. **It is the Presence of the Spirit of God that Transforms us into sons and daughters of God.** When the child of God believes in Christ’s atoning work and invites the Holy Spirit of God to live in his/her heart, a powerful spiritual adoption has taken place.

Romans 8:14 – 17 *“Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”*

For the past months we have looked at truth in God’s Word all through the Old Testament illustrating the fact that it has always been in God’s heart to have a kingdom of sons and daughters of God, people who know Him personally. We looked at God’s heart before creation. We saw His desire for Adam and Eve, in Abraham, and in Melchizedek who is a priest without any genealogical record.

The truth is that God put spirituality into the humans He created, which explains why people in our culture are enamored with spiritual things. The origin of this comes from God who created them. The spiritual longing in humankind is what makes us long to worship God. The seed of sonship and daughterhood is what it means to be made in His image. We of all creation are able to **Commune with our God from our Spirit being!**

This morning as we look back at another Old Testament record of this desire in God’s heart to have a kingdom of sons and daughters. In the book of Exodus there is a story that gets at the heart of what God desired for Israel. I want us to look at another man of God. His name is Jethro. He is called a priest but who predates the priesthood of Levi’s descendants. He is the father-in-law of Moses whom we first meet when Moses flees from Egypt. Jethro and Moses spent a lot of time together in the desert. We next meet Jethro in Exodus 18 when he comes to bring his daughter and grandsons to be with Moses and the children of Israel.

Jethro is a priest of Midian. That seems really curious since Midian has been a sworn enemy of Israel. But remember that Midian was a son of Abraham by his wife Keturah; see Genesis 25:1, 2. Abraham’s obvious love for the Lord Jehovah very well may have passed down to Jethro from

his family, because this man can clearly see the hand of God on Moses' leadership of the children of Israel, and he's quick to praise God for it!

In Exodus 18:5 – 12 there is an incredible picture of God's work and presence in the life of Jethro priest of Midian. Jethro, we are told in this passage, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, then prepared a sacred meal for Moses, Aaron, and the 70 elders of Israel. They sat down to eat together with Jethro in the presence of God. Aaron who is about to become God's chosen priest defers to Jethro. Jethro leads them in the holy meal before God Most High.

Do you see what Jethro's life represents? It is a picture of this ancient priesthood of believers, a people who belonged to God predating the Israelites. This is something that has been in the heart of God forever. It surfaces again and again in His record down through the Old Testament. God wants to have a people who will walk with Him in intimate fellowship and relationship. What matters is not what kind of religious pedigree we have. What matters is a simple answer to a simple question: Do we know Jesus as Savior and Lord?

The truth Jethro's life teaches us is important to you and me because it shows us our sonship and daughterhood to God is not an afterthought. It is the thought. There is a school of theological thought that says that we are nothing at all, worms, good for nothing but yet forgiven. This system of thought ignores what the entire Biblical record declares about the people of God. Yes before our salvation we were fit for no good thing. We were sinners and deserved nothing but a sinner's Hell.

But we are not sinners who deserve nothing but a sinner's Hell when we meet Jesus personally and open up our hearts to His presence dwelling in us. The truth the Bible tells us that when we are redeemed we become the sons and daughters of God, indwelt by His holy presence who transforms us over time by changing our hearts. We are His children and we have been given throne room privileges in heaven.

You and I are priests of our own lives, solely on the basis of having **Surrendered** to the powerful and life-changing **Work** of Jesus in our hearts. This isn't dependent on who are parents were or what we did before. We now have **Direct Access** to God because we are a kingdom son or daughter. He sees us as His kindred-hearted people, with open access to His throne room at any time!

I. The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Today's parable of the kingdom of heaven revealed on earth, which we are studying together is the "Parable of the Ten Virgins." In this remarkable kingdom story, Jesus tells us the kingdom of heaven is like a bridegroom engaged to be married to the woman he adores. He has been betrothed to her since just after her birth, and he has patiently waited for his wedding day. He has gone on a journey but he plans to be back on a designated night, and when He gets there the wedding banquet will begin.

One of the historical things we need to know in order to understand this parable better is this. The bride in the customary Jewish wedding tradition chose ten virgins, who were usually close

friends, who attended to her needs. On the wedding night, their job was to go before the bridegroom carrying a lighted torch on a pole, to light the groom's way to get her. There were ten virgins carrying ten torches because in Jewish tradition ten is the number of perfection of the divine order of marriage for them. Their marriage path, lighted by ten torches, would lead them symbolically speaking to have a perfect marriage.

This was the reason why they were out there together on the side of the road waiting when they fell asleep. Their entire reason for being on this street at this time was to light the bridegroom's way to get their dear friend who waited for her man to come to her. They served as the welcome to the bridegroom as he entered into the area where his wife-to-be lived, swept her up in his arms and carried her to their new home.

When five of the virgins prove to be foolish because they didn't bring any extra oil along for their task, only five torches lit the way for their friend the bride and her bridegroom. Their showing up for the feast too late to light his way with his bride naturally put off the bridegroom. They have missed doing the one thing that was their responsibility to do. That is why they didn't get to enjoy the feast! Their entrance fee, so to speak, was to have a lighted torch on a pole and go before the bride and groom to light their way.

Jesus chose this word picture of the wedding night to point out **Spiritual Truth** to his listeners. There are some powerful lessons that are taught to us in this kingdom story if we have eyes to see and ears to hear what He is saying to us.

II. Jesus Invites Us to Share in His Joy

This is another picture Jesus gave to His followers so that we could see His perspective of what the kingdom of heaven is like. Jesus said it could be compared to the joy, celebrative and festive time feasting, singing, and dancing, that the people of that culture enjoyed during the days of wedding feasting. The wedding feast was such a high-spirited time for the people of that time, and that very often the whole town showed up for the feast.

The worries of life, the days of walking in intense suffering ourselves and suffering for our loved ones who are hurting are put aside. All of the battles they fought to stay pure and to walk with God are pushed to the back burner. The daily struggle to keep food on their tables were forgotten for a few days and they engaged in a wonderful and joyous celebration of wedding day love, the new life of the beginning of a brand new home in their city.

The groom often gave generalities regarding when he was coming for his bride, but rarely gave the specifics. It was a sign of her deep love for him if he found her waiting for him expectantly, with excitement in her heart. The wedding procession began at the groom's home. He went to her father's house, walked into her bedroom, and swept her up in his arms. The walk from her house back to his house would not be all that it is intended to be without the ten virgins to light the way. The ten lamps are so important to the culture and the girls are sent out to make preparations for the joy to begin.

The truth that Jesus is driving home should be pretty evident to us. The virgins represent **Believers** in Christ Jesus, the lamp represents the **Light** of the Gospel of His kingdom, and the oil in the lamp represents the **Resources** of the Holy Spirit who makes the light of the Gospel shine to a darkened world. What Jesus invites all of us to understand is that He expects us to engage in activities that prepare for His glory to be seen in Mifflintown, PA. When people we love walk with you and me, they should be able to see Jesus in our actions, and He will draw them to honor God in life!

Matthew 5:14 *“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.”*

Matthew 5:16 *“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

III. All of Us Are Responsible to Be Prepared for His Glory:

There are ten people who are sent out to wait for the bridegroom to come. They all have lamps that are burning and oil in the reservoir. However, the hours slip by and he tarries his coming. All of them are sound asleep. When the shout arises that he is coming they lit their torches. Now, all of the virgins who are bearers of the light will be seen for what they truly are.

The truth this points out to us is that **Preparation** for meeting the Lord is **Personal**. The only thing that will matter on that great day when we meet Him is have we responded to His invitation to know Him and have we invited Him to live in our lives, pouring in inner resources of the oil of His presence?

Those Who Make Adequate Preparations are called Wise. The wise are deemed so because they have chosen a far better attitude. They have been given one task by their friend the bride, and her man the groom. Have your lamps ready and full of oil so that when he comes back to get me you can joyously light the way to my home and for him to take me to his home.

They only had eyes for, thought for, and care for the bride and the bridegroom so that they were ready when the time came for them to be with him. There are several significant truths their lives speak to us who have a heart to hear what the Lord is saying to His followers:

- a.) The Lord’s followers have **Singleness of Heart** for the glory and honor of Jesus.
- b.) The Lord’s followers have **Sincerity of Devotion** to the will and ways of the Lord.
- c.) The Lord’s followers choose a **Life of Self-Denial** in order to honor the Lord.

Those Who Make Inadequate Preparations are called Foolish. The foolish ones find themselves shut out of the joy of their Master’s celebration, like the foolish virgins who arrived late and failed to carry out the one thing they were asked to do. Think about it. Just one task – have your light full of oil and ready to light the way as a blessing to the bride and her groom.

There is only one thing that is needful for you and me to be prepared to meet the Lord – **to have a Heart that is Filled with His Presence**, being changed by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, receiving His grace and mercy within! There are some things that cannot be borrowed.

- a.) No one can borrow a **Relationship with the Lord**; he/she must possess it personally.
- b.) No one can borrow **Character**; he/she must be clothed with it from the heart.
- c.) No one can borrow **Spiritual Riches** from someone else; they must be personally obtained by our own time with Jesus.

There are some things that cannot be obtained at the last minute, like the virgins who missed the banquet. A heart that is after God's heart is not obtained in a few minutes. If we are full of His grace and love poured out by His Holy Spirit, it has been purchased by a life that seeks God's word and work in the Scriptures and in prayer every day! Plans to make things completely right with God later on sometimes go awry. There are absolutely no guarantees that we will have time to put things right later on!

IV. The Time When the Doorway to His Presence Will Be Shut

The picture of the shut door of the wedding feast is pretty painful to the foolish ones who had not oil for their lamps. But remember the fact that this is a picture of spiritual things, eternal verities that the King of Glory, Jesus Christ is making available to us all. **Right now the Door is Wide Open to engage with the Lord**, to embrace His gift of salvation, open our hearts to believe Him and receive Him into our lives as Savior and Lord.

But there is coming a day when He comes for us when the doorway of grace will be shut and those who are on the outside are on the outside. The picture of the foolish virgins shut outside is such a clear word about making the right kinds of preparation now for a life with the Lord in heaven. I want to remind us of several truths we have been studying all spring and that are extremely important to us right here:

- a.) God is interested in having a kingdom of sons and daughters, a royal priesthood of people who belong to Him. This is His heart's longing and desire. It is what He has made available to us in Christ Jesus.
- b.) Remember the fact that God's desire is not simply that we experience forgiveness of sins, or that we escape going to hell. His desire is for a deep and personal walk through life with you and me. His desire is for relationship with you and me!
- c.) Those who are full of sorrow and shut out of the Wedding Feast of the Lamb will include those who have simply rejected His desire to dwell in us Holy Spirit, radically change our lives by His transforming power.

The word here in the Greek for the foolish virgins lamps going out is the word we render "extinguished." There was a time when their lamps were burning brightly and they were full of the oil that was necessary to keep them lit. But instead of engaging in activities that refilled their inner resources they rested on what they had in them!

In I Thessalonians 5:19 it is rendered "quench." In that text Paul says, "*Do not put out the Spirit's fire.*" You and I must have the sacred oil of His Holy presence in our lives daily! I implore us all to buy the oil we need today. The oil of His Spirit must fill us so deeply that His heart becomes our heart, His is our will, and our character reveals Jesus to watching people. We

choose to purchase more oil of His presence when we engage in the following activities with Him:

- It is purchased by a passionate longing to **Know Jesus more Intimately.**
- It is purchased with a faithful and **Earnest Prayer Life and Intercession for others.**
- It is purchased by getting alone with the Word of God reading it daily and applying it to our thought process and decision-making!
- It is purchased by a **Surrendered Will** to the will of God each new day.