

READING – Matthew 25:1 to 13

**SLIDE** Our Betrothal and Pending Wedding

We may begin reading about Jesus' last week here on earth in the Gospel according to Matthew in chapter 21 with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He then cleanses the Temple. Throughout the next few days Jesus tells several parables. The chief priests question His authority. The Pharisees work hard trying to trap Jesus with questions designed to create problems with the Roman leadership and the leaders of the Jewish religion. Jesus places a quilt upon them by His skillful and honest answers. Jesus makes predictions, including the coming destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. Things begin to turn bad as people realize this is not the king they had hoped for. A king to displace the corrupt Jewish leadership, a king to remove the Romans from Palestine and return Israel to power and glory among nations. In the middle of this fast moving week of king to accused criminal, to crucifixion, Jesus tells a parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins in chapter 25.

Please stand as Brother Hal comes forward for the reading of God's Holy Word in Matthew chapter 25 beginning in verse 1.

**SLIDE** <sup>1</sup>“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. <sup>3</sup>For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup>but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep. <sup>6</sup>But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him*.’ <sup>7</sup>Then all those

virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup>The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' <sup>9</sup>But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.' <sup>10</sup>And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup>Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' <sup>12</sup>But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' <sup>13</sup>Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour." (Matthew 25:1-13 NASB)

**SLIDE** Palm Sunday is usually a time for marking the kingly entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem at the end of his life. He comes riding on a donkey. Palm Sunday marks the beginning of the end of Jesus' time here on earth. The Gospel according to Matthew says, **SLIDE** "This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet (Isaiah): 'SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.' " (Matthew 21:4-5 NASB) The people spread their cloaks on the road, and cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road, and went before Jesus and shouted, **SLIDE** "Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21:9 NASB) This found in Psalms 118.

**SLIDE** **Hosanna** (ὡσαννά) is an Aramaic expression meaning, "Help, I pray" or "save, I pray." By Jesus' time "**Hosanna**" had become a shout of praise or adoration with the general meaning of salvation or deliverance. **BLANK** So they were saying: "Here comes our Deliverer, our Savior! Salvation belongs to the Son of David, the Messiah! Here he is. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." The king they expected would take hold of Israel and turn it once again into a mighty kingdom.

Instead the people received a different king - they got God Himself to come live among the people and offer them salvation. Unfortunately, this did not make most people happy

On Palm Sunday the focus is usually on Jesus the King. Today I want to say that, but also say something more, I hope much more. I want to focus on this truth: Jesus is not just a king; he is a betrothed King—an engaged King. Soon, upon His return He will be a married King. His betrothed bride is the people of God—the people who trust Him, the “elect” from every race and nation, the Church universal. He came the first time 2,000 years ago to die for His bride—to pay a dowry, as it were, with His own blood. He will come a second time to marry her and take us—His church—into the gardens and the chambers of His love and joy forever.

The Apostle Paul said it this way in Ephesians 5:31, **SLIDE** “FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church, as well as a husband and wife. I believe we can make this connection by what Paul wrote a few verses earlier, **SLIDE** “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.” **BLANK** (Ephesians 5:25-27 NASB) King Jesus came into the world to take a wife. Not a harem as many religions gods did. But Jesus gave His bride the greatest gifts – salvation, peace and joy. He paid for His bride with His very life. Jesus is now at work by His Spirit and by His Word purifying and beautifying His bride, the Church for Himself and also for His bride’s joy.

This is why Paul saw his ministry, his calling, as a kind of “go-between” for Jesus Christ, who is the groom or suitor, and the church as the one Christ is wooing to Himself. Paul said to the Christians living in Corinth, a city of corruption that compared to Sodom, **SLIDE** “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you *as a pure virgin.*”

**BLANK** (2 Corinthians 11:2 NASB) One way to describe the Christian ministry is to say that ministers of the word are agents of God in betrothing the church to Christ. It is a pastor’s job to help people live as spiritual virgins in a corrupt world. We seek to awaken people’s faith in Christ, which purifies His bride, the church; and we seek to deepen people’s love for Christ, which purifies them and His bride the church. This calling sobers and humbles me. The church is not ours, not yours, not mine. You belong to Jesus, you are His bride and you do not belong to me as your pastor, but you belong to Christ and Christ alone.

John the Baptist saw this and dared not lay any claim to Jesus’ bride. Someone asked him how he felt about the fact that his ministry was waning and Jesus was making many more disciples than he was. I can just hear John’s strong voice as he answered, “You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, **SLIDE** ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent ahead of Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.” (John 3:28-29 NASB)

Jesus, the betrothed King and bridegroom spoke of Himself in this way when the disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? **SLIDE** But the days

will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.’ ”

(Matthew 9:14-15 NASB) One of the functions of fasting is to say with our hunger that we miss the Bridegroom and want Him to come back and take us into His gardens and chambers forever. How anxiously we await the return of Jesus our King and husband. I cannot say it anywhere near as well the Apostle whom Jesus loved said in last book of the Bible, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, in chapter 19, **SLIDE** “Then I heard *something* like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.’ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, ‘Write, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ And he said to me, ‘These are true words of God.’ ” (Revelation 19:6-9 NASB) I say from the depths of my heart, **SLIDE** “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” I am ready Lord, come Jesus come! **BLANK**

So on this Palm Sunday our focus is not simply on the fact that Jesus came 2,000 years ago as a king on a donkey entering Jerusalem with people shouting, “Hosanna to the son of David” and a few days later they shouted, “Crucify Him ... His blood be on us and on our children.” My dear beloved, time will tell if we are the true and faithful bride of Christ or the unfaithful bride like Gomer and Israel. May we prove to be faithful brides for our King and husband who will come again. Remember this week that begins with Palm Sunday this fact, that the King of the universe came into the

world to betroth Himself to a bride at the price of His own blood, and that He will come a second time to marry His bride and take us into the infinitely beautiful chambers and gardens of His love and joy forever.

Everyone who trusts in, and believes in Jesus is His betrothed and is anxiously awaiting the wedding. Not every person will be a part of the marriage supper of the Lamb. Some will be outside wishing they could get in. So I urge you, “Trust Christ, believe in Christ, love Christ - be His bride in waiting.” The joys He gives us here and now are but a taste of the joys to come and are beyond anything experienced or imagined on this present earth. Until Jesus’ return He tells us, **SLIDE** “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” **BLANK** (John 14:27 NASB) The world is a place of unrest and violence, but we, my beloved have the gift of Christ’s peace! We can shout “Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!”

Now I ask, “What does Jesus want to say to us this morning in our position between the betrothal and the coming marriage?” What does He have to say to us who are the blood-bought bride of Christ? One answer is given in today’s text, Matthew 25:1-13. This is Jesus’ word to us about how we are to live in the time between His coming to betroth us, and His second coming to marry us. Let’s walk through this passage together verse by verse.

Beginning in verse one of Matthew 25, we read, “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.” Notice three things in this verse. It is about a Kingdom, and a bridegroom. This is where I got the idea that Palm Sunday is really about a *betrothed*

King who will return to be married. The king is betrothed, he has gone away on a journey, and he is going to return to be married.

Second, notice that this is a parable about the time between the first and second coming of Christ. We will see that more clearly as we move along through the text.

Third, notice that the virgins represent the visible church, that is, they represent those who profess to be Christians. They are going out to meet the Bridegroom. They are not those people who want nothing to do with the Bridegroom. But whether they represent those who are truly Christian we will see shortly.

Don't stumble over the fact that in the parable itself these ten are not the bride. The bride makes no appearance in this parable. The details of the parable should not be pressed too far. Look for the larger point. In some texts the church is pictured as the bride. Here the church is pictured as the ones who go to meet the Bridegroom and bring him in. Jesus doesn't want us to stumble over that difference. The parable is still about how we, the bride of Christ, should prepare to meet Him.

We will now move on to verses 2, 3, and 4. <sup>2</sup>“Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. <sup>3</sup>For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup>but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.” I don't think the percentages here are intended to say that 50% of the church is foolish. The numbers ten and five is incidental. What's crucial is how some were foolish and others were wise.

All ten had a job appointed for them to do. They were to be ready to welcome the Bridegroom with shining lights when he comes. That was their job or you might say their calling—to be ready as we see in verse 10. The instrument appointed for that calling were oil and lamps. It was their responsibility to use these gifts of spiritual oil

and spiritual light that were necessary for the work they had been given to do. They had been appointed to shine when he comes. Give light when he comes.

But five of them did not take seriously their calling to give light, and they neglected the only means by which they could do what they were called to do. They took no oil. They only had lamps. Their job was to provide light, and they had lamps without oil. Candles without wicks, torches without fire and light bulbs without electricity, in others words they had the outward form of religion and no internal power. They liked their position as part of the bridal party or otherwise they would have left. But they did not have a passion to use the necessary means to fulfill the point of their position. That is to give light! Their foolishness was to think that the mere form of a religious lamp would be sufficient. Or, perhaps, that the power to light a lamp could simply be borrowed at the last minute. However, in fact, it can't be borrowed at all.

We notice two things in verse 5, “**Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep.**” Jesus gave us advance warning that His coming would be delayed. This has been a stumbling block for two thousand years. The apostle Peter dealt with this in his second letter, writing, **SLIDE**<sup>3</sup> “**Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts,**<sup>4</sup> and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.’<sup>5</sup> For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water,<sup>6</sup> through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.<sup>7</sup> But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.<sup>8</sup> But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice,



beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is **not** slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:3-9 NASB) **BLANK** Jesus told us in verse 25 of Matthew 25 that he would be delayed. But, man’s sinful nature leads him to lack faith like those who took no oil for their lamps. The devil has been at work since the “Fall of Man” and he will continue until the return of our King when he will be dealt with permanently.

Then notice secondly that it is not foolish to sleep. All ten slept, not just the foolish. This is not sleeping on the job of life. Sleeping is part of the job. What sleeping signifies in this parable is simply the ordinary activities of life. We are not called to go up on a mountain and gaze idly into the sky as we wait for Jesus. We are called to do our work and then rest. We then to do some more work and rest again. Jesus spoke of this in Matthew 24 saying, <sup>45</sup>“Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? **SLIDE** <sup>46</sup>Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. <sup>47</sup>Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.” **BLANK** (Matthew 24:45-47 NASB) So, all ten slept because sleep is part of the normal rhythm of life that we should follow - we work and rest and wait for Jesus.

Now the action in our parable picks up in verse 6, “But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him*.’ ” We know from our study a few months back that Jesus does not return quietly. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians, **SLIDE** “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.” **BLANK** (1 Thessalonians 4:16 NASB) The cry goes out: “He’s here! Go meet him! Let

your lamps burn brightly as you go!” This is going to happen some day! Now we are about to see in the rest of this parable what is a very sober warning to be ready for the return of Christ.

We read in verses 7 to 9 the following, “Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup>The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup>But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ ” You see a life of foolishness deepens foolishness. When the shout goes out that the bridegroom is here, they trim their empty lamps. They have no oil; they have just the outward form of worship of Christ. They trim their empty lamps when the cry rings out! This is deep folly. They have neglected the means appointed for doing their duty, and not even the shout wakens them to their empty lamps—not at first anyway. They trim their empty—their useless—lamps, for when Christ returns it will be too late for them. In desperation they ask the impossible. Give us from your oil. The fact that the five wise virgins won’t give them any oil is not meant to teach selfishness. It is meant to teach the impossibility of borrowing faith. It’s meant to teach the impossibility of borrowing the power of the Holy Spirit—the impossibility borrowing obedience and faithfulness. It’s too late. That is what we will see at His return.

What the wise virgins mean when they say in verse 9, “...there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.” ... is this - We can’t have faith for both you and for us. We can’t have inner spiritual life for you and for us – it doesn’t work that way. We can’t give you obedience and faith – you must have this for yourselves. The faithful use of God-appointed means – in this parable the means is “oil” – the oil of faith and obedience, the oil of the Spirit who dwells in

the souls of believers. They are telling the foolish that if you neglect the “oil in your lamps – the saving faith, the indwelling of the Spirit and obedience to Christ in this life, we can’t create them for you. Each person bears his own load and is responsible. So in desperation the foolish virgins, who wasted their lives, ran for the impossible: instant end-time obedience - instant end-time faith. It is too late.

The fact that it is too late is clear as we read verses 10 to 12, <sup>10</sup>“And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup>Later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ <sup>12</sup>But he answered, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ ” These are absolutely terrifying words at the end of the age when Jesus comes back. “I do not know you.” For you had every opportunity - You were part of the church – You were one of the ten virgins – You were told to be ready and to not be of the world. You had lamps – I gave you the spiritual oil to burn with. A life that lives and shines spiritually does not burn out. But, you took the spiritual oil and turned it into a man-made religion. You turned to the world, you looked religious, but you did not understand a relationship with Christ is not religion, but a life living in faith and in relationship with God. But you took no care for the precious spiritual oil given to you by God. You carried the lamp; you polished it and kept it shiny. Others looked at you and assumed you had life, faith, and eternal hope. But, the truth was that all you had was an empty lamp. Christ returns and now, you are about to face the One who sees right through your lamp, and says, “Truly I say to you, I do not know you.” Let me tell you, you don’t want to hear those words. Many will. But no one has to. God has made Himself evident to every person. As Paul wrote to the church in Rome, **SLIDE** “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being

understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20 NASB) We are to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus, but we cannot force anyone to believe what God has so clearly demonstrated and they disbelieve at their own peril. **BLANK**

We close out our study this morning with verse 13, “Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.” (Matthew 25:1-13 NASB) “Be on the alert” or watch does not mean look out the window at night. It does not mean go up on a mountain and wait. Even the wise virgins slept when it was time to sleep. “Be on the alert” means – to be spiritually awake! Be alive and alert to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit that He gives now, to each believer. Use all the means God has given you to know Him and love Him and trust Him. Be filled with the oil of faith, oil of the Spirit and know joy and hope. Live for Christ and strive to live a Christ-like life now!

Let this thought govern your life - Jesus Christ came to betroth a people to Himself at the price of his own blood and He will return for the wedding of eternal honor. If I am a part of that betrothed people by faith in Jesus, He will come to me (and all who believe in him) and Jesus will say to all believers, “Come, O faithful bride, enter into my gardens and into my chambers and learn now for eternity what the dim shadows of earthly pleasures were all about.” And, our response is now and will always be, **SLIDE** “Come, Jesus, Come!”

Amen!