**Sermon Notes – Sunday 3rd December – Advent Sunday. ‘The Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids’**

 **Read Matthew 25:1-13. The Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids**

* Ten virgins who were waiting for the bridegroom to come - some were prepared and ready to meet the bridegroom and some had not planned ahead so were not ready.
* Anticipation of the bride and bridegroom as they wait for their whole marriage process to begin. Typically, the wedding celebration started when the bridegroom came to the bride's house. The bride and all the bridesmaids (10 appeared to be a customary number to have) would be there waiting for him. One of the great things to do, if you could, was to catch the bridal party napping. So the bridegroom comes unexpectedly, and sometimes in the middle of the night - although he would be required to send a man ahead of him along the street to shout "Behold! The bridegroom is coming!" But that could happen at any time so the bridal party had to be ready to go out into the street at any time to meet him - whenever he chose to come. The other thing is that no one is allowed on the streets after dark without a lighted lamp, and when the bridegroom had arrived and the door had been shut, the late-comers to the ceremony would not be admitted.
* Once the bridegroom arrived, they would all go through the village, usually at night, with torches (be like a bridesmaid carrying flowers now) in a celebration of singing, talking, and joy. In the parable, everything was ready for the wedding to start. The bridegroom had prepared a home. He was now coming to come take his bride to their new home. He would come at night so the procession through the village could be enjoyed by everyone. Then the wedding party would go to the couple's house, where the celebration would continue for as long as seven days. At the end of the celebration, a friend of the bridegroom would take the hand of the bride, place it in the hand of the bridegroom, and everyone would leave. Then the couple would physically consummate their marriage.

**2. Who do the 10 virgins represent?**

* Initially, this parable was directed against the Jews. They were the chosen people; their whole history should have been a preparation for the coming of the Son of God; they should have been prepared for Him when He came. Instead they were quite unprepared and therefore were shut out. What a tragedy for the Jews.
* On a more universal scale, the 10 bridesmaids would be those who profess to be Christians.
* They say they anticipate Christ's return and are prepared for Him. Their presence symbolizes their interest in Christ and their torch symbolizes their profession of faith in Christ.

**3. Why were 5 of the virgins considered wise? Why were the other 5 considered foolish?**

* On the surface the ten bridesmaids look alike but inwardly they are not alike.
* Today the foolish virgins would be those who grew up in the church and made a commitment - have a light but is going out because they are not filling their lives with spiritual nurture (not maintaining their relationship with Christ). In this way they are not preparing themselves to meet Christ
* The five that were called wise had planned ahead and prepared for the future. Had brought extra oil with them which means they were filling their lives with spiritual nurture so their lights wouldn't go out.
* The five that were called foolish were less careful, living only for the moment and not caring about the future. Therefore, they were caught unawares because they hadn't planned or prepared for the future. They also could not borrow from those who were prepared.
* In this parable we see that all 10 identified themselves with Christ externally, but only five were really believers. The true believers were the wise ones.
* The foolish ones will deceive themselves by thinking that everything is OK because they are involved in church.
* Both the wise and wise & foolish virgins fell asleep because it was late, so that doesn't seem to be the problem - it was that the wise ones prepared themselves with oil before they fell asleep and the foolish didn't.

**4. Why didn't the wise virgins share their oil with the foolish virgins?**

* They said there wouldn't be enough for both of them
* It wasn't that the wise virgins were selfish; it's just that you can't borrow from someone else's relationship with Christ. Every person is accountable to make his own life right before God. A person also cannot borrow another person's character; he must be clothed with it. We cannot ride on the coat tails of others spiritual experiences; we need to acquire them for ourselves.

**5. Who does the bridegroom represent?**

* Jesus

**6. How long would it be before the bridegroom came? What might those who are waiting for Him be tempted to do?**

* He would be a long time in coming. He finally did arrive at midnight.
* They might become drowsy and fall asleep
* Maybe Jesus was subtly telling the disciples that the kingdom wouldn't come as soon as they expected or how they expected.
* It is easy to get excited about Christ's return but when nothing seems to happen, it is tempting to think that nothing will happen so just go back to our regular routines. We are to wait as we carry out our daily responsibilities. Matthew 24:40-41 says: "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." People will be carrying on business as usual when Christ returns. Matthew 24:38 says, it will be like it was in the days of Noah, when people kept on eating, drinking, and marrying.
* Midnight seems to be a late time to start a wedding. Yet interestingly enough, the deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptians happened at midnight (Exodus 12:29-33).

**7. What is the most important planning and preparing we can do for the future?**

* Make sure we are part of God's kingdom by having received God's saving grace and stay in close relationship with Jesus so you keep being filled with His Spirit so you will be prepared when Christ returns.
* Keep watch for we don't know the day or hour that Christ will return
* We can't wait until the last minute to get ourselves ready for Christ's return - we can't do it when He is on the way. It is just like it is too late to begin to prepare for an exam on the day of the exam or it's too late for a person to acquire a skill or character, if he doesn't already possess it when an opportunity or task comes his way. Too late is always a tragedy so we need to prepare ourselves and be prepared for what lies ahead.

**8. What is the consequence of being unprepared for Christ's return?**

* If we are not ready when Christ returns we will be shut out from His presence and kingdom. We will be told by Jesus that He doesn't know us. (shudder)

**9. What will be the reward for being prepared to greet Christ when He does return?**

* Christ will admit only the prepared ones into the kingdom.
* We need to be wearing the wedding garment (Matthew 22:11)