

LESSON 22
“Inherit The Kingdom Prepared For You”
Matthew 25

OVERVIEW:

The parable of the ten virgins. Parable of the talents. Qualities of those who inherit the kingdom of heaven.

SCRIPTURES:

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
ST MATTHEW
CHAPTER 25

Jesus gives the parables of the ten virgins, the talents, and the sheep and the goats.

(This is still Tuesday afternoon, the conclusion of the Olivet Discourse on the Mount of Olives to his apostles.)

1 (And) ^aTHEN (, at that day, before the Son of Man comes,) shall the kingdom of heaven (shall) be likened unto ten ^bvirgins, (According to Jewish authorities, it was the custom of the East to carry in a bridal procession about ten such lamps. In Palestine, ten was the number required to be present at any office or ceremony, such as at the benedictions accompanying the marriage ceremonies. MM, 3:466) which (who) took their ^clamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 And five of them were wise, and five (of them) were foolish. (“Surely this parable is not intended to divide half the saints into one group and half into another. But it does teach, pointedly, that there are foolish saints who shall fail to gain the promised rewards.” DNTC, 21:685)

3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: (Olive oil was used anciently for culinary, cosmetic, funerary, medicinal, and ritual purposes. Its most important use, though, was to provide light. It provides the clearest, brightest, and steadiest flame of all the vegetable oils. Verse by Verse, the Four Gospels, p. 531)

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried (In last week’s lesson of Matthew 24, the idea that the Lord delayed his coming, is again mentioned in this parable.), they all ^aslumbered and ^bslept.

6 And at midnight (And then at midnight, while the world sleeps – a most unlikely hour for a bridegroom to come and claim his bride – behold he cometh and his reward is with him. MM, 3:467) there was a cry made, Behold, the ^abridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their ^alamps. (The common household oil lamps of 2000 years ago had enough capacity for an evening’s light. It was small enough to be cradled in the palm of the hand and was about an inch or slightly more in height. It had a hole in the middle of the top for oil. The oil lamp also had an elongated spout like extension where the cotton string wick protruded. Extending the wick provided a brighter flame while consuming the oil faster. Trimming the lamp meant extending the wick just enough to keep a flickering flame and using a minimal amount of oil. When more light was needed, a pin could be used to pull the wick out a little further, thereby increasing the light. In the parable of the ten virgins, they were invited to light the way of the bridegroom. The foolish virgins may have used up too much light on themselves early in the evening and were left unprepared for the Master when He arrived later. Daniel Rona, New Testament Supplement, p. 104. If they had been dedicated to serving Him, they would not have wasted their oil.)

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps ^aare gone out (Gr are going out). (The five foolish virgins thought that their meager supply of oil was sufficient when they went out to meet the Bridegroom, but found they were not prepared for a longer usage of their oil.)

9 But the wise answered, saying, ~~Not so~~; lest there be not enough for us and you: ~~but~~ go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ^aready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was ^bshut (Gr locked)

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open (un)to us.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I ^aknow you not. (Ye knew me not.)

13 ^aWatch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh. (Though all ten have every intention of meeting the Lord, only those who have thoroughly prepared their vessels to take up their light and let it shine once the Bridegroom arrives will be allowed to join him on the path that leads to the sacramental altar of the wedding feast. The theme of being watchful was taken up in Matthew 24 last week. **“Spencer W. Kimball “I believe that the Ten Virgins represent the people of the Church of Jesus Christ and not the rank and file of the world. All of the virgins, wise and foolish, had accepted the invitation to the wedding supper; they had knowledge of the program and had been warned of the important day to come.** They were not the gentiles or the heathens or the pagans, nor were they necessarily corrupt and reprobate, but they were knowing people who were foolishly unprepared for the vital happenings that were to affect their eternal lives. They had the saving, exalting gospel, but it had not been made the center of their lives. They knew the way but gave only a small measure of loyalty and devotion. I ask you: What value is a car without an engine, a cup without water, a table without food, a lamp without oil? Rushing for their lamps to light their way through the blackness, half of them found them empty. They had cheated themselves. They were fools, these five unprepared virgins. Apparently, the bridegroom had tarried for reasons that were sufficient and good. Time had passed, and he had not come. They had heard of his coming for so long, so many times, that the statement seemingly became meaningless to them. Would he ever come? So long had it been since they began expecting him that they were rationalizing that he would never appear. Perhaps it was a myth. Hundreds of thousands of us today are in this position. Confidence has been dulled and patience worn thin. It is so hard to wait and be prepared always. But we cannot allow ourselves to slumber. The Lord has given us this parable as a special warning.” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 252-253.) **In the parable, oil can be purchased at the market. In our lives the oil of preparedness is accumulated drop by drop in righteous living. Attendance at sacrament meetings adds oil to our lamps, drop by drop over the years. Fasting, family prayer, home teaching, control of bodily appetites, preaching the gospel, studying the scriptures – each act of dedication and obedience is a drop added to our store. Deeds of kindness, payment of offerings and tithes, chaste thoughts and actions, marriage in the covenant for eternity – these, too, contribute importantly to the oil with which we can at midnight refuel our exhausted lamps.”** Faith Precedes the Miracle, Spencer W. Kimball, p. 256)

(D&C 45:56-57: 56 And at that day, when I shall come in my ^aglory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten ^bvirgins. 57 For they that are wise and have received the ^atruth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their ^bguide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the ^cfire, but shall abide the day.)

(This next parable is still in the context of being prepared. This is his last recorded parable. **“Jesus dramatized the truth that to gain salvation men must keep the commandments and be guided by the Holy Spirit. Thus, Obedience is essential to salvation. By now giving the parable of the talents, he completes the picture. Not only must mortals keep the commandments to gain an inheritance in the Father’s kingdom, but they must also get outside themselves in service to their fellowmen. Both obedience and service are essential to salvation.”** MM, 3:469)

14 ¶ (Now I will liken these things unto a parable.) For *the kingdom of heaven is* (it is like) as a man travelling into a far country (Jesus, who is soon to ascend to his father, there to dwell until the Second Coming), *who* called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. (The talents were a divine gift. “All men, and the servants of the Lord in particular, acquired, in preexistence, by obedience to law, the specific talents and capacities with which they are endowed in this life. Men are not born equal; they come into mortality endowed with the abilities earned and developed in a long period of premortal schooling. And a just and equitable Being, who deals fairly and impartially with all his children, expects each of them to use the talents and abilities with which they are endowed and the gifts that are given them by a divine Providence.” MM, 3:470)

15 And unto one he ^agave five ^btalents, (A talent was a monetary weight, a sum with financial value (75 pounds or 34 kilograms of silver). The concept of a talent as an ability, an aptitude, skill, or strength came later. In a symbolic sense, though, both definitions could be applied to the message of this parable. Verse by Verse, the Four Gospels, p. 535) to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway ~~took~~ (went on) his journey. (James E. Faust said: “If their talents are used to build the kingdom of God and serve others, they will fully enjoy the promises of the Savior. The great promise of the Savior is that they shall receive their reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.” CR, April 1994, p5.)

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and ~~made them~~ (gained) other five talents.

17 And likewise he ~~that had~~ (who) received two (talents), he also gained other two.

18 But he ~~that~~ (who) had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and ^areckoneth (Gr settled accounts) with them.

20 And so he that had received (the) five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou ^adeliveredst Gr entrustedst) unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

21 His lord said unto him, Well done, ~~thou~~ good and faithful ^aservant: thou hast been ^bfaithful over a few things, I will make thee ^cruler over many things: (“Men are called to rule a deacons quorum, an auxiliary organization, a Sunday School class, a ward or a stake, or whatever, all to gain experience for future eternal administration.” MM, 3:471) enter thou into the ^djoy of thy lord.

22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two ~~other~~ talents beside(s) them.

23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and ^afaithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24 Then he ~~which~~ (who) had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an ^ahard (Gr strict) man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not ~~strawed~~ (scattered):

25 And I was ^aafraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: (and) lo, ~~there thou hast that is thine.~~ (here is thy talent; take it from me as thou hast from thine other servants, for it is thine.)

26 His lord answered and said unto him, ~~Thou~~ (O) wicked and ^aslothful servant, thou knewest that I ^breap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not ~~strawed~~ (scattered):

27 (Having known this, therefore,) Thou oughtest ~~therefore~~ to have put my money to the exchangers, and ~~then~~ at my coming I should have received mine own with ^ausury.

28 (I will) Take therefore the ^atalent from ~~him~~ (you), and give it unto him ~~which~~ (who) hath ten talents. (Everyone receives at least one gift. (D&C 46:11-12. 8 Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived ^aseek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given; 9 For verily I say unto you, they are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do; that all may be benefited that seek or that ask of me, that ask and not for a ^asign that they may ^bconsume it upon their lusts. 10 And again, verily I say unto you, I would that ye should always remember, and always retain in your ^aminds what those ^bgifts are, that are given unto the church. 11 For all have not every ^agift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and

to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God. **12** To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby. **13** To some it is given by the ^aHoly Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world. **14** To others it is given to ^abelieve on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful. **15** And again, to some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know the ^adifferences of administration, as it will be pleasing unto the same Lord, according as the Lord will, suiting his ^bmercies according to the conditions of the children of men. **16** And again, it is given by the Holy Ghost to some to know the diversities of operations, whether they be of God, that the manifestations of the ^aSpirit may be given to every man to profit withal. **17** And again, verily I say unto you, to some is given, by the Spirit of God, the word of ^awisdom. **18** To another is given the word of ^aknowledge, that all may be taught to be wise and to have knowledge. **19** And again, to some it is given to have ^afaith to be healed; **20** And to others it is given to have faith to ^aheal. **21** And again, to some is given the working of ^amiracles; **22** And to others it is given to ^aprophecy; **23** And to others the ^adiscerning of spirits. **24** And again, it is given to some to speak with ^atongues; **25** And to another is given the interpretation of tongues. **26** And all these ^agifts come from God, for the benefit of the ^bchildren of God. **27** And unto the ^abishop of the church, and unto such as God shall appoint and ordain to watch over the church and to be elders unto the church, are to have it given unto them to ^bdiscern all those gifts lest there shall be any among you professing and yet be not of God. **28** And it shall come to pass that he that asketh in ^aSpirit shall receive in Spirit; **29** That unto some it may be given to have all those gifts, that there may be a head, in order that every member may be profited thereby. **30** He that ^aasketh in the ^bSpirit asketh according to the ^cwill of God; wherefore it is done even as he asketh. **31** And again, I say unto you, all things must be done in the name of Christ, whatsoever you do in the Spirit; **32** And ye must give ^athanks unto God in the Spirit for whatsoever blessing ye are blessed with. **33** And ye must practise ^avirtue and holiness before me continually. Even so. Amen.)

29 For unto every one that (who) hath (obtained other talents,) shall be ^agiven, and he shall have (in) ^babundance: but from him that hath not (obtained other talents,) shall be ^ctaken away even that which he hath (received).

30 And (his lord shall say unto his servants,) cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (The Lord is trying to tell us to be prepared for his coming. **The secrets of preparedness are: Stay alert, watch and pray always, be not deceived, exert effort to do good and righteousness with whatever gifts the Lord has given you, do not idle away your short time on earth for the day of reckoning will arrive. If you have not improved your time while on earth your just reward will be as the slothful servant who hid away his life in fear or in idleness.** Men not unfrequently forget that they are dependence upon heaven for every blessing which they are permitted to enjoy, and that for every opportunity granted them they are to give an account. You, brethren, that when the Master in the Savior's parable of the stewards called his servants before him he gave them several talents to improve on while he should tarry abroad for a little season, and when he returned he called for an accounting. So it is now. Our Master is absent only for a little season, and at the end of it He will call each to render an account; and where the five talents were bestowed, ten will be required; and he that has made no improvement will be cast out as an unprofitable servant, while the faithful will enjoy everlasting honors. Joseph Smith, TPJS, p. 68)

31 ¶ When the ^aSon of Man shall come in his ^bglory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he (shall) sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all ^anations: and he shall ^bseparate them one from another, as a ^cshepherd divideth ~~his~~ ^dsheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his ^aright hand, but the goats on the (his) left. (President Joseph Fielding Smith: Showing favor to the right hand or side is not something invented by man but was revealed from the heavens in the beginning... There are numerous passages in the scriptures referring to the right hand, indicating that it is a symbol of righteousness and was used in the making of covenants.

Answers to Gospel Questions, 1:156-57)

34 (And he shall sit upon his throne, and the twelve apostles with him.) Then shall the King say unto them on his ^aright hand, Come, ye ^bblessed of my Father, ^cinherit the ^dkingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an ^ahungred, and ye ^bgave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a ^cstranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye ^avisited (Gr took care of, cared for) me: I was in ^bprison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee ^asick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have ^adone it unto one of the ^bleast of these my ^cbrethren, ye have done it unto me. (Everything we do for the benefit of our companion and of our family, for example, is helping build the kingdom of God – and our own eternal kingdom. Everything we do to help and lift others of the Father's children is promoting the Father's plan and purpose. Bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of others becomes our plan and purpose, too. Verse by Verse, the Four Gospels, p. 539)

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the ^aleft hand, ^bDepart from me, ye ^ccursed, (Gr who have come under a curse) into everlasting ^dfire, ^eprepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was an ^ahungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the ^aleast of these (my brethren), ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into ^aeverlasting ^bpunishment: but the ^crighteous into ^dlife ^eeternal. (The Lord closes his sermon regarding the coming Kingdom of Heaven with one final parable. It is as though the three parables of this chapter are representative of stages of testing that we must go through to be admitted into the presence of the Lord. First is the test of being prepared to receive the bridegroom with lamps trimmed and ready when he comes. Next, if we are found worthy to partake of the wedding feast, we must then stand before him and give an accounting of all our talents and how we improved our time while on the mortal journey. Then finally there will be a great sorting out of the sheep and the goats. The difference between the sheep and goats is simple. How well did we serve our fellowmen? With this, the Lord has concluded his public teaching. He now will be with the apostles and closest friends and family.)