

The title of today's message is: **Always be Ready!**

Jesus said: **Be Prepared**

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Just about every house in America goes through a familiar ritual. This ritual takes place every day and some of you may be very familiar with it.

I call it the "Are you ready yet?" ritual. As the time to leave the house draws near parents begin asking their children, "Are you ready yet?"

A spree of responses follows. You hear: "I just need to brush my teeth and/or You hear: "I still have to get my lunch."

And sometimes you even hear: "I can't find my shoes!" Now, eventually, one of two things happens.

Either everyone is ready and you leave, or you leave and someone is putting on their shoes or putting up their hair in the car.

The need to be ready is something that none of us will ever escape on this side of heaven.

In a nutshell, my friends, this is what our text for today is all about. Jesus says it is of the utmost importance that we are prepared spiritually.

Be Prepared! Jesus says. Here Jesus is talking about the end times and what the Kingdom of heaven will be like.

Instructing us on how the Gospel will work among people, and how the precious seed of God's Word will affect hearts and lives.

How it will save some from this fallen, condemned, sinful human race; and how others will fail to enjoy its benefits, all of which is offered freely to all.

The Bible does speak of Judgment Day as a terrible day of wrath and mourning.

But Jesus speaks to us as if it were a day of joy: a day to meet the bridegroom. He compares the work of the Gospel to ten virgins, who go out to meet the groom.

Remember in Jesus' day, wedding parties did not meet at the church: they met at the home of the bride.

The groom then came to her parents' house to pick her up. When he took her into his house, the wedding and the marriage celebration officially began.

Now, when the bridesmaids made their way to the place where the marriage feast was to be held, they began preparing to meet the groom.

But there was a difference between them. What made the difference? Why were some considered foolish, and others wise?

Well, the five virgins who were foolish were truly not ready to meet the groom, yes they brought their lamps just like the other five.

But the foolish virgins failed to bring extra lamp oil. Again they were not prepared.

You see the wise virgins brought the lamps of Christian Life which were kept aglow by the oil of faith.

Its burning with the Holy Spirit's flame, and warming others with the glow of love and kind deeds that shine out as we proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The lamp is important, oh so important, but without the oil, it flickers, and goes out before it's time.

So many Christians get caught up with the lamp and it's light, that they forget the oil that keeps it aglow.

The zeal to do mission work, to build/maintain church buildings, the desire to help others, the warmth to serve: it all comes from the oil of faith.

What good is a heap of offerings without faith? They are a stench before God. What good is a litany of prayers without faith that God will hear and answer them?

They're nothing but vain babbling. What good is a multitude of deeds without the oil of love and faith in the Holy Spirit? It's nothing but empty, dead actions.

It's time to meet the bridegroom, and they've no oil. They assume that the wise virgins will be able to bail them out. But there's not enough oil to go around.

The point being: no one else's personal faith will save YOU. There are some things you can't borrow.

And what's sad is when a Christian loses faith: the wick goes out, because there's no oil. I can't believe for you: it's tough enough to believe for myself.

You can't believe for someone else: having faith for your own salvation is tough enough.

So make no mistake about it, the faith of your father, mother, or your grandparents, will save you.

Nor will the faith of your husband, or wife, your child, or your friend. Have it yourself.

Nor will the faith of your husband, or wife, your children, or a friend. Will be able to make you prepared to meet the bridegroom.

When you hear the Word of God, when you come to church here to receive free oil, you can't let anyone else get it for you: you've got to get it yourself.

Jesus once asked a sad question: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" Sadly the answer is most will grow cold.

My friends, It's the inward work of the Holy Spirit, the fire of faith in Jesus, that makes the outward things in our lives glow.

How do we get such faith, such oil that fuels our lives with the bright glow of love? Scripture says: Faith comes from hearing the Word of God.

Look, when we come to hear the Gospel, when God puts out his Word to us, he's offering the oil we need, free of charge.

When God's Word is set before you, don't just browse. Don't make worship family devotional time or Bible class just be a walk through the shopping mall of God's grace.

Take God's Word to heart, store it up in that one jar we have to carry our Savior home with us: the temple of our hearts.

The wise thing is to make sure that the faith is there, the inward cleansing of the heart, the Holy Spirit's fire.

Do so, and all the other stuff flows from that, and is kept lit by it. The foolish virgins get to find out how foolish they really were.

Spiritual apathy and sleep would be the hallmark of these last days. But where are you? Are you awake and ready with zeal to meet the Lord?

So many Christians today just don't do well with watching and waiting for the arrival of the Lord, just as the ten virgins, they all did fall asleep.

But when it was time to be awake and ready with zeal, five were prepared and five were not, they had no faith.

What Christian today doesn't sleep in spiritual apathy at least once in a while? We're like fitful dreamers, who awake in the middle of the night.

You know, something at church needs to be done, a bill needs to be paid, a window needs painted, or a lightbulb needs changed.

We sense the obligations we have to meet as a congregation. We need more money. We need to fix this or that.

And so we go off to take care of the business, but as soon as the little task is completed, it's right back to sleep.

The awake and ready zeal to tell others about Jesus and his sacrifice, to get on with the business of keeping an eye out for his return.

Of living life as a testament of his grace: that sort of constant zeal, the consuming passion for souls, and constant joyful faith in the Lord, it's all so rare.

We're ready, willing, and able to go tell others about a Saints' win that most everybody already knows about.

But when it comes to telling someone who doesn't know that God loved and gave his one and only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for all their sins?

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The cares and concerns of this life—jobs, careers, benefits, health, stuff—dreams of this perishing world, consume our hearts.

We focus all our energy on momentary fun and entertainment, and, yet, forget that eternal wedding awaiting us in heaven.

Again, we snore. We have receipts running into the hundreds on a weekly basis from Wal-Mart, Target, or Best Buy, but wealth spent on the gospel or on aiding this congregation to share the gospel?

Well, that's routine. Suddenly it's naptime. And we snore. Oh, sure we'll get to football game, baseball game, or the gym, but Sunday worship? That's so routine.

It's a snore! Just as Christ asked Peter, James, and John, so today he must ask again, "Could you not keep watch with me for but an hour?"

There's no need for us to be foolish. May we all be wise, and may we all take the gospel to heart: may we all believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be true to him from the heart.

He's been true to us with his whole heart, body, blood and soul. Then, even if we snooze a bit, we won't ever miss out on the eternal joys awaiting us.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.