

“The Difference between the Wise and the Foolish”

I want to start my sermon with one question today. What is your current identification with your existence? Just think of three things. I won't give you an example because the answer must come from yourself quickly and easily.

Identity not only constitutes a person's present but also becomes an important clue through which one can see the future of that person. So, when anyone has a question about his identity, he gets confused. Therefore, everyone needs work and effort to discern one's identity based on learning and set it on a solid foundation.

In Matthew 25, the proper attitude of the saints preparing for the end time and the second coming of the Lord is introduced by the three parables of Jesus. Even with the same Christians, the theme of “The End Time and the Second Coming of the Lord” is divided into a group that is likable and indulged in this and a group that is indifferent and taboo and shows opposite reactions.

However, regardless of human reaction, Jesus gave us very clear and thorough teachings and warnings on the subject of this “end time and the second coming of Jesus” through the Bible. I would like to, over the course of three Sundays from today, consider with you three parables related to the subject.

To understand the essence of the message, let us briefly review the wedding customs of the time.

Marriage in Israel at the time took place through a three-step process. First, there is a stage of betrothal. This is achieved through a formal agreement between the bride and groom's fathers. The second is the stage of engagement. At this time, the engaged parties gathered at the bride's house and made a vow to each other in front of several witnesses, and the groom delivered the engagement gift to the bride.

Third, it was customary to have a wedding ceremony about a year after being engaged. At this time, the groom went to the bride's house, took the bride, and returned to his house, where the reception was to be held, while parading. In the scripture, the ten bridesmaids must have been waiting to meet them.

In his parable, Jesus clearly distinguished between the wise and the foolish. And the key conclusion that His message intended was declared in the last verse: "Watch out, then, because you do not know the day or the hour" (v. 13). Instead of telling us the day and the hour, Jesus warned us that we should be awake.

I tried to find a way through Jesus' warning so that we could always be awake. We can find our way through each other's establishing identities. In the text, let's find the difference between the foolish and the wise. The bridesmaids invited to the wedding exist only to please the bride and groom. Then, only for the bride and groom, should it be their joy, even at the expense of their time and effort.

For that purpose, bridesmaids have to choose only one thing that day, between their personal situation and the groom's situation. Of course, unexpected things can happen around them. But when the women decide to do everything they do with all their heart, only for the wedding and for the bridegroom, they become the protagonists, who bring joy to both the bride and groom and to themselves.

When 10 bridesmaids were nodding and sleeping together, they all looked the same. But enough oil was prepared for the wise five. The Bible does not reveal when and how they prepared the oil. Where did the different consequences of their actions come from? It depends on what identity they had for themselves, I think.

In verse 9, let us hear the answer from wise women to their friends who ask for oil. They said "no" without hesitation. We usually do not object to the identification of wise and good behavior from a biblical point of view. However, in the moment of the end, there is a distinction between wise and good behavior. Except to greet the Lord with all your body and heart, they are all just obstacles to righteousness. Our salvation is something no one can do for us.

Unfortunately, we cannot predict the end time, but fortunately, we can prepare for it. Until the appearance of the groom, the ten bridesmaids had no conflict with each other. They were exhausted waiting for the bridegroom, all sleeping in silence. However, the moment the groom appeared, everything changed suddenly. And they were given an irreversible, fateful parting. It was caused by one thing: the problem of oil.

The Bible at that time does not say that the price of the oil was too expensive or that they had no money to buy it; it doesn't even say that the oil shop is too far away or that the shop has run out of oil. The foolish women did not care for whom or for what they were invited to the wedding ceremony. If we don't establish our identity, we will never be able to set the purpose of our lives correctly. Those women who did not find a clear purpose were not motivated to prepare oil.

Why didn't the groom wait for the foolish bridesmaids to buy oil and return? Why, after the groom entered his house where the banquet was held, couldn't he still have the door open? Couldn't the groom be reluctant to open the door when those late women knocked on it? This tells us that the Lord, who is in charge of the end time, has thoroughly set the limits of time and space in His mercy and grace toward us.

While living in this world, our identities can be chosen for ourselves according to our needs and through our hobbies, skills, knowledge, and goals. But for those of faith, another identity is required. This is not my choice; it is God's decision for us. This, in other words, is our spiritual identity.

By the way, the requirements of our spiritual identity and the consequences and rewards of this are introduced in the Bible. When we meet in that direction, we are recognized as being fully equipped with lamps and oil. In the end, Jesus will not question the abilities of each of us but will ask if we are proud of our status as children of God and have lived for His joy, glory, and satisfaction.

What happened to the bridesmaids who couldn't go to the wedding party that day? Are they just going home a little hungry? The bridegroom is the Lord, and the Lord declared, "I do not know you." Failure to participate in the wedding feast means eternal punishment and death.

Let's remember that our victory in faith today means that we are living as those vigilant and wise bridesmaids with our oil at the ready, which counts as the preparation of our future in everlasting victory. It won't be problematic for those who are awake, although they do not know the day or the hour," because they are living in the day and the hour already.

Let us look at Paul's teachings related to "End Time" in another scripture today. In the midst of the Apostle Paul's ministry, there was concern amongst the Thessalonica church. Some people among the church members who were waiting for the second coming of Jesus were dying. They thought the deceased could not accomplish their salvation.

Thus, Paul gave them the correct instruction of death in Christ in 4:16 and 17: "Those who have died believing in Christ will rise to life first. Then we who are living at that time will be gathered up along with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

The physical death in Christ, which in the original Greek means "fallen asleep," does not mean the total death of the soul. They are in rest now within the absolute promise of resurrection through Jesus Christ. Accordingly, the church in Thessalonica was empowered and encouraged by the vision.

Now, after listening to my sermons, think of three identities you wish to practice and wish for through the rest of your life. This time, I'll give you three examples. One of the three I have presented must be included in your three identities.

First, I am a child of God, saved through Jesus. Second, I am a disciple of Jesus who received the mission of preaching the gospel. Third, I am a family of the Wrightwood Community Methodist Church united in love.

I would like to briefly introduce one secret to preparing oil. Keep your fellowship with the Holy Spirit through the Word of the Bible. You will certainly have the identity of "I am a child of God". Then He will show you, tell you, and teach you His will and way. Because this is His promise.

# A pastor has cancer. The pastor gathered three sons in their twenties, gave a will, and left a verse from the Bible as a legacy. "Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). The two sons replied, "I know." But one son asked, "How can I know that, Daddy?" Then the pastor, who was concentrating on his thoughts for a while, replied, "Because I went and saw Him in the faith!" At that time, the three sons cried out at the same time, "Ah! Yes, my father really met Jesus! We must meet him too!"

If you don't have a firm identity as a child of God, the evil forces of the world will continue to seduce and shake you. On the contrary, when you have a firm identity as a child of God, the Holy Spirit guides you to follow His will. Even today, take Jesus as your master and give your life to him. Then, for you, an awake and wise life will begin. Amen.

\*\* Reflection and Application for Today's Sermon:

- 1) What habits of mind and behavior do you need to change, add to, or discard in order to solidify your identity as a "child of God"?
- 2) The distinction between the wise and the foolish for the End Time is determined by preparation. What decisions do you need to make now to continue to live the life of the prepared?
- 3) Those who die in Christ will be caught up in the air on the day of Jesus' return, just as the sleepers rise again. How do you want to pray each night before you go to bed?