

30.8.26 am

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Date: 30 August 2026

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0:00] Good morning everyone. A warm welcome to the service this morning. It's good to see everyone. It's good to see a number of visitors with us as well and you're especially welcome.

! If you're able to stay behind at the end of the service there's tea and there's coffee that is served. The evening service tonight is the monthly Gaelic service that will be taken by the Reverend Callum MacDonald and after that there'll be an English fellowship around about quarter past seven. And tonight that's organised by Jane and Peggy and Anna will give testimony, God willing, tonight. Community lunch tomorrow, 12 till 2, you can note that please.

And the prayer meeting on Wednesday will be taken by Angus McKellar. And Angus and Curtis will be heading away, I think it's the Monday after that, is it?

So, if you're able to come out on Wednesday, please do so. I won't be there. I'm doing a deacons court, followed by a prayer meeting, followed by a court session at Garibost. So please pray for me.

[1:06] Thursday evening, a short notice as well to say that Dr. Adam, who's been here in the past, he will be in Liverpool on Thursday at half past seven. All are welcome to attend that.

There were many other notices, you can read them at your own convenience. Let's now worship God and let's sing to his praise. So we're going to begin. We're coming to a chapter in Matthew, Matthew 25, where there is a clear call to follow Jesus, to be sheep, not goats.

And we're going to begin singing the Lord's my shepherd. Psalm 23. Psalm 23. We'll sing the whole of the Psalm. I think the tune for her is Arlington.

So we'll stand to sing now to God's praise, please. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me down to lie. In pasture stream, he leadeth me.

In pasture stream, he leadeth me. The quiet waters dry. My soul he doth restore again.

[2:54] And me to walk, he leadeth me. Within the paths of righteousness.

Within the paths of righteousness. Even for his own insane.

[illegible]

My table that has furnished, in presence of my foes, my head thou dust with oil anoint, and my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me, and in God's hands forevermore, and in God's hands forevermore, my dwelling place shall be.

[5:42] Amen. Also, I should have welcomed those who are not present in the building.

It's good to see everyone who's present. We are always aware of those who are not present, and those who are watching. And so a warm welcome to those who desire to be here, but who can't be here. And we pray that they will know God's blessings.

We pray that we will know God's blessing. I'm going to ask, just in a second, Stuart to come up and lead us in prayer.

So Stuart, one of our elders here, is coming up to lead us in prayer as an elder today. Tomorrow, he will be our minister in training.

So he starts tomorrow, he heads to ETS tomorrow, and he begins the first of four years as a minister in training. He'll do two of them here, God willing, and then head somewhere else afterwards.

[6:43] So be praying for Stuart as he begins, and also Joyce and Emily and Anna, as they seek to obey God's call to serve him in their lives.

Pray for Scott as well. He's not doing anything this morning. This morning, Thomas will preach him in, in Graver. This evening, he'll preach for the first time as their minister.

So pray for Scott. For those who are visiting, he was our minister in training for the last two years, and he was inducted on Tuesday. And he preaches for the first time in the adjacent parish, if we can call it that.

And he will begin there with Fiona and the family. So pray for Scott as well. I should say as well that Bethany, who's been with us since she was tiny, she's heading off uptown on tomorrow to begin a job.

So she'll be leaving us and we'll miss Bethany and we'll be praying for her. But we have Rebecca and Georgia. We're gravitating now back towards Harris again. And so as one goes, we are thankful for three that will come to be with us.

[7:54] And so it's good to see those new folks coming. And it's also good to reckon, to recognize and give thanks for those who've been with us over many years.

So Stuart, our elder, will you come and lead us in prayer? And then after that, Stuart will take the children's talk too. Okay, we'll close our eyes and come to the Lord in prayer.

Our gracious and ever blessed Father, Lord, we give you thanks that we find ourselves here in your house, this on your day. We give you thanks that as we look to you, we see a God that's near to us, not one that's distant.

A God that desires us to come to him. So we come before you, Lord, knowing that that promise of where two or three are gathered, you are with us. We are so grateful and so undeserving of that wonderful promise.

We give thanks that as we look to you, we see our creator. As we look out our windows, we see your glorious handiworks. And as we look to you, we see our sovereign Lord.

[9:08] And we thank you that it is you who is the one who's sovereign over each and every one of us. And we give thanks that it's not up to us to carve out our own identities and to lead our own lives, but that we do everything according to your will.

For we know that apart from you, we can do nothing. So this morning we pray, especially for those who are unable to be with us. We pray for those who are maybe housebound at this time. We pray for those who are maybe in hospital, either awaiting procedures or investigations.

We bring them before you, especially this morning, and ask, Lord, that they would indeed find their comfort in you. But we especially pray for those who have maybe woken up this morning and had a conscious decision not to be here.

From the moment they wake to the moment they go to sleep in the evening, have no thought of you. We pray for them, Lord, and ask that you would reveal yourself to them, that you would reveal your peace, reveal your light and your love to them.

And that they would recognize that this life is one that can only be lived by following you. As we will hopefully hear later on in the service, that we ought to be sheep and not goats, that we ought to be following our wonderful shepherd.

[10:22] So we pray, Lord, for those especially that don't know you, even those among us this morning that don't know you. We pray that you would make yourself known to them and that they would recognize that that sin that separates us from you is in each and every one of our hearts.

And that we ought to be remembering that and that we ought to remember that we need that reconciliation. So we pray, Lord, that we would be turning to you this very morning, those of us that don't know you. And for those of us that do know you, Lord, and have maybe drifted, we pray, Lord, that you would bring us back, Lord, that we would be faithful to you, that we would be disciples for you, that we would be witnessing to those around us.

That you would grant us those opportunities to share your word, to share the testimony of our own lives, that we would have those opportunities and a courage and a boldness to take the many

opportunities that do present themselves.

And that we would be ones that are pointing those around us to you and to the cross, not to this church, not to this denomination, but to the cross of Calvary.

And we pray again for testimony. We give you thanks as Anna will share her testimony this evening. We give you thanks that we have those opportunities to share the hope that is within us. And it is indeed a hope.

[11:37] It's not a life of rules and a life of sadness, as many would seem to portray it, but it's a freedom, a life of absolute joy and being able to glorify you and to enjoy you forever, Lord.

So we pray that we would be able to share that, hear that message this evening. We pray for Anna as she prepares to speak. And we pray for all of the services that are taking place this Lord's Day. Where Christ crucified is preached, Lord, we ask that you would bless those gatherings in our island here and beyond. We especially pray for our visitors that are with us and for their respective congregations that they have come from.

We pray for those fellowships and ask, Lord, that we would be able to see revival across this land, across not just our islands here, but across the nation and across the globe, Lord.

And that we would be able to see that wherever you see fit for that to happen. We know that there ought to be much prayer in these places. So we ask, Lord, that we would be continually praying for revival, praying for souls to be saved, and that we would be ready as a congregation here and a people of your church being able to reach out to those, to share the wonderful gospel news with those around us.

[12:51] Be that through our community lunch, through our Sunday school, through our youth work, through the Bible studies that go on, wherever it is that you've placed us as volunteers, Lord, in this church.

We ask that you would bless us and that we would be able to share the word with those around us, Lord. So be with us just now. Go before us as we share a short message with the young ones and the older ones as we seek, Lord, to go out from this place to be a blessing to others and that you would indeed bless us to do so.

So be with us just now. Forgive us for all of our sins. In Christ's precious name we pray. Amen.

Okay, boys and girls, if you could maybe come forward. I've got just a short message to share with you.

There's a good squad of you. I'm just going to take this bag out first of all. Now, you can just have a wee look at this. Now, David was saying that this morning's message is going to be about remembering that we need Jesus.

But there's something that we need to do before. We need to be ready. And I want us to talk a little bit about being ready. Hands up if you were at the football last night. Now, there was a football match last night. Big hands going up here.

[14:00] Who won the cup last night? Harris. Well done. I'm glad to see there's a couple of players here that were playing there. And hopefully they don't nod off during the service today.

But, who was playing? Is anyone here in this building was playing yesterday? Can you tell me anyone that was playing? Ben. Andrew. Andrew. Can you see him?

So see, before he was playing. So he was heading up. Do you think he had to get a bag ready? Or do you think he just turned up? Did he leave? Did he wake up in the morning with his football boots on? No.

What do you think he had to do? Do you think he had to get ready? Do you think he had to put a bag together of things? Or maybe Iona did it for him. I don't know. But, he would have had to get a bag ready.

And it's the same for everyone that went to that football game. That was playing in the maps. They had to get things ready. Even the referee probably had to get ready. We won't talk about him. But, you had to get ready.

[14:55] And if I... David just said there that I'm going to Edinburgh. I'm going to Edinburgh tomorrow. Now, do I have to pack a bag? Or do I just go like this and... Pack a bag. Pack a bag. Absolutely.

I need to make sure I've got all my clothes. I won't let Anna do it. Because she would put all the wrong things in. I have to do it myself. I have to make sure I'm getting ready. Now, the talk that we're going to hear later on for some of the older ones, it's a reminder to us that we have to get

ready.

And I've got three things in this bag that I'm going to share with you that mean we have to be ready. Now, we have to be ready for when Jesus comes. But there's three things that I want to show you that we can do that help us to become ready.

So, maybe you imagine we're going out on a camping trip and I've got this with me. Anyone know what these are? Biscoffs. Biscoffs. Wee biscuits. Why might I have biscuits in my bag? Why would I take biscuits on my journey?

Any idea? Well, yes, Olivia. Well, that's a good guess. And you've taken a bit of a judgmental look at me there. But yeah, that does happen.

[15:59] That can happen. But you're right. But also, we also have to be ready to help other people. And that's what those biscuits are there to remind us of. Sometimes when we are walking this life, there's old people here.

There's young people here. We have to help other people. And as Christians, as people that are getting ready for Jesus coming back, we have to be ready to help others. So those biscuits are a reminder that we have to help other people.

Feed other people that don't have food and look after them. Now, there's this other thing that I've got with me. Now, I'm not letting any of you touch this. But does anyone know what this might be? And I'll give you a wee clue.

There's lots of little things in this. Oh, Olivia, you've got all the answers. Your dad has one. So this is like a wee multi-tool. And it's got lots of little things in it.

It's got a nail file. I don't think I'll ever need that. It's got a wee ruler. It's got a wee knife. It's got these pliers. So if you were out and you needed to fix something, or let's say maybe a sheep gets stuck in the fence and you had to help it out, you could maybe use these things.

[17:01] But this little thing is another thing that helps us to become ready. And it reminded me that like this, there's lots of little tools and lots of little things that can come out the side of this.

All of us, all of you guys, all of the older people have all got these, we've got talents and we've got gifts that God's given us. We've got a community lunch tomorrow.

Does anyone know what everyone eats at the community lunch? Soup and sandwiches. Now, I was joking with Ali. We wouldn't have him making the soup for us, would we? That's maybe not his talent, but helping and serving.

That's something that Ali does really well at the community lunch. Someone else does an amazing soup. Your Sunday school teachers, they're all using their gifts and their talents to help you. That little toolkit reminds me that for us to be ready for Jesus coming back, we have to use the gifts that he's given us.

And that is speaking to your friends. It's inviting them to church. It's if somebody falls in the playground, are you going to walk away from them? Or are you going to go over and help them? You're going to go over and help them.

[18:04] So that's that one. And the last one, I've got a wee red thing here. Does anyone know what this is? Oh, you wee cheat. I should have told you not to speak. Yes, it's a torch. So it's a wee torch. Quite a bright one.

Sorry if I'm blinding you there. But this is a torch. Now, that would help. When would you ever need to use a wee torch? In the dark. In the dark. But what would happen if I didn't charge that?

Or if I didn't put the batteries in? What would have happened? Ben? You wouldn't see. You wouldn't see. There would be complete darkness. So it's again, another thing to remember.

We need to be ready. So Jesus is coming. And there's a story. And I'll open it up just now. David's going to read through this as part of his talk today. But there's a story of these bridesmaids.

And they're waiting for the bridegroom. And they've got their lamps. But some of them don't have oil in their lamps. And then the bridegroom comes. And they've got no oil. And they're trying to get some.

[19:01] And it's too late. The door is closed. And it's too late for them. So that's. We need to remember. That we don't have to pack our bags. See the bag that got packed for the football that Andrew took.

Or the bag I'm packing to go away tomorrow. Or any bags you pack if you go camping or to school. Maybe we won't ask Emily. But you don't pack at last minute, do you? You shouldn't be packing at last minute.

You plan ahead. You have your bag packed. And you're ready to go. If you've got a torch that you need. You have your batteries ready. You have backup batteries. Or you have these things charged. So we need to be ready.

So these little things are a reminder that what we do in our life. Is getting us ready for when Jesus comes. So little things like looking after other people. Trusting in Jesus.

So when you come to Sunday school guys. And you hear messages. Or you're in church. And you hear David preaching. And God willing me. In the weeks ahead. We listen to what Jesus and God is telling us.

[19:58] Because it changes our lives. And that allows us to be ready for him. Do you think being a Christian is for young people or old people? Or all people?

All. So you can't just look and say. I'll do that when I'm old. When I'm that big bald guy talking at me. I'll do it when I'm a lot older like him. We need to do it today. It's not too early to get ready.

So we need to get ready for Jesus coming back. So. Remember these little things when we pack our bags. When you're packing your bag. When you're getting your snacks for school. I want you to think. How can I do. What God asks me to do.

For him. So we'll say a wee prayer hands together. Eyes closed. And we'll give thanks. For the fact that we're here. Gracious God. We again do give you thanks. That you are here with us.

And that we have these young people here. Hearing your word. Going into Sunday school. To learn more about you. To learn more about how we can be ready. That we can be ready for your son's return.

[20:57] So we pray Lord. That we would all. Whether we're listening at home. Whether we're listening here. Would be preparing our hearts. That we would be living a life that is pleasing to you. And living a life that is waiting.

Not waiting in hope. But waiting in expectation for that return. And that you would use us. That our talents that we have. Our gifts. Would be used. Not to the glory of self.

Again not to the glory of the church here. But to your glory. And to your glory alone Lord. So we ask that you would be with the young ones. As they go out. As they learn more about who you are. Be with the teachers. We give you thanks for all the help that they do.

In sharing the gospel with the young ones here Lord. So go before us just now. Forgive us for all of our sins. In Jesus name. Amen. Let's introduce the singing. And so we'll sing now.

And you guys can all stand up for this one. From mission praise 167. And it's a little bit about that torch we were talking about. And about the ladies. These bridesmaids. In Matthew chapter 25.

[21:56] So we'll sing the whole of this hymn. Give me oil in my lamp. Keep me burning. Give me oil in my lamp I pray. Give me oil in my lamp. Keep me burning. Keep me burning. Till the break of day.

So we'll stand to sing in a few moments. To God's praise. Please. Give me oil in my lamp.

Keep me burning. Give me oil in my lamp I pray. Give me oil in my lamp.

Keep me burning. Keep me burning till the break of day. Sing usada, sing usada, sing usada, sing usada to the King of Kings.

Sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna to the King. Make a pleasure of men, keep me singing. Make a pleasure of men, I pray.

[23:15] Make a pleasure of men, keep me singing. Keep me singing till the break of day.

Sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna to the King of Kings. Sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna to the King.

Make a joy in my heart, keep me singing. Make a joy in my heart, I pray. Make a joy in my heart, keep me singing. Keep me singing till the break of day.

Sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna to the King of Kings. Sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna to the King.

Make a joy in my heart, keep me singing. Give me love in my heart, I pray. Give me love in my heart, I pray. Keep me singing. Keep me singing till the break of day.

[24:47] Sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna to the King of Kings.

Sing Hosanna, sing Hosanna to the King. Okay boys and girls, if you could head through to Sunday School and Cresce.

Thank you Stuart for praying and for speaking to the young ones. Remember as they head through to Sunday School, be praying for them.

And if you could turn in your Bibles please to Matthew chapter 25. Matthew chapter 25. And we'll read the whole of this chapter. This is God's Word.

Jesus is speaking and he says, Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

[26 : 19] For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them. But the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.

But at midnight there was a cry, Here is the bridegroom, come out to meet him. Then all those virgins, Bridesmaids is probably the better translation, rose and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered saying, Since there will not be enough of us, for us and you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.

And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came. And those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterwards the other virgins came also saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

But he answered, Truly I say to you, I do not know you. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

[27 : 28] To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more.

So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid the master's money. Now after a long time, the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, Master, you delivered to me five talents. Here I have made five talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. He who had received the one talent came forward, saying, Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.

So I was afraid and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours. But his master answered him, You wicked and slothful servant.

[29 : 02] You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have scattered no seed. Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers. And at my coming, I should have received what was my own with interest.

So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance.

But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

[30 : 11] For I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you welcomed me. I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came to me.

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger, and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?

And when did we see you sick, or in prison, or visit you? And the king will answer them, Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.

Then he will say to those on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

So Matthew 25 and Matthew chapter 24, it's not difficult to see that there's one clear theme that runs through both chapters.

And the theme is the return of Jesus and the need for us to be ready for his return. And I think I'll ask the question even really before we begin today, do you think often about the return of Jesus? We often think about the fact that Jesus came into this world every Christmas. We spend weeks thinking about the wonder of the incarnation.

We often gather around the Lord's table and we remember his death in our place. We remember his life, his righteous life that he lived for us.

[41:00] And we remember also his resurrection. And there's a line at the end of the warrant for coming to the Lord's table that reminds us of the return of Jesus because, remember it says, we do this until he comes.

So do you often think about the second coming of Jesus? This morning, did you think for a moment, did we think for a moment even, about the fact that Jesus is coming back?

not as a baby in gentleness, but as judge and king.

Every eye will see him. There'll be no news coverage required. Every tongue, whether willingly or unwillingly, will confess that he is Lord.

so do we think about that return? Some of us have loved ones who work away for long periods at sea on oil rigs or in boats.

[42:20] They go away for a few weeks, but they're coming back. And the family look forward to the day when they return. Some of us have children that go away to study.

They're away for months at a time, but at Christmas and different times of the year, they come back. And so, the date is marked on the calendar and we look forward to their return.

Now, we don't have a date. We will not receive a date for the return of Jesus. But if we love Jesus, if we are trusting in his word and his promises, we should be looking forward to, we should be living in anticipation of that day when he returns or that day when he calls us to stand before him if our death comes before his return.

So, this morning, I want to think through the way that we should live as we wait for the return of Jesus. how can we be wise and not wasteful with the lives, with the time that God gives us?

It is possible, remember, to waste our lives. We can spend decades wasting our lives. John Piper famously preached a sermon, I think it was the year 2000.

[43:57] And in the sermon, he tells a story about really the American dream. He tells a story about a couple who work hard and they make lots of money and they have this dream to retire early and they achieve that dream, they retire early, they move to Florida or whatever the place was, they play golf in the sunshine, they walk on the beaches and they collect shells.

And the world looks in on them and says, these people, they've made it. They are living the dream. They've won the game of life.

But on the day they stand before Jesus, if all they have is a good golf handicap and a handful of shells, Piper says, they've wasted their lives.

And if all we have is money in our accounts and cars in our garage and sheep and cattle on our crofts and letters after our names and trophies in our display cabinets, if that's all we have, but we're spiritually bankrupt, we are not ready to meet Jesus.

So how can we get ready? Three points in the time that we have. Point number one is live expectantly. And that takes us from verse one to verse thirteen.

[45:49] The parable of the bridegroom and the bridesmaids. The second point is we're to live servant, not selfishly. That takes us to the second parable of the servants and the talents.

And the last point is we're to live as sheep and not goats. And that takes us into the final section from verse thirty-one to verse forty-six.

So first of all we come to the first parable and we think about how we can live expectantly. So scan the verses with me please if you will.

I've got no time to read them again. But if you look at verses one to thirteen, Jesus, he tells a story, he paints a picture, a word picture, of a bridegroom and ten virgins as it has it in the ESV.

The best translation for us to get an understanding of what's going on in this story is it's a picture of a bridegroom and ten bridesmaids. We always have to ask the question as we come to a parable, who's who in this story?

[47:04] And we're told by one of the commentators, Hale is the commentator, and he says the bridegroom is Christ. And the ten virgins represent the church waiting for Christ's return.

According to Jewish marriage custom in Jesus' time, the bridegroom came to the bride's house to fetch her. The bridesmaids would go out to welcome the bridegroom on his arrival.

If he came at night, they would need lamps. So that just gives us a wee bit of the context. So that's the picture. And it does seem strange to us.

And it seems strange to us that the timing of the bridegroom's arrival would be so vague. We have Ruthie sitting over there. She's getting married in three weeks and all.

He's maybe gone next door. I can't see him just now. But if you were to have a conversation with Ruthie about the wedding, our bride-to-be, she has a spreadsheet.

[48:07] That's bigger than any spreadsheet seen in NASA's HQ. And every moment, every movement, every timing of the wedding is precise, apart from my sermon.

But back then, the time of this parable being told, no spreadsheets, no phones to communicate with, no location tracking devices, and because often the bridegroom would come from a long distance away, the estimated time of arrival of the bridegroom could be hard to know.

So the primary job of the bridesmaid back in that day was not so much hair and makeup and dresses. It was to watch for the arrival of the bridegroom.

That was task number one of the bridesmaid. Watch for the arrival of the bridegroom and make sure that the bride is ready when he arrives so that the marriage can progress and the celebrations could begin.

That's the picture. And it's a helpful picture for us to think about as we think about what it means to be a Christian. To be a Christian is not to sign up to some religious code.

[49:31] To be a Christian is to be in relationship with Jesus. Like a bride is in relationship with her bridegroom.

That's what a Christian is. It's a relationship. And that relationship with Jesus, it begins here in this world as we trust the Lord Jesus, we enter into this soul-saving and this soul-satisfying relationship with him.

That happens here and now. And then when we think about what lies beyond this world, the picture we're given of heaven is the picture of a wedding feast.

You can go to Revelation 19, one illustration, and we have this picture of the marriage supper, where Jesus and his bride, the church, come together in this perfect, loving relationship.

So in this parable, as we just step through it, are these bridesmaids ready to meet the bridegroom when he comes? That's the question.

[50:49] And what we learn is, five are ready, there are five wise bridesmaids, and they're identified in verse 4, they have lamps, lamps working of large dome-shaped torches, they have oil, they have fuel for the light, and when the bridegroom comes, they go to meet him, and we're told in verse 10, they become part of the wedding celebration, they enter into the celebration of this marriage.

So five are ready, but five are not ready, and they are not wise, they are the unwise. They're identified in verse 3, they have lamps, they look the same as the other bridesmaids, they wear the same clothes, they're in the same space, much like we're all in the same space this morning, but the difference is they have no oil in their lamps, and when the bridegroom comes, it's too late, verse 8, to go and get oil, so verse 11 tells us they don't get into the wedding feast, the door is locked, and they miss out.

so what is the lesson that Jesus is teaching, what's the application? Well, often we have to try and work that out, in this parable, we're not left to work out ourselves, Jesus makes crystal clear what the lesson is, Jesus applies this to us in verse 13, he says, watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

so Jesus through this story, is teaching us to be ready for the day that he comes back.

We are to live expectantly, we are to live lives that expect the return of Jesus. How can we do that?

[53:13] Well, we need lamps, lamps, the word of God, we just sang that from Psalm 119, and we need oil, and the oil is likely a reference to the Spirit of God, and as we read the word of God, and as we believe the word of God, and as we are led by the Spirit of God, and as we trust in the Son of God, we are made ready to meet Jesus, and we are given the assurance that when the day comes, we will not be locked out of heaven, but rather we will have a place set for us at the

marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven.

So point number one, live expectantly. Point number two, live serving, not selfishly. And if you look at verses 14 to 30, we have the second parable.

And again, it's not a difficult story to grasp. It's the story of a man who goes away in a journey. He has three servants. All this is very normal in that culture.

and the servants are given the assurance that the master, although he's going away, he's coming back. But they don't know exactly when.

They're not told when. And until the master comes back, they are given this charge to care for his property, to care and use wisely the talents that he gives them.

[55:02] So again, parable, we have to ask the question, who's who in the story? And the man is Jesus. He's the one who is going away, who has now gone away, and who will return.

And we are the servants. But we have to figure out, are we servant one, two, or three? So Jesus is the master, we are the servants.

And maybe an opening point of application is the reminder that we're given through this, that our lives belong to God. We have a master.

And the lives that we are given, the talents that we are given, the time that we are given, is given to us by God. We belong to him.

there's a song that came on the radio through the car the other day on a playlist. Bon Jovi.

[56:12] The song was entitled It's My Life. And it's a catchy tune, but it's a bad message.

Because Jesus is saying to us in this parable, it's not your life.

you were made by God, you were made for God, you were made to be in relationship with God.

And that's where we find joy, that's where we find purpose, in serving him.

So what happened next? What did the servants do whilst the master was away? How did they use the talents that they were given? Well, what we see here is that the first two servants, they're faithful servants.

they use their talents wisely to serve the master. The first servant is given five talents, the second servant is given two talents, but the number is not the most important thing, it's what they do with the talents that they're given, that's the most important thing.

And what we see is that servant one and servant two, they both use the talents they are given for the good of the master. And the master, when he returns, he commends them both for being good and faithful servants.

[57:30] The ESV study note, if you've got a study Bible, says the master's identical statements of praise to both servants show that what was important was not the total amount earned, but faithfulness in utilizing their gifts and potential.

So both servants are told, well done, good and faithful servants, and both servants are told in verse 21 and 23, enter into the joy of your master.

They're given a pass, you could say, that gives them the assurance that they're coming into heaven. They lived wisely. Servants one and two lived wisely, serving their master.

And that's a picture for us of how we are to live. Jesus is coming back, the master is coming back, we don't know what day, but until then, we are being given this picture of how we are to live.

We're to use the talents that Jesus has given us to serve him. And the talents that we've been given are all different. I can look around in the room just now, I can see some five talent people.

[58:49] Most of us are not in that category. Most of us are in the two-talent category, or the 2.5 talent category. But it doesn't matter how many talents we've been given, we are simply called to do what we can to serve the Lord Jesus, as these two servants did.

What about the last servant? Well, the last servant takes his talent, and he buries it, and he lives not for the master, but for himself.

We don't know exactly what that life looked like, but we know that he lives not for the master, he doesn't use the talent he's given for the good of the master, he seems to live a life that is selfish. selfish. And that's bad, but what's worse, actually, is what he says about the master. Because look at how he describes the master.

In verse 24, he calls him a hard man. In verse 25, he says, I'm afraid of you. And what's clear to us here is that servant number three, he does not know the master.

[60:17] That's why he doesn't want to serve him. And the end for the servant is grim. He's condemned. He does not hear these words enter into the joy of the master.

Rather, we're told in verse 30, he is cast out into outer darkness. he is forcibly taken to a place, verse 31, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and that's a picture of hell.

So, in application, if we are to live wisely, if you and I are to live lives that please God, we are not to live selfishly, as the last servant did, but we are to live lives of service to God.

That's part of the lesson of this parable. But I don't actually think it's the main lesson. The main lesson in this parable, I believe, is not so much about what we do, it's about who we know.

Again, think about this. Why did servant one and two joyfully serve the master? It's because they knew him.

[62:01] And they recognized that this master was a good and loving master. He was worth serving. So they served him enthusiastically, wholeheartedly.

What about servant three? Why did he not serve the master? Because he did not know him. So the main question for you and I actually is not a question about how we live and what we do.

it's a question about who we know. Do we know God? Can you and I this morning see that God is loving and he is good and he is holy and he is righteous and he is gracious and he is kind and he is trustworthy?

Can we see that? And are we trusting him? We will never serve God until we know and trust him.

That's the truth. so we've got no desire to serve the Lord. If we take all our time and our talents and our money and we say that's for me I'll decide what I'm going to do with my life and my time and my stuff.

[63:46] If we resent the thought of having to do something where we put ourselves out for Jesus' sake do we know him?

Speaking as a Christian I know sometimes I get lazy. Sometimes Christians we get lazy.

Sometimes we look a lot more like servant three than we do servant one and two.

sometimes our lives become more about pleasing self than serving Jesus. Why is that? I think it's because we've lost sight of God.

When we become lazy, inactive, reluctant, servants, or even non-servants, we must have drifted from Jesus.

There must be something in our lives that is blocking our view of Jesus. We must have come to a point where we cannot any longer see how good and loving and kind and worthy he is of our service.

[65:12] So if this morning we are professing to be Christians, but we see as we examine ourselves that we are actually not serving the Lord, what should we do?

We should turn our eyes again upon Jesus. Take our eyes off self. Take our eyes off all that's around us in this world.

and fix our eyes upon Jesus. And when we are able, with the help of the Spirit of God, to see him clearly, and when we remember once more all that he has done for us, we will want to serve him wholeheartedly.

live serving, not selfishly, live expectantly.

Finally, very briefly, live as sheep, not goats. And I don't need to spend much time on this, because we're so familiar with the picture. in the first two parables, Jesus, he takes stories and he speaks using these parables.

[66:35] In the last section here, from 31 to 46, Jesus speaks plainly, but he uses this familiar picture for us of sheep and goats. Go back to that place at that time.

Sheep and goats, they looked very similar. You couldn't really differentiate between them. They were often found grazing, in the same areas, but although they looked similar, although they were found side by side, they were different creatures.

So goats are independent, they're self-reliant, they do their own thing, they survive on their own wits. Sheep are the opposite. They're dependent, they're vulnerable, they need a shepherd, and they're only safe for as long as they follow the shepherd.

And right through the Bible, you don't need me to tell you that Jesus, he's identified as the good shepherd, and he calls us to be his sheep.

He calls us to listen to his voice, he calls us to follow him, he calls us to admit that we need him, he calls us to confess the fact that we cannot be safe, we cannot be saved, we cannot find life apart from him.

[67:58] And in this last section, at verse 32, Jesus makes clear that there will be a final separation between the sheep and the goats.

So in the field, picture it, all these beasts look the same, but the shepherd comes in, and he knows them.

So he takes the sheep, he puts them on one side, he takes the goats, puts them on the other side, and now they're identified as what they are.

And today, we're all in the same space. We're all holding the same Bibles. Most of us are actually singing the same songs.

We all look very similar. We're all together. But Jesus is making clear that on the final day, there will be a separation.

[69:09] And even in this room, likely, in families, in this community, there will be a separation. That cannot be reversed.

And the goats, those who have trusted themselves, those who have lived for themselves, those who have done their own thing, they will be separated from the sheep, those who have trusted in Jesus.

And Jesus says the sheep will go to the right, place of blessing, a picture of heaven, and the goats will go to the left, to the place of cursing.

It's a picture of hell. And so the question again, that we finish with, is how are we living, but more specifically, who are we trusting in?

Who are we depending on? who are we following? And the plea that runs through this final section is follow Jesus.

[70:27] Depend on Jesus. Live for Jesus. Jesus. He is the good shepherd.

He is the one who laid down his life on the cross for his sheep. That's the extent of his love for us. That's how much we can trust him. As John often prays, he went over the cliff for us. over the cliff for us. And he is the one who can save us from sin's curse.

Because at Calvary, he took that curse into his body on the tree. Peter tells us that. He is the one who can lead us to a place of eternal blessing.

A place of peace, a place of joy, place of life, if we know him as our Savior and our Lord.

[71:39] And if we know him, if this morning we are trusting him as Savior, if this morning we are serving him as Lord and Master, then we are ready for his return.

are you ready? Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for what is almost an uncomfortable clarity as we see the differences between what is prepared for those who are yours and those who are not.

We thank you that in this world we are living in a day where there is opportunity to trust you. Open our eyes, Lord God, we pray that we may see the beauty, the glory, the worthiness of Jesus and enable us, we pray, Lord Jesus, to serve you, to live lives which expect your return, to live lives that are not consumed with our own preferences, our own selfish, often desires, but help us to live lives where we are willing to serve you and follow you as the Lord our shepherd.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to conclude Mission Praise 799. 799 in Mission Praise.

[73:38] All I once held dear, built my life upon, all this world reveres and wars to own, all I once thought gain, I have counted lost, spent and worthless now compared to this, knowing you, Jesus.

Knowing you.!

All I All I once held here, built my life upon, all this world revealed and wars to hold, all I once thought in, I have counted lost, strength and worthless now, compare to this.

Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you, there is no greater thing, you're my all, you're the best, you're my joy, my righteousness, and I love you Lord.

My heart's desire is to know you more, to be firm in you, unknown as yours, to process by faith, what I could not hear, also God sing gift of righteousness, knowing you, Jesus, knowing you, there is no greater thing, you're my all, you're the best, you're my joy, my righteousness, and I love you Lord.

[75:59] to know the power of your risen life, and to know you in your sufferings, to become like you, in your death, my Lord, so in you to live and never die, for in you, Jesus, knowing you, there is no greater thing, you're my all, you're the best, you're my joy, my righteousness, and I love you Lord.

Now in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more. Amen.