

## Matthew 25:1-13

Today's parable on the wise and foolish virgins falls within what scholars sometimes refer to as Jesus' final discourse or the Judgment Discourse (chaps. 23-25). In this final discourse, Jesus speaks about the "last things" or what we sometimes refer to as eschatology.

Jesus gives a series of parables that focus on watchfulness and/or perseverance before the Parousia (the Second Coming of Christ). Today, we have the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids (25:1-13). Tomorrow is the parable of the talents, i.e., using them well (25:14-30). And finally, our Lord presents the Judgement of the Nations (25:31-46).

Today, the kingdom of heaven is likened to a wedding feast. This happens to be my favorite metaphor for heaven. We are then introduced to the five wise and foolish virgins. Notice that virgins are not good and bad, but rather prudent and imprudent. For Matthew, the wise are ready. They plan ahead. In your prayers, ask the Lord for prudence and wisdom, i.e., to plan ahead.

The bridegroom, for reasons unbeknownst to us, is long delayed. It's worth noting that both sets of virgins were expecting the bridegroom, but only five were prepared for his *delay*. Naturally, we want to know the meaning of the oil.

Again, we see the importance of prayer. In prayer, you can go to Jesus and ask, "Lord, what does this mean? Am I prepared? Do I have enough oil?" Whether the oil represents faith, good works, charity, or joy, we know that we need it!

Certainly, there is at least some connection with oil and the Holy Spirit. Oil was used for medicinal purposes in biblical times. The Spirit brings *healing* and restoration. Oil *lights* a lamp as in today's parable.

In baptism, you are enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Oil *warms* when used as fuel for a flame. The Holy Spirit brings warmth and comfort. Oil *polishes* when used to shine metal. The Holy Spirit wipes away sin. And oil adorns when used as a perfume. St. Paul says that we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved (2 Cor. 2:15).

Pray for an increase of the Holy Spirit (your oil!) and receive the sacraments with great joy that you do not become spiritually drowsy.

In doing so, you will have enough oil to keep your light shining brightly before others (Matt. 5:16).

~ St. Thérèse, pray for us!