

Jesus Wisdom: Some Stories Jesus Tells in Matthew

These study notes complement what is happening on Sundays (see below) and can be used individually or in groups. Our hope is that if you're new to bible study that you'll have been helped along the way by listening to the sermon and that you'll go deeper by looking at the passage and thinking about it for yourself.

04 Feb	JESUS WISDOM: It's Good Jesus is Judge Matthew 25.31-46
11 Feb	JESUS WISDOM: It's good we're not the judge Matthew 7.1-5
18 Feb	JESUS WISDOM: Keep a pure heart Matthew 15.10-20
25 Feb	Guest Speaker Sunday: Andy Mason - 1Kings 19.1-18,
03 Mar	JESUS WISDOM: Understanding the Kingdom Matthew 13.24-50
10 Mar	Parish Weekend; All- together - Mothering Sunday
17 Mar	JESUS WISDOM: Being Ready Matthew 25.1-30
24 Mar	Palm Sunday Mark 11.1-11
31 Mar	Easter Day - All Together Mark 16.1-8

We hope your small group will be able to join in the church weekend away, events happening in and around Holy Week and that you also have some social time.

Digging deeper we highly recommend:

The Message of Matthew by Michael Green

Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes by Kenneth Bailey

JESUS WISDOM: It's Good Jesus is Judge Matthew 25.31-46

Welcome: *In this series we're looking at some of the stories Jesus told. Discuss why stories help us and share your favourite story of all time.*

Word:

Read Matthew 25.31-46

How significant is the word 'when' in verse 31? What is the good news that there will be a judgement? Why is judgement important?

In this story there are three groups (the sheep on the right and the goats on the left) – what is the third group (verse 40)?

Why is the behaviour towards the 'least of these' so important? How should that influence us today?

This parable is often misunderstood – it would be useful to look at two bits of commentary and in this session to read together a bit more than normal and learn together and so I'd love to encourage you to print out some copies of this article and have a look at it together (maybe take it in turns to read a paragraph each): <https://www.psephizo.com/biblical-studies/the-not-parable-of-the-sheep-and-the-goats-in-matthew-25/>

And to look at this:

Let us look at it afresh. A number of features, many of them uncomfortable, stand out.

It tells me that I am accountable. I am free to live my life just as I please, but at the end I shall have to give account to the one who gave me my life.

It tells me that judgment awaits everyone. There will be no exceptions. There will be no favouritism. There will be no excuses. It will be totally fair.

It tells me that we are not all going in the same direction though by different roads, as we would dearly love to think in this tolerant and pluralist age. We will not all end up in the same place. It is possible to be utterly lost, and Jesus warns us of that possibility here.

It tells me that there will be great surprises on that day. Lots of people who were very confident of their condition will be undone. Lots of people who rated themselves very lowly will be astonished by their reception.

It tells me that the heart of Christianity is relationship with Jesus himself, which shows itself in loving, sacrificial care for others, in particular the poor and needy.

It tells me that people who have never heard the good news (and it is they, the pagans, *ta ethnē*, who are primarily in view here) will be judged by their response to what light they had, and in particular by their response to the *brothers* (and sisters) of Jesus, whether these be Jewish or Christian.

But most of all this great parable brings us face to face with our Judge, and we need to be clear about three great realities which it underlines.

This extract comes from Michael Green *The Message of Matthew* page 263. He goes on to say that the three great realities are that the Son of Man will return in glory, the Son of Man has come and the Son of Man will judge.

And so citizens of the Kingdom are you ready to meet your King?

Worship: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TM-L-L7OD_A

Witness: Relationship with Jesus is the most important thing. Pray for each other as we head towards the season of Lent that we will be able to set time aside to grow our relationship with Jesus.

JESUS WISDOM: It's good we're not the judge

Matthew 7.1-5

Welcome: Have you ever made a judgement and been wrong? If it's not too painful/embarrassing, are you prepared to share it with the group?

Worship: Say shortened version of night prayer together:
The Lord Almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end.

Amen

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Keep a period of silence for personal reflection.

Most merciful God, we confess to you, before the whole company of heaven and one another, that we have sinned in thought, word and deed and in what we have failed to do. Forgive us our sins, heal us by your Spirit and raise us to new life in Christ. Amen.

O God, make speed to save us. O Lord, make haste to save us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Read Matthew 7.1-5

Keep a period of silence for personal reflection.

A time to pray together.

God, thank you for this time, draw close to us now as we study your word and as we head into this evening help us to rest in your peace. Lord bless us and watch over us; Lord make your face to shine upon us and be gracious to us; Lord look kindly on us and give us peace. **Amen**

Word:

Read Matthew 7.1-5

What stood out from reading the passage afresh? And did anything particularly strike you from listening to the sermons from Sunday?

Jesus uses a bit of humour in this story – how can humour be helpful in pointing out things we need to learn?

All too often what we condemn in others can be weaknesses we don't want to face in ourselves – instead of being known for a critical spirit Jesus wants his followers to be known for their humility – recognising their own shortcomings. How do you go about recognising your short-comings and how can you have a healthy attitude towards them?

Why is it good that God is the judge and not us?

If we're not to judge, not to be hypocrites and we are to exercise humility – how can we still do the following: Matthew 18.15; Luke 17.3; Galatians 6.1; 1 Timothy 5.20?

Witness: Think for a moment what you will ask God to help you with from the session tonight. Then pray in smaller groups for one another and our witness to the world around us.

JESUS WISDOM: Keep a pure heart Matthew 15.10-20

Welcome: What's the most precious thing you have ever had to look after? Today we're going to be looking at watching our hearts and our words that flow from our hearts – is that something you think about often?

Worship: Read a psalm of praise and pray for the time of study.

Word:

Read Matthew 15.10-20

What teaching methods is Jesus employing here? How are they affective?

Jesus is pointing out that inner purity is much more important than outward ceremonies/rituals (the Pharisees at the time held the view that what entered them could defile them). In what ways today might we show more concern for outward things than inner things?

What advice does Jesus give to followers of the Pharisees?

Why did Jesus explain his statements to the disciples?

Why does the bible teach us to guard our heart (see Jeremiah 17.9 & Proverbs 4.23)? Why is this important? What happens if we're led by our unchecked emotions/desires?

To what degree are you longing to please God? What does pleasing God look like? Given that we cannot just follow rules, that we cannot achieve our own salvation – what can we do to position ourselves in such a way that we are growing like Christ and seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we will follow his ways?

How can we keep our hearts close to Jesus? How can we be careful that our following Jesus does not become an external ritual?

Witness: What practical wisdom from this passage could you take into your work life or life spaces this week? Take time to pray for each other individually.

JESUS WISDOM: Understanding the Kingdom

Matthew 13.24-50

Welcome: When you're learning something new or learning more about something what tactics do you use to go about it?

Word:

Read Matthew 13.24-50

As you discuss the questions below try hard to refer to the text and what Jesus is saying.

What has stood out to you from the sermons you heard on Sunday and from what you have now just read?

How well do you understand the Kingdom of God? Or how would you describe the kingdom of God to others?

How is hope offered in this chapter despite the evil we also see in the world?

What actions can you take to seek the Kingdom of Heaven like the man who found the hidden treasure or the merchant who found the pearl of great value?

How can the parables of the Kingdom's growth encourage you in your personal spiritual growth?

How can the parables in this chapter influence your sharing of the Gospel?

How does understanding the Kingdom of Heaven's value influence your priorities, goals, and decisions in life?

Worship: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqxtFUwM3-o>

Witness: Spend some time deliberately praying for loved ones you long to know Gods love for themselves. And pray for any distractions that stopping you putting first the Kingdom of God.

JESUS WISDOM: Being Ready Matthew 25.1-30

Welcome: Do you have a testimony or a story when you had to stand on your own two feet as a Christian and not rely on someone else's support or leadership around you?

Worship: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcmqSfr1ENY>

Use this song to quiet ourselves before Jesus and to pray over our church, community, home, and world.

Word: Read Matthew 25.1-30

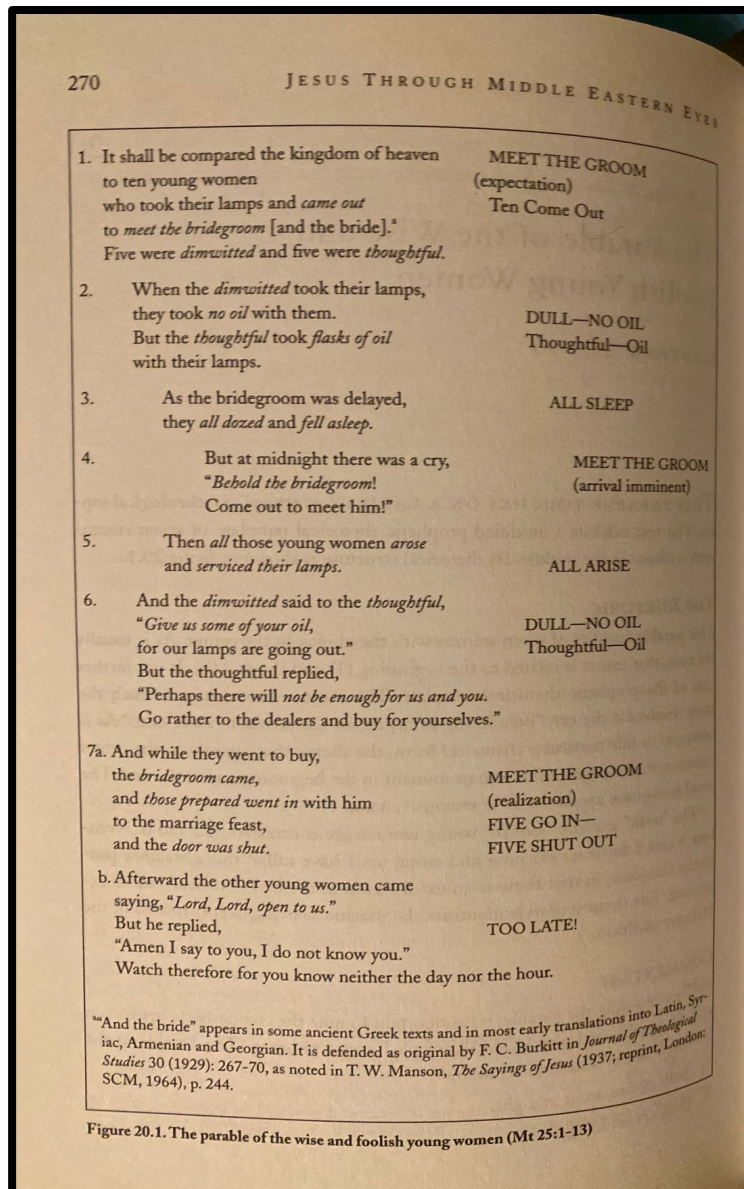


Figure 20.1. The parable of the wise and foolish young women (Mt 25:1-13)

The most central and significant thing is our relationship with Jesus. Yet I know for myself that I have a long way to go in prioritising that. What should spur us on from our reading today? And instead of feeling guilty (which the enemy loves to help us wallow in) how can we make realistic steps towards increasing our connection with Jesus as we walk through real everyday life (after all Jesus loves to chat to us while we're loading the dishwasher, finding that odd sock, scanning through vast amounts of reports before a meeting or out meeting friends)?

Who are the virgins? What is the story about? Why don't the ones with oil share with the ones who don't have any/enough?

Why is it important then that we take responsibility for our walk with Jesus? Are there any ways where we individually or as a church can put on a pedestal our past experiences/encounters with God, or certain Christian leaders? What are the dangers of doing this? Why is it so important to have our own oil?

Read Psalm 147.10-11, how can this also help to inform us?

What else do we learn from these stories and was there anything shared in the sermons that its worth remembering again now?

What would you like to apply from this study?

Witness: Pray for us and our church that we would be living lives that reflect Jesus at the centre of them. Pray this Lent that God would grow the church here in holiness, in numbers, in its witness.