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**Sermon Series: Christ's Return:
Living with the End in Mind**

To be used with Session 6:

Stay Prepared and Ready

Sermon Title Possibilities: Stay Ready

Scripture: Matthew 25:1-13

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study "*Christ's Return: Living with the End in Mind*," this sermon explores how believers can ready ourselves for Christ's return. As the song says, "Be ready when He comes, He is coming again so soon."

Introduction: Experts advise us to prepare kits so that we will be ready in the event of an emergency. These kits may prepare us for our cars breaking down or some sort of natural disaster occurring. The idea is that if we stay ready before the time comes, we will not have to rush around trying to get ready when it finally does.

As important as being ready in the event of an emergency is, it is far more important to be ready for Christ's return. Jesus tells His disciples a parable about ten virgins illustrating why it is necessary for us to be ready to meet Him.

1. Prepare for a Wait (vv. 1-5)

Jesus begins the parable by describing the kingdom of heaven as being like ten virgins going to meet a groom as part of a wedding celebration. Five of the virgins are foolish, failing to take oil with their lamps, while five are wise, bringing oil along with their lamps. The groom is delayed, and all of the virgins fall asleep.

In analogizing Himself to the groom, Jesus makes it clear that His return will take a while. He does not give a reason for the delay, as that is not to be our main concern. What we should be concerned with is being prepared to wait. While we all are experiencing the time of waiting, what determines our wisdom or foolishness is whether we take the time to prepare ourselves.

2. Put in the Work (vv. 6-9)

Continuing the parable, Jesus says that in the middle of the night, the groom's arrival is announced. Hearing the news, the virgins all get up and trim their lamps. The foolish virgins tell the wise ones to give them some of their oil, as the foolish virgins' lamps are going out. The wise virgins refuse, as they need the oil themselves and tell the foolish virgins to go and buy their own oil.

Being prepared for Christ's return is something each of us must do individually. We cannot expect to be able to rely on others' work or effort. When we see those who are wise preparing themselves, it should motivate us to prepare ourselves

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as well. We must use the opportunity we have today to do the work necessary to be ready.

3. Position Yourself to Watch (vv. 10-13)

As Jesus concludes the parable, He says that the foolish virgins go to buy oil. However, the groom arrives while they are gone. The wise virgins are ready for his arrival and enter the wedding banquet. The door is shut and later the foolish virgins arrive, seeking to be let in. The groom declines, saying he does not know them. Christ reminds the disciples that they do not know when His return will occur.

If we are wise, we will position ourselves spiritually to watch for Christ's return. This involves avoiding distractions or concerns that would steal our focus. Now is the time for preparation. We must be on watch as we wait. Christ's appearing is something we do not want to miss.

Conclusion: Christ is surely coming back, and God has graciously given us time so that we will be ready. We must use this time wisely by watching and waiting. Our waiting is not to involve sitting around idly, however. Rather, we are to prepare by living as faithful disciples. By staying ready we can say with eager anticipation "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

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