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FIRST SERVICE - Kevin and Sarah Stevick (Mark), Luke and Hope Leal (Derek) Jordan and Emily Vezina (Fiona, June, Faye)

SECOND SERVICE – Josh and Alyson Viljoen (Elijah),

Introduce families

Psalms 127:3–5

³ Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. ⁵ How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.

These parents have come today to dedicate these children to the Lord. By presenting them for dedication, they are entrusting these children to the heavenly Father and accepting their roles as God's representative, His steward, in raising God's children. It is a beautiful thing to be God's appointed steward over His children.

Stewardship is a term often associated with money, but it applies to most everything in life including our children. A steward is a manager of another's possessions. Stewards are not owners.

This quote from Charles Stanley helps us understand this idea.

Charles Stanley – "God has the right to tell us how to raise our children because in reality they are more His than ours. He created them, He sustains their lives moment by moment, He sent His Son to die for them and purchase them for Himself, and He is the One who has prepared for them an eternal dwelling place. They are ours for only a little while; they are His forever!"

Proverbs 3:5–6

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

Trust – Remember this day when you dedicated your child to God as you parent; when you placed your trust in the Lord for your child.

Don't lean on your own understanding – you need Him. Trust Him.

Acknowledge Him – In all your ways, in everything situation, you turn to Him.

Promise – He makes the crooked straight. Trust Him.

Parents –By coming before the church today, you are presenting these children to God, and you graciously accept your role as God's stewards to manage, oversee, guide, love and direct these precious lives. So that these children may walk in the abundant life that Christ offers, do you vow by God's power and in partnership with the church, to provide them a Christian home of love and peace, to raise them in the grace and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to encourage them to one day trust Jesus as their Savior and Lord? If so, say we do. ("We do.")

Pray for Luke and Hope Leal (**Derek**), Kevin and Sarah Stevick (**Mark**),

Pray for Jordan and Emily Vezina (**Fiona, June, Faye**) Josh and Alyson Viljoen (**Elijah**)

Announcements – Moldova trip prayer team,

We are currently looking at what Jesus taught in our series called All Hail King Jesus and today we are going to dive into a parable Jesus told to His disciples right before the crucifixion, and it is known as the parable of the 10 virgins in Matthew 25 and is part of a discourse where Jesus is speaking of future events at the end of time. Here's the parable:

Matthew 25:1–13

1 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 “Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. 3 “For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, 4 but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. 5 “Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. 6 “But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ 7 “Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. 8 “The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9 “But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ 10 “And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. 11 “Later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ 12 “But he answered, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ 13 “Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

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What does this mean? Who is Jesus talking about? Is this the rapture, or the second coming or something else? Are the five wise virgins the true church and the five foolish virgins some kind of fake church? What’s up with the oil? Does this have anything to do with Israel? Does it have multiple meanings?

I think you would be hard pressed to find a parable with more debate surrounding it than this one. I read several commentaries and listened to several sermons and found little agreement between them when it comes to the passage. There is a wide variety of opinion on how to interpret this and some of the misinterpretations can be quite harmful. It’s important that we look at it through the right lens or we’ll miss the teaching Jesus is giving.

If you look at this through a “good works salvation” lens, which is the usual approach, you’ll draw conclusions that will lead you down the wrong path. This is usually taught as pertaining to the church right before the rapture. The 10 virgins are seen as the church awaiting the return of the bridegroom. When it is time for the rapture, the true church is revealed by those five who have oil in their lamps and that oil is referred to as representing the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The foolish ones are those who don’t have the Holy Spirit, so they are not true Christians and subsequently left behind at the rapture. So, the conclusion that is often drawn by looking at it through a good works lens is this:

If you are not faithful and obedient exhibiting the work of the Holy Spirit through your life, you will be left behind. There are even some who say all 10 virgins are Christians, but only five are good enough to get in. It’s like a partial rapture based on your spiritual performance.

Is that what is intended here? Not at all. We are qualified for the rapture not by our works, but by believing in Christ for our salvation. He has won our victory by His sacrifice. Our entrance to heaven be it through death or the rapture is not based on our works at all. Interpreting it this way is ripping the passage out of its context.

Context is always critical in understanding Scripture properly so I’m going to take a little time to set the context. It is in the gospel of Matthew which is known as the gospel of Jesus Christ written to the Jews. Where we find this parable is in a larger discourse being given by Jesus called The Olivet Discourse which encompasses the 24th and 25th chapters of the

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gospel and is a private briefing He gives to His disciples who are all Jews. At the end of chapter 23, He tells His Jewish audience they have rejected God by killing His prophets and rejecting His Messiah. Jesus says their house; the temple is being left desolate. But He gives them the promise that a day is coming when the Jews will believe in Jesus and say – “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord?” We know that, from other Scriptures to be at the end of the Great Tribulation when the remnant of the Jewish nation that survives the Tribulation will believe on the Lord Jesus for their salvation.

Then Chapter 24 begins like this:

Matthew 24:1

1 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.

His disciples, all being Jews, point out the beautiful temple buildings that Jesus had just called desolate. “Not saying you’re wrong Jesus, but from the looks of these beautiful buildings, Judaism is pretty strong. No desolation here.” To which Jesus replies:

Matthew 24:2

2 And He said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”

Your beautiful temple will be destroyed which it was in 70AD. We are to interpret this whole discourse through a Jewish lens. When you do, it becomes clear what Jesus is saying. So, it’s in this Jewish conversation that the disciples ask three specific questions:

Matthew 24:3

3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

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When is the temple to be destroyed, what will signal your return and how does the world end. Again, they are Jews asking what is going to happen to your people, the Jews. And then Jesus gives them many details in chapter 24 which pertain to the Jews during the events of the end times, particularly the tribulation. He talks about the whole world turning against the Jews and the antichrist standing in the new third temple to be built proclaiming himself God at the halfway point of the tribulation. He then tells the Jews that when this happens, run for the hills. He details events of the tribulation because the tribulation is for the redemption of the Jews. It is often referred to as the seven years of Jacob’s or Israel’s Trouble. Matthew 24 and 25 is not about the church; it’s about the Jews in keeping with the context.

During the tribulation, two thirds of the Jewish population will be killed. The five wise virgins represent the Jewish remnant that turns to Jesus and is brought into the wedding feast and the eternal kingdom. The five foolish virgins are the unbelieving Jews that are excluded.

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Having said all that in setting the context, it doesn't mean we just ignore this because it's about the Jews. Not at all. There are many Universal Truths from the Parable that are meant for both Jew and Gentile.

There are only two groups of people – wise and foolish

Five wise virgins who believed in Jesus and five foolish virgins who did not. Sometimes it seems as though people think there are multiple belief systems from which to choose. You have atheists who don't believe in any deity. You have agnostics that believe there is not definitive proof of God, so we can't know whether or not there is a god. You have Muslims who believe in a distant, non-involved god who is judging all people according to a standard he has laid out. You have new agers who believe we're all moving towards a perfect utopian oneness of collective consciousness. The world wants you to believe there are many good options out there. Scripture is clear – there are only two groups of people. The wise who believe Scripture is absolutely true and believe in Jesus for their salvation because He is the only way to an eternity of joy in His presence. And the other group are the foolish who believe something else.

Reminds me of the list that appeared at the shipyard in England after the Titanic had sunk with all kinds of people on it. Rich people, employees, staff, middle class people, citizens from different countries. But the list only had two columns – saved and lost.

The end times will reveal Who's in What group

One way of thinking about the two groups are one group believes man is in charge and the other believes God is in charge. People today think we have entered a time where man is so smart that we are capable of solving all our problems. In my upcoming teaching in Moldova, one of my subjects I've been given is the impact Artificial Intelligence may have on the church. I've been studying AI and quantum computing which will take AI to a level that makes current AI look like the stone age. The internet changed the way we live our lives. The smart phone further changed the way we live. But the impact of those changes will be nothing compared to what's coming with AI. Man thinks he is so smart.

And have you heard about agenda 2030 at the UN? The United Nations has this strategic plan they call the Sustainable Development Goals which are to solve every problem of humanity by 2030. There will be no more hunger, no poverty, gender equality, clean water, excellent health care, etc. There are 17 goals that will be accomplished worldwide. They believe they can solve all our problems and usher in a beautiful utopian future of peace and harmony.

In many ways, it's simply telling God, we got this from here. You are no longer necessary. And they increasingly make those who believe mankind can't solve its problems and need a savior, (Namely Jesus) out to be some kind of hateful, simpleminded, impediment to their plans. So you have two groups – Believers in Jesus who place no faith in man and Non-believers who place all faith in man.

But there is coming a day when the church will be removed from the earth in the twinkling of an eye. One of the two groups will be completely removed leaving only unbelievers. Israel will sign a covenant with many nations and the antichrist which begins the tribulation. The antichrist will institute a worldwide economic system controlling every transaction, the mark of the beast. Then there will be natural disasters of every kind. Many will die. Meteors will hit the earth; all ocean life will die. It's hard to imagine the pain, the suffering of the tribulation. Many will curse God, hate Him and many will turn to Him realizing who He is and become part of the coming kingdom. There will be no fence sitters. The two groups will be evident to all.

The entrance into Jesus' kingdom is knowing Jesus

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When the foolish virgins knock on the door to be let in, the bridegroom, Jesus, says to them: I tell you the truth, I do not know you. Reminds us of the end of the sermon on the mount.

Matthew 7:22–23 (NASB95)

22 “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’

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Your church attendance is not evaluated. Your ministry is not considered. Believing in Jesus is knowing Jesus. Don't think of it as becoming a Christian and changing your behavior or accepting a new belief system. It is extremely personal. It is meeting someone who loves you and beginning a relationship with Him. Is He your Friend? Do you love being with Him? Is He active and working in your life changing you more every day into His image? DO YOU KNOW HIM?

The coming of Jesus is sudden, and no one knows when it will happen

This parable is about the second coming of Jesus at the end of the Tribulation I believe. But the same applies to the rapture which precedes the second coming. I think Scripture is clear that these are two distinctly different events. The rapture is where Jesus calls us up to meet Him in the clouds; He doesn't come to earth. He takes us to the marriage supper of the lamb, a seven-year celebration of life in Him while the tribulation is happening on the earth. Then He returns with us to the earth where the antichrist is defeated at the battle of Armageddon and Jesus reigns with us on earth for 1000 years. After which is the judgment of unbelievers, the eternal locking away of Satan, then the new heaven and new earth come, our eternal home. But it will all get started in a moment's time and we are to always be ready because no one knows when it will happen.

It is hard, even impossible to describe the beauty that awaits the believer. Think of it this way. Think of the best experience you can imagine here on earth. What would bring you the greatest joy? Young people, teenagers, what are your dreams? What is on your ultimate bucket list for the rest of your life? Spare no expense, dream big. Got it in your mind. What Jesus has prepared for us, the new heaven, our eternal home, is a thousand times greater than the best thing on earth you can think of and its unending. Its forever. Its greatness, beauty, love, joy has no end. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and nothing has entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him. All Hail King Jesus.