

Matthew 25:1-13

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' "No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said, 'Open the door for us!' "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

Years ago people never gave a second thought to walking over to their neighbor and asking to borrow a cup of sugar, or flour, or some other ingredient which they had run out of, and was now needed for their recipe. Remember, going as a child, or maybe sending your child next door to borrow some item you had run out of, or forgot to buy while grocery shopping? How about borrowing a lawnmower, or set of tools, or maybe even a car? We think nothing of borrowing from our family and/or friends when we are in need. We borrow from our family and/or friends all the time.

A former co-worker and close friend, some 11 or 12 years ago, sent me an email, and informed me he had been diagnosed with cancer. Not long after receiving his email we went back to Laurinburg for a visit. While Patricia was visiting friends, I went to visit James. Naturally he was depressed with his situation, but not why you would think. James asked me what he should do, because he had not been a good church person, his words not mine, what was he going to do? He said “you could pray to God,” but what about him, he believed he had no one to turn too.

All of James' life he had put his faith in the wrong things of life and now that he needed faith he found he was spiritually empty. James sat across from me with tears in his eyes feeling totally alone. He needed something, unfortunately what he needed he could not borrow. He needed faith, Godly faith, spiritual faith, but he had none, and to make matters worse he believed he had no time to change that. Have you ever felt spiritually empty? Have you ever felt you were all alone and there was no one you could talk too or turn too in your time of need? There are some things you just can't borrow.

This morning's passage is a parable Jesus told about ten bridesmaids waiting for the wedding celebration to begin. You have all been to weddings some big some small, but in Biblical times, a wedding was one of the greatest festivities a village could have. Everybody would turn out for the wedding. Men took the day off work, women put aside the daily household chores, children were excused from their chores and/or daily lessons, everyone took the day off went to the wedding celebration and remained for the entire celebration. No one left early, everyone stayed until the end.

The high point of the wedding day came when the groom took his new bride from her parent's house to their new home. See, after the official marriage ceremony, the bride and groom would enter the home of the bride's parents, perhaps to discuss the dowry. When all business matters had been settled, the bride and groom would run out joyfully and head to their new home, and once there the celebration would begin. The couple would take the longest way through the village, trying to make the wedding parade last as long as possible.

This is where this morning's parable picks up. The bridesmaids would wait outside for the groom to bring his new bride home, but there was a longer than expected wait, and the girls fell asleep. Then at midnight there was loud shouting, "*Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!*" The bridesmaids woke up, and made ready for the bridegroom. Some of the bridesmaids, who had been waiting all day and half the night, discovered a problem, a big problem. They realized they had not prepared well enough and their lamps were going out due to lack of oil.

Frantically they tried to borrow some oil from the other girls and couldn't, so they had to rush off and purchase some. Only to find when they returned they had missed it. The big moment they had waited for they missed. The celebration parade was over, the doors to the great banquet were closed, and they had missed out because they were not prepared.

My point this morning is clear: When crisis comes, you had better have prepared in advance, because there are some things you just can't borrow. When crucial moments come in your life, you and only you have to take responsibility. In your time of crisis, you need your resources. Yes, it's good to have borrowing power, it's good to have material things, it's good to have friends, but when everything is over and dust settles, you have to stand on your own, and there are just some things, you can't borrow!

When a crisis comes, you cannot borrow someone else's commitment to Scripture. Yes, you could borrow someone's copy of the Bible, but when trouble comes in your life, you need your own Biblical strength and knowledge.

You will need your own personal biblical inspiration to bring you through those rough times. Someone can give you a Scripture, which carried them through, but without a personal relationship with God and His Scriptures, they may be just that, only words.

I heard a minister one time who told of a funeral he had preformed. During the service he held up the Bible of the person who had died, it was held together with duct tape. The Bible had been read and re-read so much the pages were falling out. Verse after verse was highlighted, and writings throughout the margins were found. This person had made personal notes to herself and to God what a particular passage meant. She wrote frequently, "This I can count on!" When her great crisis of death quickly approached she was ready with grace, confidence, and courage. Why, because she prepared herself with a personal commitment to Scripture.

Let me ask you: Are you at home with the Scriptures? Are you on good terms with your Bible? Is your Bible your friend or is it just a book you carry around to appear religious? No one can ever master the Bible; one can only be mastered by it.ⁱ Familiarity with the Scriptures comes only after long term exposure to its words.

A minister who was visiting a home of one of his members and talk of the Bible came up and they asked him a question where something was located in the Scriptures. He asked if he could see a Bible so he could show them. The mother asked her little five-year-old daughter Jennie to go in the other room and bring back their favorite book, which they love so much located on the coffee table. Jennie runs out, and in a flash she returns with the Sears catalogue.

Think about this for a moment. What is your favorite book? Be honest now, when was the last time you really sat down, read and studied your Bible? Not just read, to read and cover five more chapters, but really read and studied its contents? How long has it been? Remember, when crisis comes, you cannot borrow someone else's commitment to the Bible.

When crisis comes, you cannot borrow somebody else's commitment to prayer. How many people have ever had to have a MRI? To some people it's nothing, but according to statistics, 35% of people are claustrophobic, and to those people a MRI is torture and maybe impossible. I heard someone tell how difficult it is for them to have a MRI.

He told of a time when they had to have one and, as he was about to start he took off his watch and rings, and he noticed the time as he removed his watch. Hey laid on the table and up into the tube he went.

Following the procedure this man told how he had prayed the whole time he was in the tube. While on his way home this man told his wife how calm he was and surprisingly he never panicked. His wife mentioned that while he was having his MRI their preacher had come in and since he had missed him he prayed with her. He asked when that was and it was around the time he was removing his watch. You can believe it was the medication they gave him for nerves, which never worked in the past, or you could believe in prayer.

A good friend of ours Bobby Fleming now he believes in prayer, this I know for fact. He called me one morning about 10:30, after just hearing the doctors and nurses say, “There’s no pulse, there’s no pulse.” After receiving his call I turned to the ministers I was with and told them I had to leave, they stopped the meeting, and they laid hands

on me right then on behalf of his wife Shirley, and when I walked off the elevator about 15 minutes later I heard the doctor tell Bobby she was fine and resting comfortably. You can't tell me prayer does not work.

Prayer is friendship with God. Prayer is conversation with God. You talk with your good friends on a regular basis don't you? You don't have to put on a front to your true friends. So if God is your friend talk to Him, and talk on a regular basis. You cannot have a real friendship without real and true communication. Problem is, for a lot of people, and sadly for a lot of "Christians" they only talk to God when they need something. Their prayers are always, "Gimme, gimme, gimme." That's not prayer. Real prayer is the sharing of joys, sorrows, victories, defeats, concerns, thanks, and fears with God. Prayer like that you can't borrow.

Lastly, when crisis comes, you cannot borrow somebody else's commitment to Christ. You all know someone who through even the roughest times they remained steadfast. I'm not talking about someone who walks around telling everyone they are fine when deep down they can't hardly stand. I'm talking about the person who goes through a

crisis of health, finance, and even death and remains steadfast in their faith. They stood firm on their commitment to Christ in the midst of their crisis.

Some run and hide themselves from the world. Some live blaming God for their loss. Some reject Christ and turn from Him in their crisis, but some, those who build a relationship with Christ stand firm. Now did I say by being committed to Christ they did not grieve? Did I say by being committed to Christ they would not have tough times? Did I say by being committed to Christ everything would always be sunny? NO! But by be committed to Christ you have an advocate to the Father, the one who can and will stand by you, strengthen you, and care for you in the midst of your crisis. You can't borrow someone else's commitment to Christ. This commitment is developed over time. Again, it's like a friendship, you develop it, you nurture it, you cherish it, and when a need arises your friend is there.

A man came to a farmer one day and asked to be a hired hand. The farmer asked him, "What can you do?" The man answered, "I can sleep when the wind blows." The farmer thought that was a bit strange, but since he really needed of help he hired him. Soon after, the farmer

went off on an extended trip. When he returned a couple of weeks later during the night a bad storm came up. The farmer woke and heard the rain against the windows; he heard the strong wind against the house and through the trees. Then he remembered the broken barn door, the weak place in the barn wall, and the weak place in the hen house.

Concerned for his property and his livestock, he got up and went to check on them. What do you think he found? The barn door had been fixed, the barn wall and the hen house both repaired. The animals were safe and the hired hand was asleep in his bunk in the barn. It was then the farmer remembered what the hired hand had said, "I can sleep when the wind blows." This was true because he had prepared ahead of the storm. He could sleep through the storm. The question this morning is can you? Can you sleep when the wind blows?

There are some things you just can't borrow, so prepare yourself. Be prepared for those crisis which will occur during you life. Start now developing a commitment to the Scriptures, a commitment to prayer, and a commitment to Christ. Remember, there are some things you just can't borrow.

ⁱ Edward Blair, *The Bible and You*, Abington Press, Nashville TN. 1953, pp. 52.