

Hanging Out With Jesus: Helping Men Climb Out Of Their Rut

Unedited Transcript

Matthew 25:1-13, The Ten Virgins

Good morning, men! This last week we had the memorial service for Jim Seibert, who was the administrator of the Bible Study for seventeen years. Men do graduate, but not often is that person known to almost everyone. A lot of us lost a really close friend. It was a beautiful service, God was glorified, Jim's legacy was honored, his widow was properly loved and comforted, and the people who were there had an opportunity to mourn and grieve his loss. It was a good day. He was a genuine friend to all of us, and he was my best friend.

This morning, I want to wish everybody a happy Easter. Because Friday belonged to him, Sundays belong to us, so it's a very important day, that's why they call it Good Friday. A very important day in the life of the church, the life of Christians, and so I hope your Easter is wonderful!

We're going to start this morning off with a shout out to the First Baptist Church Ponder of Ponder, TX. Five men there who have been meeting for five years on Mondays at 7:00 pm using the video Bible Study. Hank Quigg is their leader, and so I wonder if you would join me in giving a warm welcome to the First Baptist Church in Ponder? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're glad to have you with us!

We're getting back into Hanging Out with Jesus. This is a ten year series that we're breaking up with other smaller series during the course of the year. We're going through the Gospels chronologically, one story at a time. Today, we come to the story of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. The title of the message today is *Helping Men Climb Out Of Their Rut*. Now, you're probably wondering what in the world do ten virgins have to do with climbing out of a rut? Well, let me explain. We want to take a look at this passage and see what's going on. Matthew 25 starting at verse 1:

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins...

What is at that time? That's the parousia, the second coming of Christ. When Jesus returns:

The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Now these ten virgins here represent the visible church, those people who profess to be part of the body of Christ. All of us, and anyone who profess to be part of the body of Christ. These ten virgins carrying these lamps kind of a thing, it says:

Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

So in the visible church, you have wise Christians and you have unwise professing Christians:

The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them.

So these little lamps back in that day, this was a culturally relevant metaphor, and these small lamps would have a cup with some olive oil and a wick, but they didn't take extra oil with them. Verse 4:

The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming...

So there was a delay:

and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

They all looked exactly alike, they all had lamps, and they all fell asleep. That's the visible church. You can't really tell the difference between the visible church and the invisible or the real church often by outward appearance. This is why the Bible says don't look at a man's outward appearance because God looks on the heart.

I personally don't really relate to a parable about ten virgins, so if you want to, you can make your own little twist on this. For me, I like the idea of ten soldiers who enlisted in the army and were issued rifles and some cleaning oil and ammunition, and were then sent out on guard duty. The master, the general who was going to send them on their mission after their guard duty was complete, he was running a little late. So everyone fell asleep on guard duty. That guy in World War II, that Japanese soldier on some island, he just died. He spent twenty seven years out there doing his duty, waiting. So just picture soldiers having to wait a very long time. Then, the general shows up. I like that, though it's not really what the Bible says. Let's keep reading. Verse 6:

"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.

So everyone on guard duty was asleep. They all wake up at this. They all enlisted, they all had been issued this rifle. They all tried to make sure their weapons were in good working order:

The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

In other words, our rifles are rusty! Give us some of that oil!

"'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 general came:

The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

"Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!'

“But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

What’s going on?

There are many ways to talk about this parable. First of all, parables are intended to be a metaphor to communicate a broad idea. We could try to delve down into the theological details and figure out things like what is that oil in the jar the wise ones had and the foolish ones didn’t? Let me tell you that we will never ever agree on exactly what is the oil in the jar! Because theologians have been talking about this for centuries! One thing we do not do at this Bible Study is we do not engage in theological debates which have for centuries remained unresolved, as though somehow suddenly today we’re the ones who are going to get it right! We don’t do that! The approach that we usually use and will use today is the approach of how does this apply to us today? What does this mean at 9:00 am when you get to work and the customers are chewing you out? What does it mean then? What do these ten virgins mean then? That’s what we’re going to do.

So the situation: we’ve got these ten virgins, it’s a parable that something is going on in the visible church. We don’t see any discernable outward differences in these ten soldiers, and the reality is that there is a delay in the coming of the Lord. He is delayed, we also know from other scriptures that he is patient, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. So he’s delayed his return, we know that. We also know from the scripture that when he does come it’s going to be midnight, it’s going to be an unexpected hour, and some people in this visible church are not going to be ready. This is a parable about how you cope with that. You see these men at traffic lights all across America. They seem like their senses have been dulled. They seem passionless, the zeal is not there. Many of these men have professed faith at one time, but now they’re just going through the motions. Yes, they are professing Christians, but they’re just going through the motions, they’ve lost their zeal. You might even be one of them. What’s in this jar, this oil, whatever it is, it must be one or more of three things. It must be one or more of three things, and perhaps one or more of only three things. It might be different for Bill than it is for Steve, or for Chase.

Acts 26:20, Paul says, I was not disobedient to the vision of heaven. I preached three things, I preached that they should turn to God and turn from their sin and prove their repentance by their deeds. I preached faith in God, repentance from sin, and doing good deeds as the evidence that you have in fact this faith and repentance in you. You might be that soldier who enlists and gets issued a rifle that you never learn how to clean and shoot. The point is that if you enlist in the army and as a soldier, and you get issued a rifle that you never learn to clean and shoot, are you really a soldier? James said in chapter 2 verse 17, let’s turn there... This is that very thorough and dense teaching of the relationship between faith and works. In verse 17 it says:

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

One of the possibilities for these five foolish soldiers/virgins is even though they have all the appearances of having faith in God, they really don’t. They really don’t believe, and you know that there are people like this because you have met them. They may be like the man who had heard, but like the rocky soil, the seed was thrown upon it, grew up with great joy but when persecutions came they fell away. They could be like that. Or it could be that they just can’t get by the idea that there’s a real hell. They just can’t accept that, it shocks their sensibilities. Or they can’t get over the idea that there is

eternal life. They think you live, you die, and that's it. Maybe they have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, or maybe they have made some kind of lie up. At the root of all this is the basic lie of I know more about what's going on in the universe than the one who created the universe! I can't accept that the creator, the one who was smart enough to fling the cosmos into existence, these billions of galaxies, I can't accept that he would reduce himself to writing stories to explain his existence. So all these are just different forms of pride that just creep into people who are part of the visible church. So we've got faith, and men just unwilling to humble themselves and repent. But hey, I repent of my pride! And then there are those that, having their "fire insurance," just don't give any evidence of having that faith. Whatever the oil in the jar is a symbol of, it's one or more of a combination of those things.

Here's the point, these men need your help! Because of the end of the passage, the door was shut. In verse 11, later the others came but he replied I tell you the truth, I don't know you. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know day or hour. There are men out there upon whom the door is going to be shut. In this particular text, it does not say that they then go off and get cast out into the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. It doesn't say that, so we don't know. Perhaps it is, but maybe it's some sort of severe punishment. So we have the Biblical Christians, the five wise ones, and the unwise ones, the cultural Christians. Do we have a type C and D? Counterfeit Christians who don't really believe, who don't have repentant faith that's been proven deeds. Perhaps a cultural Christian type D who has been defeated, that has a repentant faith and some deeds but like it says in 1 Corinthians 3, instead building with gold, silver, and precious stones, they built with wood, hay and straw. So what's going to happen is they're going to be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. So we don't know. From one parable, you're never going to know. That's why we look at the counsel of all the scriptures together to get a full doctrine on that. The point is, these men need you! They're out there! Some of them have a defeated faith, some of them have a counterfeit faith, but they're cultural Christians. If you don't get them, who will?

Here's the Big Idea for the day: **If God puts a man in your path who is stuck, discipleship means finding out why and then helping him solve that problem.** Let me give you a couple of examples.

I told you a few weeks ago about a run in with a guy at the gym. Guess what? We met again! We had another run in! Oh my gosh, this guy is out of control! When I'm at the gym, I super set. Super set means simply that you alternate two exercises for different body parts, like chest and back. You do one set for the chest, then one for the back, and then you take a little brief rest, then you do the back to back sets again. I was using this piece of machinery, and by the way when I do a super set and I leave the one piece of machinery or weights, and somebody else comes along, that's fine. That's the way it is. I had been in another room and came around the corner, and he was just then taking the weights off a machine I had been super setting off of. It was a Smith machine I had been doing some dead lifts on. He was taking the weights off, and maybe I gave some sort of body language of surprise. Not anger, but like okay it's his turn. I'll go over to this other machine. Just a barbell and put some weights on it to do my dead lifts. No problem. But whatever little thing I did set him off! And he said I know what you're doing! You can't hog these machines! I said honestly I don't think I'm doing that, I just saw that you're there and I'm going over here now instead. He said I've been watching you! I said, oh you've been watching me have you? He said yeah! I see you! You'll tie up four different machines at a time! I've never done that, so at this point I'm thinking wise virgin, foolish virgin. Then he says besides, this is a public gym and you can't do super sets in a public gym! So I'm thinking okay, it's actually a private gym number one, and if you can't do super sets in a private gym you pay for then where can you do super sets? Do I have to have a home gym? What's the deal here? Anyway, he goes on and on and finally I held out my hand and said my name is Pat. What's your name? He rejected that and continued on just hammering me like

crazy! I wasn't scared, I have never lost a brawl ever! Now I haven't had one since I was twenty-one. I've gotten cold cocked twice, but in terms of actually getting in a fight, I've never been beaten. So I'm pretty fearless when some guy tries to intimidate me. But he was really going off, so finally I held out my hand again and asked what's your name? My name is Pat. Reluctantly he shook my hand and said my name is... X... He was still talking when I walked away, but you know something? God put him in my path for a reason, and he is obviously very very stuck. God calls us to make disciples! What is discipleship? It's finding out why and helping them solve that problem! How much progress was I going to make that day? Not so much! But I feel like the Holy Spirit prompted me to just put out my hand. For me that day discipleship was learning his name and shaking his hand. I have no idea where that goes. My job is not to produce a particular outcome, nor yours. Our job is to be faithful. That's one example.

Let me give you another example. Jim Seibert; how many of you have had your lives impacted in some way by Jim Seibert? Look at that! Hands all across this room and community! Let me tell you about the other Jim, the Jim that we met twenty-five years ago. Jim came in and sat at this table. I'm not even sure how he wondered in one morning after he had moved to Orlando. Scott Alexander was his table leader. Jim in his own words, and having given me permission on numerous occasions to tell this story, said that I sat down and if anybody had asked me to say a word I would have been out of here so fast it would have made everybody's head's spin. He said somehow Scott had the presence of mind to sense something and so he did not put me on the spot. He just let me come week by week and sit there. **If God puts a man in your path who is stuck**, and Jim was stuck at that point as all of us have been, **discipleship means finding out why and then helping him solve that problem**. Scott's method of finding out why was to not lean in at all. He just let Jim sit there. Then one morning Jim told me that Scott asked who'd like to close us in prayer this morning? Jim said I'll do that. I don't even know why I said that! I never prayed out loud before! But Jim did! He closed with the prayer that morning and it was like somebody flipped a switch! God got a hold of my life and began to turn my life around. Just a few weeks after that, he came to me and asked is there anything I can do to help around here? I said yes, as a matter of fact. Our table time is running a little long. I need somebody to go around about five minutes until the hour and get all the table leaders to attention and give them the cut sign. A couple weeks later he comes back and says is there anything else I can do? I said well the man who was bringing the orange juice can't do that anymore. Would you like to do that? He said yeah I can do that. And this continued every couple of weeks and after six months of this he was doing 80% of everything that needed to be done. So I said hey I got an idea. Why don't you just become the Bible Study administrator? He said what does that mean? I said I will teach and you do everything else. And he said okay! God put a man in Scott and mine's path. **If God puts a man in your path who is stuck, discipleship means finding out why and then helping him solve that problem**. Jim had the gift of service. He was going to implode until he came to Christ. If you don't exercise your gifts, you're going to implode! So we were helping him solve that problem, how do you answer that call to be sent to live for Christ? You get the idea.

Why did the Holy Spirit preserve this passage?

Why did the Holy Spirit preserve this passage in the scriptures? This is the only debatable part of the message. This is my interpretation. I did not find this, and it was not the subject of the commentaries I read. I believe that this parable is meant as a warning, not a prediction. I don't believe here that Jesus is predicting that five people are going to get shut out for every five let in or anything like that. It's just a warning. You have children and sometimes you want to guide their behavior. Sometimes you do that through positive motivation and sometimes you do that through cautionary tales. This is a bit of a cautionary tale. The purpose of the parable is to inform us and to explain how the kingdom of heaven works. It's to create a little bit of negative motivation. My calling is to take God's message of love to a

broken generation. It's interesting, because when that calling came to me, I was meditating on R. C. Sproul's thought about the holiness of God. I was thinking about the irony of how men get into these places these five foolish virgins were. They get stuck in these ruts because they don't revere and honor the holiness of God! But the irony of that is that when the man is in the lowest point of the valley because he has not respected and treated God as holy and awesome, the message he needs then is not that God is holy but that God is love. It was immediately after thinking that that God came to me and said I want you to take my message of love to a broken generation. But part of the message of love is telling the truth! Part of the message of love is that if a man will not be motivated by eternal life, if he doesn't believe in it, then maybe the threat that that's not all there is, that you can go to the left or the right, maybe that's another way of loving men, you see? Talking to men about the reality of hell, that hell is a real place.

If this parable was actually a story, you would say the punishment doesn't fit the crime. All they did was forget, neglect because of foolishness a thing that could have been easily corrected had they given more fore thought. All they did was forget to bring more jars of oil! Are they going to go hell for that? So that's why you shouldn't be pushing this particular parable too far. It may be that they had a counterfeit faith, but it could just as easily be that they had a defeated faith and the Lord had something else in mind for them before they would be invited into the next feast. Who knows? We don't know! One point to remember from this parable is this: there are real deadlines in life. Jesus wants to communicate a warning that there is a real deadline in this life. The one thing that causes me stress... everyone has a modicum of stress, but the one thing that has really caused me stress in the last couple decades is catching a plane on time. When the plane door closes, it's closed! When you're in Phoenix and you're trying to get back to Orlando to be with your family, for me it creates a lot of tension and stress. There are real deadlines in life, and this parable, it's a warning more than a prediction that you don't want to miss this deadline! If you're stuck then get yourself unstuck! Wise up! The Big Idea today: **If God puts a man in your path who is stuck, discipleship means finding out why and then helping him solve that problem.**

What can you do to help these men?

Final thing today, what can you do to help these men? In other words, what does it mean to be wise? We can help men be wise by telling them that you need some more oil for your jar, and I would be happy to show you how to do that. You need more of a kingdom perspective. That's what I would say. I actually wouldn't say you need to do anything because that can be a turn off. I had this happen yesterday, some guy told me you know what you need to do? And I just shut down. You don't even know who I am and you're going to tell me what I need to do? So I wouldn't tell a guy this is what you need to do but I would as a guy a question; would you be interested in having more of a kingdom perspective on how to live your life? If he said yes, I would give him the research.

I ran across a guy, total stranger, can't remember who he is, but it was a guy God had put in my path who was obviously stuck. I'm a disciple maker so I decided I would find out why he's stuck and if I can I'll help him solve his problem. He shared his story and I gave him a copy of *Is Christianity for You?* He said this is timely. I had been thinking about my own mortality and what comes after. I really need this. That was it! I did my thing and that was all that was required. That was the kingdom perspective moving him that day. There are lots of things that you can do to move a man toward a kingdom perspective. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Without holiness no one will see the Lord. It is God's will for you to be holy. Go and make disciples. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Everything else that you need will be

given to you. If you use the things of this world, don't be engrossed in them because the world in its present form is passing away. All of these things that make up this kingdom perspective.

Turn with me as we close to 2 Timothy 4. When Jim Seibert was asked what scripture he would like to have read at his memorial service, this is the one he picked. 2 Timothy 4:6-8:

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

That's the wise soldier there. That's the wise virgin:

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

So the application: help people have that kingdom perspective. Instruct them, get involved in their lives because they are stuck in a rut! Oh but I don't think I should meddle in another person's business! That over against them saying one day, calling from below to above why didn't you tell me!? I didn't want to meddle, I didn't want to offend you. The Big Idea, **If God puts a man in your path who is stuck, discipleship means finding out why and then helping him solve that problem.** Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Our Father in heaven, we come humbly to you today and we ask that you would help us to be men who will make disciples of other men. Men who will see men who are stuck in a rut, find out why and then help them solve those problems. We offer this to you for your glory and praise. In Jesus' name, amen!