

### **Matthew 25:1-13**

**25** “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. <sup>4</sup> The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

<sup>6</sup> “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

<sup>7</sup> “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

<sup>9</sup> “‘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.’

<sup>10</sup> “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.

<sup>11</sup> “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’

<sup>12</sup> “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

<sup>13</sup> “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

### **Ephesians 1:17-19 New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit<sup>[a]</sup> of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength

### **John 12:21 New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>21</sup> They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.”

Matthew 25:1-13 & Ephesians 1:17-19, John 12:21

“Seeing Jesus Today”

Lent 5 – April 2, 2017

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There’s an old saying, “be careful what you wish for, you just might get it.” I think the same is true when we simply talk about what we’re looking for. You’ve probably heard someone say, “Be careful what you’re looking for, you’ll probably find it.” Or “We always find what we’re looking for.”

There was a woman that was sure that her husband was having an affair. She had been watching him acting strange. He’d been getting up earlier than normal to leave the house and he’d been losing weight and working out which was something he’d never really done before.

He was being overly affectionate and this was just not like him. She knew he loved her, but the extra affection felt like he was overcompensating for bad behavior with someone else, doing something he shouldn’t.

This had been going on for nearly 2 months and when she tried to ask him if everything was ok, his answer was always that everything was great, couldn’t be better.

One day she decided to surprise him at his place of work for lunch and when she arrived, he wasn’t there. She tried to call his cell phone and it went straight to voice mail which never happened when she called. She asked around and no one seemed to know where he’d gone.

She didn’t normally look at the bank account, but finally she decided that since all the signs pointed to an affair, she would look. She found a recent plane ticket purchase for two to the Bahamas and sat down in tears. Her fears were confirmed. Her husband was having an affair and taking this woman to the Bahamas for a week, because just the week before, she had been right next to him when he told a friend he had a work trip and couldn’t join him golfing.

Finally, one evening when he came home after she’d sat distraught all day, she confronted her husband.

She had seen all the things she was looking for....and he confirmed that yes indeed, he had been leaving earlier for work each day and going to the gym before going to the office. And yes indeed he did purchase 2 tickets for the Bahamas for a week. He also had been out of the office that day getting a pedicure.

A pedicure, she asked? Why on earth would you get a pedicure? I’ve been begging you for years to go because your feet are so scratchy when you crawl in bed at night, and oh this woman must be the reason. You’ll do for her what you don’t do for me! She began crying again.

He laughed which only infuriated her more. How could he! And she cried some more. She could see everything so clearly now, how he’d been working out for her, getting calluses off his feet for her. Spending their savings on a trip for her. How could he!

And then he got so upset and started crying too. He said, “I never meant to hurt you. This was not part of the plan. I love you. I have always loved you. I was going to surprise you for our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary...I wanted to do something special and I’ve been acting funny because I didn’t know how to keep a secret from you. I wanted to be the man you married and fit into that suit again. I wanted to crawl in bed and put my feet on yours and not scratch your legs.”

“I want to be everything you’re looking for.”

She found all the clues of an affair because it’s what she was looking for, when she could have found a romantic anniversary getaway if she was looking for that.

Is Jesus everything we’re looking for, or are we seeking more?

We often miss out on seeing Jesus today because we’re simply not looking for him. We’re fixated on the woman taking forever to walk across the parking lot we’re trying to park in, and we miss the little boy she is walking slowly with who is stopping to pick up all the trash other people have left.

We miss out on seeing Jesus today because we’re seeing others impatiently waiting for their coffee that seems to be taking forever, so we get impatient and miss the woman in front of us that just paid for our cup.

We miss seeing Jesus today because we’re used to seeing the bad in people, that we’ve stopped looking for the good.

Years ago, my brother was in high school and my dad was picking up or dropping him off for a band rehearsal and as they were stopped at a stoplight, my dad commented on the kid walking across the street slowly in front of them with a Mohawk died purple and a leather jacket and ripped jeans. He said, “There goes a real winner” or something to that affect.

My brother said, “well dad, that so-and-so, and he’s in band with me, you wouldn’t know because when we put on our hats, his hair is covered. He’s pretty much a straight A student and the president of key club” – a service organization on campus.

My dad, like many of us, are used to looking for the negative, the ugly, the stuff we don’t like, and we miss all the good, wonderful, beautiful Jesus parts of people.

We see Jesus when we are looking for him,  
but the problem is we aren’t often looking for him.

The parable of the 10 virgins is like this. This is a parable I’ve never preached before because I have sooo many unanswered questions about it and it’s just funny to me. But perhaps I’ve made it too hard, and perhaps it’s supposed to be a little bit humorous.

We have 10 maidens who are waiting for their bridegroom...why a bridegroom needs 10, I'm not sure. Five of them brought their lamps and extra jars of oil. Five of them only brought the oil in their lamps and no extra. It seems that if the bridegroom was timely, all the ladies would have been prepared!

However, the bridegroom took way too much time primping and showed up very late, so late in fact that the five who brought extra oil needed it for their lamps and the other five who had none were left scrambling. I don't know about you, but if we have a set date, I'm not waiting around for hours for you to show up. If I'm not important enough for you to be on time, then I'm going to go do something else.

I digress. They go to buy oil and miss the bridegroom. They go to buy oil...at midnight! Who's selling oil at midnight? Is there a 24-hour convenient store? And when they return, with or without oil, it doesn't say, the Lord says, "truly I tell you, I do not know you." – which is true, he didn't get to meet them because he was late and they had to go buy oil.

The listener in the first century would hear this story a little differently, but only a little – the 10 virgins, maidens, would have been more like junior bridesmaids – 10 to 11-year-old girls who were to accompany the 1 actual bride to her bridegroom's place when the beginning of the marriage ceremony would be taking place. These were children! Silly girls – no wonder some of them were prepared and some were not, they were just kids!

We hear the story and we all get a good laugh at the silly girls who weren't prepared for the bridegroom and cannot accompany their bride to his house. But then when they return, the twist ending, the master does not let them in.

The audience of Jesus isn't laughing anymore. This isn't how this silly little tale is supposed to end. He's supposed to let them in, even though they are silly.

We've all done the silly thing. We've all been unprepared when we should have been prepared, and there is supposed to be grace. But here, Jesus says, "Truly I did not know you."

"Keep watch for you never know the hour or the day"

We miss Jesus because we aren't looking for Jesus. We're looking for the foolish and the horrible and the newsworthy – which let's be honest is 80% of the news – bad stuff that happens. We miss seeing Jesus because we aren't keeping watch for him.

"Please sir, we want to see Jesus."

– We earnestly do, we want Jesus to be here with us this day.

So look for him. This week I spent time actively looking for Jesus and I found him in the most extraordinary places – expected and not. And often I when I couldn't find him, I realized that maybe someone else was looking for him in me. I needed to be Christ for them.

We find what we are looking for, and sometimes we forget to look within ourselves or in others for Jesus today.

One of my favorite authors and theological thinkers asks himself these questions and I offer them to you as we part from one another for our week ahead:

“Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone’s face? Did I say words of healing? Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love? These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and the life to come.”

Amen.