

BE AWARE

Matthew 25:1-13 Text vs. 13 *"Keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."*

Our text this morning is a reminder for you to be prepared for the second coming of Jesus Christ. It's a call to be on the alert. Because no one knows the exact time of the Lord's return. So, you need to be ready. And this parable of the ten virgins in is an example of preparation.

Ten virgins were waiting for the bridegroom to come. Five had brought enough oil for their lamps for the wait. But the other five ran out of lamp oil. The five who were prepared for the bridegroom's arrival were rewarded. They met the bridegroom. The five who were not prepared had to go to buy more oil and missed the bridegroom's arrival. They were left out of the wedding banquet. Making this the moral of the story, you must always be prepared for the Lord's return. Because you don't know when it will happen. And that's what makes this message important to you.

The fact is, it's a topic that's both sobering and inspiring. You never know when your time on earth will end. It's a fact we all know about. But it's one we often forget in the hustle and bustle of daily life. It's true.

Life is short. Life is unpredictable. You never know when your time will come to an end. So, you must always be prepared for it. This isn't meant to be a morbid thought. It's a reminder – you should live each day to the fullest and make the most of the time that you have left. In the Bible, James 4:14 says, *"Why, you don't even know what will happen tomorrow! What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while, and then vanishes"*

Here's a reminder. Life passes quickly. Make the most of every moment. What does that mean? It means to live a life that's full of purpose and meaning. It means treasuring the people you love. Spending more time with them. It means following your desires. Using your talents to make a positive impact on the world. But more importantly, it means living a life that's pleasing to God. You never know when your time on earth will end. But you can be sure that the day you will stand before God to give an account of your life, you must be prepared for it! Having a life that has been faithful and obedient to God's will.

But with so much chaos and confusion going on in the world, you may have wondered if you aren't already living in the end times. You may have seen, or heard, predictions that we are! But while God's Word encourages you to be ready for Jesus' return, it also reminds you that *"that day and hour no one knows. Not even the angels of heaven. Nor the Son. But the Father only."* (Matthew 24:36, ESV) So, since you must always be prepared for the unexpected, you are encouraged to always be ready. *"Be prepared"* as the Boy Scout's motto proclaims. Keep on your toes. Life's full of surprises. And you never know what's going to happen next. Or, what's just around the corner!

But if you are always prepared, you can manage just about anything that comes your way. *"Mamma," the little child said. "My Sunday School teacher told me this world is just a place where God lets us live a for a little while so we can get ready for a better world to come. But mommy, I don't see anybody getting ready! I see you preparing to go on a trip to grandma's house. And Aunt Elsie is preparing to come here. But I don't see anybody preparing to go where my Sunday School teacher was talking about."*

Well, the Gospel of Mark says there is a time of preparation before something happens. *"I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare the way."* That's from Malachi 3:1.

And through Isaiah, God said, *"I will send my messenger to prepare the way. He will be the voice of one crying in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the coming of the Lord! Clear the road for him.'"*

In Exodus 23:20 God sent an angel ahead of the Israelites to prepare their way to the Promised Land. *"I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared."*

Mark 1:2 says, *"As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way.'"*

John the Baptist was a Messenger. He brought the Good News to the people. He was to baptize in the Jordan River. He was to preach baptism for repentance and forgiveness of sins. God sent John to prepare the way for the Promised One. Jesus. You always need preparation to enjoy the finished result. A nicely iced birthday cake. French pastries. An expertly prepared dinner. A beautifully built home. A well-raised family. And many really enjoy the preparation and the work that goes into a finished project? So, if you are always prepared for Jesus' return, you can face the coming judgment without being destroyed. You can receive blessings. Even though they may be hidden. If you prepare, you can manage just about anything!

The possibility of a Third World War is a topic of concern for many people. However, it's important to understand that the current conflict in the Middle East is not necessarily the beginning of World War III. Yes, the situation is complicated. There are many factors at play. It's not yet clear whether this conflict will escalate into a global war. However, according to a recent article in the weekly news magazine *The Week*, security experts have warned that Israel's war against Hamas opens up bringing regional players into a wider conflict making the consequences go far beyond the Middle East.

However, it's important to understand. This is not the only potential *hot spot* affecting major powers around the globe. The Middle East has always been a region of conflict and tension. It's often referred to as a potential trigger for World War III. However, it's difficult to predict the future. And it's important to remain vigilant and informed about the situation. So, while the conflict in the Middle East is serious, it isn't necessarily the beginning of World War III. Or the coming of the end. But it's important to stay informed and avoid jumping to conclusions or making assumptions about the future.

In Matthew 24:36-44, prior to our Scripture lesson today, Jesus said to *be prepared for His return*. He didn't say the day. He didn't say the hour. He said that just as in the days of Noah, people were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark. They weren't prepared for the flood. It came and swept them all away. Therefore, you must be ready. *"For the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect."*

Being prepared for the unexpected is not just about being ready for the return of Jesus. It's about being ready for unexpected events that will happen in your life. You never know when you might lose your job. Get into an accident. Or face a health crisis. But if you are prepared, you can manage with grace and strength.

So, how do you prepare for the unexpected?

First, you must have faith in God. You must trust He will be with you, no matter what happens!

Second, you must be proactive. Take steps necessary to prepare yourself for the unexpected. It may mean having an emergency fund. It may mean keeping your skills up to date. It may even mean having a plan in place for when things go wrong.

And third, you must be flexible. Be willing to adjust to new situations. Change your plans when necessary. Live your life with purpose and meaning. Always strive to do good and help others. Be mindful of your actions and your words. Because actions and words have the power to influence others in profound ways.

Several centuries ago, a Japanese emperor hired an artist to paint a picture of a certain species of bird. The artist sat down and painted the most beautiful picture of that bird that had ever have been painted. The emperor asked him why he had not painted the bird before? The artist took the emperor into another room and showed him the hundreds of birds he had painted: eyes, feathers, wings, feet, heads. He had spent hours and hours using gallons of paint preparing to paint this masterpiece. And it wasn't until he had finished his preparation that he could paint his masterpiece.

Today, Jesus' arrival is being prepared. It's going to be a world changing event. It will be the biggest event ever in the history of man. Everything must be exactly right for it! Everything needs to be in place. Everyone must be ready. John the Baptist was ready for his event. He was prepared. He was in the right place at the right time to tell the world the Messiah was coming. And what's most amazing about it is, John hadn't prepared it! God had already prepared the way for John! Look at the scripture: *"I will send my messenger ahead of you"* John was God's messenger for Jesus. But God was the messenger for John. He had prepared the way for him. And if you asked John the Baptist what his credentials were to do what he was doing, he would say, *The Lord had been preparing the way for me for seven hundred years.*

And the Lord God Almighty has been preparing you for His moment. God placed you in this world. His world. He has given you the tools with which to work His ministry. You have been called out of this world of sin to tell people to repent and get prepared to meet their Lord.

You're in the wilderness, just like John was in the wilderness. It's the world of sin. Tell people to repent. Get ready to meet their God. He's returning soon! God has not called you to fail. He has called you to be successful! You are being prepared to prepare others to meet Jesus, just as He did in Acts 2 *"when the day of Pentecost came. They were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that*

separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. . . . ¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. . . . “Let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” ³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” ⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized. And about three thousand were added to their number that day.”

Yes, God prepared others to receive Him. Jesus spent three years preparing the disciples for their ministry. He has spent 2,000 years preparing His church to prepare the world to receive Him. *“He brought you out of the miry clay. He has set your feet on the rock to stay.”* (Psalm 40:2-4)

So, being prepared for the unexpected is an especially important part of your life as a Christian. You must be ready for the return of Jesus Christ at any time. But you must, also, be ready for the unexpected events that happen in your daily life by having faith in God. Take the initiative. Be flexible. You can manage anything that comes your way. Remember, the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

“Keeping watch” reminds you to be vigilant and be prepared for the second coming of Jesus Christ. It’s a call to live your life with purpose and meaning. Determined to do good. And help others.

BE AWARE of this.

Hold this message to your heart.

Live your life with meaning.

Live with purpose.

Because *you do not know the day or the hour*” of His coming. . . .

It could be today!

AMEN