

Oil of Intimacy: Encountering the Bridegroom God (Matthew 25)

INTRODUCTION

Roman numeral I. Matthew 24:37-41 is a passage where Jesus begins to talk about the Tribulation period. He says: “As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking . . . until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left” (Mt. 24:37-41). In this passage, Jesus emphasizes, “But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

THE CONTEXT FOR JESUS’ TWO END-TIME LEADERSHIP PARABLES

Now that’s tragic. They didn’t even know that the greatest judgment in history up until that time was on the horizon. They had no clue about the Great Tribulation, which will come upon the earth. They didn’t even know it until the rain came. Completely unaware—and notice in Matthew 24:39 that the flood took them away in death. That’s how the flood took them. Jesus is emphasizing that as it was in the days of Noah, it will be in the days just before the Son of Man comes. They didn’t know that the flood was about to come and take them all away. All of them will be taken away in death. So also will be the coming of the Son of Man be.

WHEREVER THE BODY IS, THAT’S WHERE THE VULTURES WILL BE

Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken. The context is clear that they’re taken away in death. This isn’t the rapture. They’re taken just like the people in the days of Noah. Two women will be grinding at the mill. One will be taken in the way that the people were taken in the flood of Noah. It’s the exact parallel. If there’s any question, the disciples asked the question in Luke 17:36. In Luke, Jesus gives the same teaching, and the disciples asked, “Where Lord? Where are they going to take these people?”

And Jesus said, “Wherever the body is”—or “dead body” in the NIV—“there the eagles”—or *vultures* (NASB)—“will be gathered” (Lk. 17:37). Many translations say, “Where the carcass is.” Jesus is painting a gruesome picture: where the body of flesh is, that’s where the vultures will be. Now I use the New King James, and it says eagles. Most translations use the word *vultures*. So the question is this: “Where are they going to take these people who are suddenly snatched away?”

Jesus answered, “Where the carcass is; that’s where the vultures are.” In other words, it’s clearly the place of death—the place they were taken in the days of Noah. This is often being taught as a rapture teaching. That’s not even my point; I’m not trying to give a rapture teaching right now. The rapture is a true doctrine of the Bible. I believe the error is the timing people give it, before the great revival and the great trouble. We’re going to be raptured; there isn’t a question about that. It’s a glorious reality.

In the next verse, verse 42, Jesus has just said that two men will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. It’s clear that the place they’re taken is the place of death, and Jesus’ primary and pastoral advice is this: “Therefore watch. Develop a prayer life” (Lk. 24:42, paraphrased).

“WATCH THEREFORE”

The exhortation in Luke 24:42 to “watch therefore” comes in light of the fact that two will be in the field, and one will be taken in death. There’s a massive and tragic death toll with huge numbers in this hour. The only safe response is as Jesus exhorts in Luke 24:42: “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.” Jesus is instructing us to develop a prayer life. The word *watch* means more than a prayer life, but for our purposes tonight, at the very foundation of watching is developing a prayer life. It’s developing an inward connectedness with the Holy Spirit.

Now it’s important to understand that the people that Jesus is telling to develop a prayer life are the people who are living on the earth in the context of this great trouble. The great trouble is what Jesus compares to the days of Noah. The saints are on the earth at this time. During a time of such trouble, they must have a connection with the Holy Spirit. The primary teaching of Matthew 24-25 is the phrase, “Watch therefore.” Jesus mentions it several times through Matthew 24-25. It’s the main teaching.

MATTHEW 25: THE PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

Matthew 25:13: “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming” (Mt. 25:13) Matthew 25 includes a parable of the Bridegroom with the wise virgins and the unwise virgins, or bridesmaids. He gives the same exhortation to “Watch therefore.”

Throughout His teachings on the end times, He gives us the repeated exhortation to develop a prayer life. There’s going to be a tremendous death toll. Many people will die. There will be numbers that we can’t imagine. Many people will be afraid. That’s what Luke 21:26 prophesies, that “men’s hearts [will fail] them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Lk. 21:26). Many will faint for fear. Others will draw back from the Lord to try to find some kind of safety in dark systems. There will be a lot of confusion.

GOD’S PEOPLE WILL HAVE A HEART CONNECTION WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

God will have His people with prophetic clarity, boldness, and courage in their spirit. There will be a multitude, hundreds of millions, if not a billion or two, who will have clarity and boldness. Though there will be a great falling away, there will be a great harvest of souls as well. The number of souls in the Body of Christ worldwide will increase, though many fall away. It’s possible that several hundred million will fall away. No one knows the number, but it’s a major number. I believe that a billion or more will be added. So the net result will be a great increase in the midst of the Body of Christ. It’s this exhortation—to watch therefore—that will keep us in the day of trouble.

MARK 13:32-27: JESUS EXHORTS US AGAIN TO WATCH

I have in paragraph C that the passage in Mark 13:32-37 and Matthew 24 are the same teaching. Mark 13:32-37: “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch” (Mk. 13:32-37)!

Here’s the point that I want to make: Jesus says it three times. He gives them a sentence and then says, “Watch

therefore.” He says it three times, one after the other. He’s giving such repetition and emphasis that His recommendation for preparedness is bound up in the exhortation to watch.

I’ve been a pastor for a little over thirty years, and it would be a very reasonable thing for a pastor to say to Jesus, “Jesus, I know that You’re a man of prayer, but with so many people dying and fainting with fear and confusion everywhere, don’t You think that You could maybe give us some practical advice besides praying?”

Jesus the Great Shepherd might look at us and say, “The most practical advice you can give them is to connect with Me. If they connect with Me, they will receive instructions in the present tense. They will know where to go and where not to go. They will know what to do and what not to do. If they connect with Me, they will have boldness supernaturally in their souls. If they connect with Me, they will have peace instead of fear. The most significant thing they can do is connect with Me.”

THE GREATEST PREPARATION IS TO DEVELOP OUR CONNECTION WITH GOD

Beloved, I can’t think of anything more important. There may be several things that are equally important to the Body of Christ beginning to call people to develop a history in God in their private lives. I call it our secret history in God. Each of us has a secret history in God, or a private history in God. It’s private and secret because no one can see the inner movements of your heart. It really is secret even if you don’t want it to be, because you can’t even fully measure all the movements of your heart toward God. But each of us is developing a secret history in God that no one else really sees. You can see it a little by seeing the quality of one’s life, and you’ll know they’re connected to the Lord. However, no one knows the quality of your secret history in God. I want to challenge you as a brother tenderly: are you focused on developing your history in God in a deep way?

A day is coming, and I believe the hour of trouble is just two or three decades out. I turn fifty-one this year, and you know that a few decades really feel like a minute. I mean, ten years goes by in a moment. It hasn’t always gone by so fast. Now I realize that ten years goes by in a moment. We need to go deep now, and we need to get our people to go deep now, because forces will begin to mount up. There’s trouble and evil coming that will be seductive and powerful. People with clarity, boldness, and peace will be the lifeboats in the midst of the storm.

So Jesus is teaching on the end times, and He’s telling the people to develop a prayer life. The people of God are on the earth. They’re the ones He’s talking to right here.

MATTHEW 24:43: “KNOW THIS”

Now in Matthew 24:43, He’s going to give a general principle that has a real particular application in the final generation, but it has an application in every time throughout the history of the Body of Christ. In Matthew 24:43, Jesus says, “Know this” (Mt. 24:32). Now when Jesus says, “Know this,” obviously this is something that we’re supposed to know. “If the master of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into” (ibid). The application is clear: we each have an inheritance. The house speaks of our inheritance all throughout Scripture.

Beloved, there’s a thief (Jn. 10:10). He’s the devil. Jesus said that Satan is the thief. He wants to steal your inheritance, but if you watch, you can keep him from stealing your inheritance.

OUR PRIMARY INHERITANCE IS TO HAVE OUR HEARTS CONNECTED TO JESUS

Our primary inheritance, paragraph B, is to have our heart connected to Jesus. You can call it a prayer life or

intimacy with God; there are many ways to term this, but you know what I'm talking about. Our primary inheritance is our heart connection with God.

That's what the parable of the oil is all about. In a moment, Jesus is going to focus on the heart connect—the oil. He's going to give the same exhortation—"Watch therefore." It's all one teaching. It's all one theme. It's all in the same context. Our primary inheritance is our heart connection with God.

Satan knows that if he can defile that part of our inheritance, he will have access to our ministry inheritance as well. If Satan can get to my heart inheritance with the Lord and defile my relationship with the Lord, which is my primary inheritance, then he can get to my inheritance in terms of my ministry assignment that God has entrusted to me.

A PARABLE FOR THE LEADERSHIP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Jesus is talking to leaders. This parable is directed at leadership in the Body of Christ. "Strike the shepherd and scatter the sheep" is always Satan's strategy. But there's another strategy that Satan has: dull the shepherd, and you will put the sheep to sleep. Satan can't strike every shepherd by killing each one. Remember how Jesus was the Shepherd, and the sheep scattered when He died. In a moral sense, the shepherds are being struck and are falling into scandalous sin. The flock are being scattered in various places.

I have great mercy and tenderness for those shepherds. It's not as if I say, "Well, there you go." No, no. We need to recover and fight for them, cover their shame, and help them to see their place of inheritance returned. Stand with them and believe for them. I'm not for the shepherds being out of the game. We need to fight to get them back in the game. But I tell you there's another truth: not just strike the shepherd and scatter them, whether a moral tragedy or a martyrdom. In context, this verse is talking about killing the shepherds, but beloved, Satan knows that if he can dull the shepherds, he can put the flock to sleep.

KILL OR DULL THE SHEPHERD, AND YOU ROB THE SHEEP

If you kill or dull the shepherd, you rob the sheep. On the other hand, fiery shepherds beget fiery people. The flock is on fire when the shepherd is on fire. Not all the flock is on fire. Jesus had one in the midst of His flock that didn't catch the flame—Judas.

Here's the point I want to make: that Jesus said, "Know this." Do you know what "know this" means? The thief is trying to get your home; he's trying to steal your inheritance! Do you know that? Do you know that watching is Jesus' answer to stop the thief? Not the whole of the answer, but if we watch, we'll follow through on the rest of the answer.

The whole answer isn't just, "Be connected," but when we're connected, we get insight, courage, peace, and we see more clearly. So here is my question: are you watching as your primary strategy to keep the thief out of your house? Or are you just hoping that nothing bad happens? Or are you actively developing a deeper prayer life? This is what watching is about.

CALLING IHOP-KC BACK TO THE HOUSE OF PRAYER

I find that it's a challenge to do that. Even here at IHOP-KC, it's a challenge to do that. There are many forces that pressure us, even in a house of prayer, not to pray. I'm constantly calling IHOP-KC to IHOP. We have about 1,000 people here now who are doing IHOP-KC in a full-time, focused way. There are 500 staff and 500

students and interns. There are 1,000 of us, and this is our primary thing. It's often the case that the bulk of IHOP-KC is in the wrong direction. It's like we're constantly calling IHOP-KC back to IHOP.

The Lord is constantly calling me back to IHOP. He whispers to me, "Mike, you're the director of IHOP-KC. Do IHOP."

I tell the Lord, "Oh yeah, Lord, that's right; that's right. I know that."

The Lord might whisper to my heart, "You know that stuff you told them to do, so you do it too!"

I appreciate the Lord being bold and speaking up. I don't always like it in the moment, but I say, "Thank You, Lord; You just prevented a collision in my life."

THE LEADERSHIP OF THE KINGDOM AT THE END OF THE AGE

Roman numeral II. Right after this call to watchfulness, Jesus is now going to describe and differentiate between two types of leaders. He's talking about leaders in the Body of Christ. He's going to talk about good leaders and evil leaders.

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 24:45-51)

In Matthew 24:45-51, there are two categories of leaders. Matthew 24:45 asks the question, "Who then is the faithful shepherd?" We're talking about the shepherds who have the government over the people of God, and who are commissioned to feed them in a daily way through the Word of God.

Look at verse 48. There are evil servants. My point is not to develop this particular parable; my point is this: to highlight that Jesus, in the context of the end times and in the context of watching, is now focusing on exhorting leaders to "Watch therefore" (Mt. 24:42). He knows that if the leaders develop a watchful life, the people will as well. If the leaders present themselves, even unintentionally, as though it's normal not to live in prayer, the people will think that it's normal not to have a prayer life.

So He gives two different categories of leaders. There are the good ones and the evil ones. The evil ones are in big trouble. You can read it on your own. Then in Matthew 25, Jesus isn't talking anymore about evil leaders. He then characterizes the good leaders and sub-divides them even more. In Matthew 25, Jesus is talking about the good ones.

WISDOM AND FOLLY DEFINED BY THE MASTER

It's as if Jesus says, "Among the good ones, the sincere ones, there are also foolish ones. There are wise ones, but these are the company of the sincere and wise leaders. There are those who will lose their intensity. There are those who will lose their connectedness to the Lord, and therefore, they're foolish."

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom” (Mt. 25:1). When it begins, all ten are doing well; they’re good leaders. As you’ll see in a moment, half of them lose their connectedness in the midst of the good work. It’s in the midst of the good work that they lose the oil in their lamps.

SOMETIMES WE LOSE OUR CONNECTEDNESS IN THE MIDST OF THE GOOD WORK

The evil leaders are laid aside now. Jesus taught that there are good leaders and there are evil leaders in Matthew 24. Now let’s focus in Matthew 25, on the good ones, and let me tell you this: though all of them started out sincere and connected, half of them lost their connectedness in the rigors and in the increase that the Lord gave them. I’ve lost my connectedness a few times. I don’t mean in the full sense; you know what I’m talking about, and I’m sure that many of you have done this also in part. I had a certain level of connectedness to the Lord and freshness in my prayer life and my life in the Word of God.

Sometimes it’s the very increase of the ministry itself or just the troubles in the ministry that rob you. What happened to me is this: after some months have past, I realize that I’ve lost my way a bit and say, “Oh no! It’s happened again. How is this possible?” I don’t think it’s so big of a problem that we lose our way sometimes. I’m not trying to get you comfortable with losing your way and connectedness. The problem isn’t so much that as weak and broken people we lose some of our connectedness; the problem is not seeing it. I don’t know if anyone goes for twenty or thirty years without having times where they’re missing it in this regard. I don’t think the Lord looks down at our lives and says, “You’re missing it. How wicked!” Rather, He says, “Oh no. Of course you’re missing it. You’re weak and broken people. You’re weak human beings. But when I speak to you, humble yourself and adjust.”

So we respond rightly. We say, “OK. Now, I feel a promise from the Lord that if I’ll just humble myself and adjust when He speaks with me, then I’ll end up doing OK.”

He speaks to me three or four times a year on this subject. I don’t mean once every five years. I don’t mean to imply that God speaks to me about this every week, but it seems like two or three times a year. I don’t know the exact number. It’s not like it’s on the calendar, but it seems like several times a year. I’m going down the highway and I’m supposed to be in this proper lane, but I’m in the wrong lane entirely. I’m still going in the right direction, but I have so many things going on. It’s as if the Lord says, “Mike, it’s Me again. You’re in the wrong lane again.”

I ask, “Ah, are you sure?”

God might answer, “Yes, I’m really sure. If you would stop for a second, you would be really sure as well.”

I tell God, “Yeah, I’m in the wrong lane again. How did this happen?” I’ve been preaching on this all the time. Beloved, preaching about it is not enough. It has to do with our schedules and our time. It really has to do with our time. However, beloved, it’s not only time. Time is one of the biggest issues involved here.

THE CHALLENGE IS TO KEEP OIL IN YOUR LAMPS EVEN IN THE MUNDANE ROUTINES

Now in the parable in Matthew 24 about the good and evil shepherds, Jesus came sooner than they expected. They basically says, “Oh no, we didn’t expect You!”

However, in the parable of the oil and the lamps, He came later than they expected. It's a very different dilemma. When Jesus comes later than we expect, we find out that it's more challenging than we thought to stay steady. In Matthew 25, He's talking to the leaders and says, "If the delay is longer than you think, you might be surprised at how difficult the challenge is to keep oil in your lamp." We have to do this. It's a challenge to keep oil in our lamps. The delay of the Lord can be the coming of the Lord, or it can be the delay of the breakthrough of God's promise to us for our life in ministry. I thought that at the ten-year mark, breakthrough would have hit my city for sure. Imagine how I felt at the twenty-year mark! And the Lord might say, "How are you handling this? The delay is longer than you thought. What are you doing in your heart about this delay?" The challenges are greater than we naturally think. Well, they are for me. I think one of the challenges of the delay is the mundanity and the routine of the work that we're assigned.

Everyone—I don't care if you're the greatest apostle in history; Paul the apostle had significant mundane and routine dimensions to his task. We lose our way in the mundanity of the task. We tell the Lord, "Lord, it's the same mundane routine."

He says, "That's right, but you can connect with Me in your spirit. Even in the midst of the humaneness, you can connect with me."

FOR OTHERS, IT'S PRESSURE WHICH ROBBS THEM OF THE OIL IN THEIR LAMPS

For others, it's the opposite that's the challenge. It's not that it's mundane, but that there's too much pressure. We end up getting offended at the Lord. Things don't go right, we're disappointed, and we end up getting offended at the Lord. It goes on and on and on. We get offended: "Lord, You were supposed to do this, and I didn't think people would do that. What's going on?"

The delay is a huge challenge. The mundanity is another challenge. And thirdly, the offense that comes in our heart toward the Lord, or people, just because things are disappointing and troubling.

When I was a young man at twenty years old, I was already a pastor. My first little church was out in the country. I was scared to death. So I read all of these biographies and I promised myself, 'When I'm old, when I'm forty years old, I'll be so filled with God.'

I just assumed that if you loved God when you were twenty, you would be so deep when you were sixty. I just thought it was an automatic process because you know the Lord better, you know the Word of God better, and you've seen the work of the Spirit better.

What I didn't know was that we also have a lot more disappointments, we've been worn out by a lot more mundanity, a lot more people have lied to us, the Lord has disappointed us in things we thought were supposed to happen that never happened, and our hearts have fainted. We become disappointed and disgruntled.

MOST PEOPLE DON'T STAY ON FIRE IN MINISTRY FOR TEN YEARS

In my thirty years of ministry, I observed this: that most people don't stay on fire for the Lord over ten years. Most of the people who were fiery when I was twenty, by the time they were thirty, they were nearly flat-lining spiritually. They already had the "been there, done that, whatever" type of attitude. They were in revival prayer meetings and believing God for the full power of God. By the time they were thirty, they were just jaded.

When I was thirty, there was another group. Ten years goes by, and they're jaded also. I thought, "What's the deal with this?" Now I see the miracle of someone sixty or seventy years old who's still on fire for Jesus. They've been walking with Jesus for fifty years and have had so many reasons to be offended; so many reasons to be tripped by the mundanity. The fact that they're still on fire for the Lord is simply a miracle. Now I have an automatic, deep appreciation for anyone who has stayed steady through the years. It's truly a miracle.

IF YOU DON'T QUIT, YOU WIN

Many of you in this room are in your forties and fifties. It's a miracle. You're going hard after God. I'm telling you, it's not a common thing. I'm not trying to speak to our pride. I'm just trying to encourage you to keep going. Keep going. You're the real deal.

You thought, "Well, I've got some issues that you don't know anything about."

I want to encourage you: "I know, but you're here." I don't mean that being here is the point, but you're trying to do something with God. You're energetic, you care, and you're in pain about the issues in your life. Beloved, you're unique. I pastored a church of 3,000 people for eighteen years. I know where lots of them are today. I pastored several other churches and lots of other ministries. I know where lots of folks are today. It's a miracle that someone is fifty years old and still going hard for God. I reckon that about 5 percent of the group that was on fire in their twenties and thirties is still on fire.

So I look at a number of you, and I thank you. It's a blessing to be in the room with you. I mean this with all sincerity. I know you think, "I have issues you don't know about." I know all of that stuff. I understand that, but beloved, you're pressing in. Because greater than an issue that's unsettled, or that problem that you're stuck in, is cynicism, unbelief, and the general giving up and giving in. You haven't done that. That's a big deal.

DON'T GIVE UP, AND DON'T GIVE IN

Well, the other area that gets us over the years is temptation. If mundanity doesn't get us, then the offense of difficulty comes after us, and then the ordinary temptations of our lives. The temptations are different in different decades of our lives, and the enemy is subtle.

My point is this: in Matthew 25 with the oil, the lamp, the wise virgins, and the foolish virgins, the Lord is saying, "Don't be tripped up by the delay. There are giants in the land, but if you watch, if you will develop a prayer life"—even in your weakness, because we're all weak—"you will be able to stand, and you will have something to give the others in that day."

THE PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

Let's look at the parable really briefly. Matthew 25:1: "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were wise; five of them were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps, but they took no oil. The wise took the oil with their lamps."

So we'll begin in verse 1 with a fourfold description of the Body of Christ in the generation of the Lord's return. There's a fourfold description. First I want to establish the fact that this is describing the kingdom in the generation when the Lord returns. This isn't for all the different generations throughout history; this is specifically addressing the generation of the Lord's return. Therefore, it's not the kingdom throughout history.

This is particularly in one time frame, although of course the Holy Spirit has used this passage to inspire the saints for 2,000 years.

“THEN SHALL THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BE LIKENED TO TEN VIRGINS”

The key word is the word “then.” Then, the kingdom will be likened to ten virgins seeking the Bridegroom. When is *then*? There’s no chapter break in Jesus’ teaching. Men put the chapter break in hundreds of years later, which is OK. We can appreciate them as long as we don’t think the teaching begins at the chapter break.

Look back at Matthew 24. In the time where two men are in a field, and one was taken, and one was left, there were two types of leaders—the good shepherds who were pressing into God, and the evil shepherds who were coming under the judgment of God; *then*, the kingdom of God will be like this. It will be like virgins taking their lamp to meet the Bridegroom.

That word then locks it into chapter 24, but another word locks it into chapter 24 as well. It’s the word *Bridegroom*. Never in history, has there been a universal emphasis of the Holy Spirit on the revelation of Jesus as the Bridegroom God. Never has there been such a universal emphasis as there is today. In the past, the Holy Spirit has emphasized Jesus as the Savior, as the Healer, and somewhat as the King, though there’s a lot more of that coming. When we focus on Him as King, we focus on His power. However, never has there been a time in 2,000 years of church history where there was a universal emphasis in the Holy Spirit of seeing Jesus as the Bridegroom God.

REVELATION 22:17: “AND THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, ‘COME!’”

It’s Revelation 22:17: “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). You know the passage well. The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” There’s only one time in history. It won’t be 1 percent of the Church crying this; rather, the whole Church will cry out under the anointing of the Spirit, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

BRIDAL INTERCESSION

We’ll be crying out from the revelation and the identity of a bride. To see Jesus as a bridegroom is to see Jesus with His burning desire for us in a way that we’ve never seen it before. I’ve been focused on the Bridegroom revelation for nearly twenty years. The Lord really called me to this Bridegroom revelation. It was disconcerting. The Lord spoke to me audibly in July 1988. Twenty years ago, the Lord commanded me. I tell the testimony all the time, and it was the most life-changing event. It’s as if Jesus said, “Go after the revelation of the Bridegroom.” I had never heard one message on the Bridegroom, ever. I never thought of the Bridegroom, ever.

I remember thinking, “What? The Bridegroom?” My father was a world champion boxer. I grew up in the boxing world. He was involved in underground crime. It sounds like a movie, but it’s true. My father did many strange things. He died when I was eighteen many years ago, but I grew up in bars, in the boxing world, surrounded by criminal activity with the mafia, and a bad environment. When I got saved, none of my family was saved.

MY OWN JOURNEY TO DISCOVERING JESUS AS MY BRIDEGROOM GOD

So I asked, “Lord, Bridegroom? I’m the son of a boxer. Maybe give me the life of David, the book of

Revelation, or Romans, or something.”

God said, “Song of Solomon.”

I thought, “Man, I don’t know.” I had never studied the Song of Solomon! But that’s what He told me to do—to study the Song of Solomon. I remember I was so excited when the Lord spoke audibly in the morning. I called my wife while I was at the office and told her excitedly, “I’ve received life direction! Song of Solomon and the Bride of Christ.” It was 8:00am, and I was excited because God spoke audibly. How many times does that happen in a lifetime? Like once? I was so excited.

I came home at 7:00pm that night, and she said, “What’s wrong?”

I said, “I read the Song of Solomon.”

She said, “Isn’t it awesome?!”

I said, “No! It’s horrible! I’m in prison for life. It was the audible voice of the Lord. This is more bitter than death. I’m stuck forever in this prison; flowers, perfume, gardens, and roses! I can’t bear this!”

I asked the Lord, “Please God, give this to the women’s ministry! They’ll love this thing!” I really said this. I was depressed. It wasn’t funny. It’s cute now, but it wasn’t funny then. I told God, “Lord, You obviously don’t know my family tree. This isn’t what we do in my family.”

Here’s the point: having been focused on the Bridegroom message for nearly twenty years, I’ve researched and studied it. I haven’t done this perfectly, but I’ve done this pretty energetically. Beloved, it only shows up a few times in all of church history. Very few of the known, prominent ministries, all throughout history, ever mentioned Jesus as the Bridegroom—hardly ever. It’s almost completely absent. There was always one strange, little strange guy over here on a mountaintop, and a guy over here who wrote a pamphlet. However, the revelation of Jesus as Bridegroom barely existed.

THE CHURCH WILL SEE HERSELF AS HIS BRIDE

But there’s coming a time when all of the ministries will be seeking the Bridegroom God. Beloved, this parable is about the end of the age. There’s only one time it will happen, and the Scripture clearly prophesies concerning this in Revelation 22:17, when the Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” Let us look at the four descriptions in Matthew 25 concerning the ten virgins.

DESCRIPTION NUMBER ONE: THE TEN ARE ALL VIRGINS, OR BORN-AGAIN BELIEVERS

Number one: there are ten virgins. Virgins speak of born-again believers. We’re made to be chaste virgins by the blood of Jesus and the gift of righteousness. Every born-again believer is spiritually a chaste virgin as a position before the throne of God. So this passage is talking about born-again believers here.

DESCRIPTION NUMBER TWO: THEY ALL HAVE LAMPS, OR MINISTRIES

Number two: they all have lamps. Lamps clearly speak of ministries. Lamps bring light to the path for others. Most of the references to lamps in a spiritual context speak of ministry, and there are many of them here. So they’re born-again believers who are truly born again. They have ministries. He’s talking about the leaders. Just

like the verse before, and this is what they did, they went out to meet the Bridegroom.

DESCRIPTION NUMBER THREE: THEY HAVE A REVELATION OF JESUS AS BRIDEGROOM

All ten of them have revelation of Him as Bridegroom. All ten of them are going to the bridegroom conferences, or they're speaking at the conference about Jesus as Bridegroom. The Bridegroom isn't a remote revelation to them. The Bridegroom God—this message of intimacy—is something they're familiar with. They have a secret history in God concerning relating to Him as their Bridegroom King.

DESCRIPTION NUMBER FOUR: THEY WENT OUT TO MEET HIM

They went out. They're exerting themselves to encounter Jesus as the Bridegroom. In other words, this parable is for this group of people. It's for the people who are going to the conferences about intimacy with God, and they're attending the prayer meetings. All ten of these ministries are intimacy with God ministries. All of them are. This isn't about the other guys who don't get it; they all get it.

Five of them, in the increase of their work and in the rigors of their work, lost their intimacy. In the increase of the stewardship that God gave them, they lost some of their connection to the revelation of the Bridegroom. They were all flowing in intimacy with God at the beginning. He's not talking about reprobates here; He's talking about sincere, godly ministries with virgins who are born-again who believe in the intimacy with God message.

MINISTRIES RECOGNIZE THEIR LACK OF OIL AND DIMINISHING MINISTRY

Now He's going to go on and talk about oil. He says in Matthew 25:5, that there are five who were wise, and five who were foolish. He describes the wise and the foolish in the most simplistic way. He describes it in the same kind of broad strokes as the words, "Watch therefore." "Watch and develop a prayer life."

He says, "Here's what the foolish are like." The foolish are simply the ones in Matthew 25:3 who take their lamps, but they don't take oil. They're preoccupied with their ministry, but they're not preoccupied in their inward life in God. They believe their inward life in God is important; in Matthew 25:1, they were meeting the Bridegroom. They were encountering Him in previous days. They believe in it; they preach on it all the time. But here is what they did: they take their lamps. Notice the order: lamps are their primary occupation. Oil is secondary, or it's just out of the way. Their ministry is growing, doors are opening, and they're networking like never before. There are so many opportunities facing them: the resources, opening of new doors, and the excitement of it all. They're going everywhere, and their time and energy is spent on ministries. They love Jesus, and their devotion is real. They really do love Him, but their oil is diminishing, and it's getting less and less.

Their sincerity isn't diminished, but their connectedness with the Holy Spirit and experiencing the presence of God is decreasing daily in their lives. Matthew 25:4: the wise are exactly the opposite. Look at the order. Matthew 25:4: "But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps" (Mt. 25:4). They took their oil, as the oil is the first thing, and they took their lamps. They didn't disregard their stewardship to ministry.

YOU CAN'T SEPARATE THE FIRST COMMANDMENT FROM THE SECOND

Sometimes people will come and join IHOP-KC and say, "I'm tired of the whole ministry thing, I just want God."

I tell them, “Listen, if you want God, God so loved the earth that He sent Jesus to die for it. If you’re trying to escape a life of responsible servanthood, and you’re running into the house of prayer to escape it, then you’re going to run into the Lion of the tribe of Judah who is going to bring you right back out to the harvest field.”

They ask, “Well, what do you mean? I’m tired of ministry. I just want God.”

I answer, “God loves people. Get connected, get healed up, but beloved, you also have to get your lamp burning.” This thing isn’t about escapism; this is about putting oil first in order to touch other people with the presence of God, but notice that between the wise and foolish the order is exactly reversed.

WISDOM MEANS INTIMACY FIRST AND MINISTRY SECOND

Now here is Jesus in His classic, seemingly over-simplistic answer. Jesus looks at sincere leaders in the Body of Christ and simply calls them “foolish.”

They’re foolish if they put their ministry first, and they’re wise if they put the oil first and their ministry second. It’s as if Jesus says, “Absolutely: I mean what I say, and I say what I mean. Yes, they’re foolish. Do they love Me? Yes. Are they sincere? Yes. Do I love them? Yes. Will I use them? Yes. Are they foolish? Yes.”

Beloved, the pressures that are going to mount, they don’t reckon with them. The outpouring of the Spirit will increase, as well as the persecution and pressure. It’s the outpouring of the Spirit that they’re not qualified to operate in. “But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves’ (Mt. 25:4-9).

THE FOOLISH AREN’T READY WHEN THE CRY COMES TO MEET HIM

It’s not that they’re just offended by the trouble. They’re not equipped in the spiritual capacity to impart the present thing that’s in God’s heart. This is where this thing is going. Jesus is just so bold; He’s so secure. He just makes these simplistic statements. In Matthew 25, it’s as if Jesus is saying, “Take them or leave them, but you will find them true.” I look at this and I say, “My goodness, look at this: it’s the midnight hour of human history, but while the Bridegroom delayed, they all slumbered and slept.” Slumber and sleep in some parables means spiritual passivity. Spiritually passivity in this parable means having no oil. So don’t drag the symbolism of one parable into this parable, or you’ll miss the idea. Spiritual passivity and superficiality is about not having oil. That’s what the metaphor is—it’s lacking oil. In this one, the wise slumber and sleep.

What this passage is talking about is that they all have lived their lives according to the natural order of things in this age. The natural processes of life are going on. We all pay our taxes, eat, work out to feel good, and we all have to obey certain natural laws to do the rigors of relationships. Sometimes we think, “God, do I ever get to do the real stuff?” We have so many things to attend to in the natural realm. All of the virgins, even the wise ones, were submitted to the routine of natural life. So don’t expect God to come in and somehow suspend the realities of natural life so that you can get oil. No, you have to get oil in the context of that.

THE FIVE WISE VIRGINS SLUMBERED WHILE THEY WAITED FOR THE BRIDEGROOM

The five wise virgins slept and slumbered as well. This isn’t talking about passivity; they’re still wise. This is

talking about some people who idealize this idea. They lie to themselves and think that maybe the natural rigors, routine, and mundanity of life will lift, and finally an angel will come. “Everything will be suspended, and I’ll touch God!” This is what they’re hoping for, and that’s a fantasy as well as a falsehood. We’ll get oil in the midst of the routine context of the natural order of life. For example, as we get older, we’ll all get fatigued; we’ll all battle with family problems, financial issues, and relational issues in the order of natural life in a fallen world. All of us will.

OIL IS FOUND IN THE MIDST OF THE MUNDANITY AND PRESSURE OF LIFE

Oil is found in life. That’s where oil needs to be found. Some people lose five full years in fantasizing, imagining a world where all the problems are gone. That day never comes. We have to get it in the context where the five wise ones received it as well. That’s in the midst of the burdens with our body, our life, our money, other people, and our family. The burden of the whole thing is right there. That’s where we get oil—in the natural, mundane, routine things in life.

You might be hoping for some other dispensation. It’s not going to happen. That’s why Matthew 25:5 is important. Now look at what happens at the midnight hour of human history when the things are darkest in terms of the pressures in the world. A cry was heard. There’s this threefold cry going forth in the earth: “Behold the Bridegroom is coming, go out to meet Him!”

CRY NUMBER ONE: THE MESSIAH IS A BRIDEGROOM

Here is cry number one: “Behold the Messiah is a Bridegroom.” That’s cry number one. He’s not just a king with power; He’s a bridegroom with desire. He uses His power to serve the purposes of His loving desire. He’s a God with burning desire. He’s a bridegroom God; He’s a bridegroom king. This is a huge message, the Bridegroom message.

CRY NUMBER TWO: THE BRIDEGROOM IS COMING

Number two: He’s coming. That’s a completely different message than the fact that He’s a Bridegroom. He’s coming. He’s coming to us—whether breaking in with revival or breaking in with judgments to stop those things that hinder revival. Either way, whether it’s the revival itself or His judgments, when He comes, there will be serious consequences. When He comes, everything will be shaken (Heb. 12:26); many things must be proclaimed first.

We say, “Lord, send revival. Do something like the book of Acts.”

And the Lord might say, “Well, half of your congregation would die. If the Ananias and Sapphiras died under My glory, half your church would die today. I don’t think you want revival today.”

We tell God, “Let them die, Lord; I want revival.”

God might say, “Well, you would die too!”

We finally say, “Oh, OK. Well give me a little time to get ready.”

Then, the Lord says, “Now we’re talking eye to eye.”

You know, I'm having fun with that, but my point is this: when He comes, the message that He's coming is a good message with an asterisk on it. Because when He comes to His church, He's not changing; He's coming as Himself. Jesus Christ is coming, starring as the lead role of Jesus Christ. He's coming with burning desire for us, and He's destroying everything that gets in the way of love, no matter how dear it is to us.

We say, "God, give us a little more time to get ready before you come."

He answers, "I thought you might want that." The message that He's coming is a huge message. The consequences are really serious, when He manifests Himself in the natural realm.

CRY NUMBER THREE: GO OUT TO MEET HIM

Thirdly, the message is to go out to meet Him. Get off your bed, rise up, and encounter Him—that's the prayer message. It's the intimacy message. Get up, go out, and encounter Him. Exert the energy necessary to encounter Him.

We make excuses: "Well, my life is burdensome here. You don't understand the church, and the ministry, the money, my body, and my family."

No. Go out and meet Him. Rise up, shake off the dust, and exert the effort that He requires for you to encounter Him.

That's what the cry is—the threefold cry. The Bridegroom: He's a God who's more than a king; He's the Bridegroom King with burning desire. He's coming with consequences, and we have to exert ourselves to encounter Him.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, THE CRY WILL BE HEARD

Now notice that the passage says that there's a cry. It's an unnamed cry because these are the forerunner ministries. I believe there are a number of you in this room who are forerunners. What are forerunners? They're people who are one short step ahead of us in the Body of Christ. I mean one short step. You're proclaiming what the Holy Spirit is going to emphasize just a short way down the road. He's not emphasizing it universally yet, but He will in about ten years.

So the forerunners are the people who are proclaiming it before it has been universally emphasized by the Spirit to the masses. It will be emphasized in a few minutes. It might be a decade or two, but it's a minute either way. The forerunners are guys and gals with arrows in their backs. That's how you can tell if someone is a forerunner. We tell the Lord, "You know, Lord, this is hard."

He answers, "But I'm paying you so much more than you can ever deserve."

I answer, "Oh yes! Good point. I'm getting a far better deal than I deserve at every level."

So I don't care if I get some arrows. He said, "I'll pay you well for every single burden you take in leading in any way. Even as an individual, not just as a leader. Everything you do to obey Me, I'll pay you well beyond anything you can imagine. So even with those arrows, just say, 'Thank You, Lord.'"

GOD PAYS US WELL WITH ETERNAL REWARDS

So, in the midnight hour the cry is heard, and some of you are forerunners. The Lord is calling you to cry out. Right now, this is a forerunner message. It's simple; it's very simple, but it's still a forerunner message. I'm crying out, and many of you already know this message well, but you're refreshed and renewed.

If we were changing rolls, I would be out there saying, "Yes. That's right; that's right. Thank You, Lord, because I need to hear this all the time." Beloved, I need to hear you cry it to me, and you need to hear me cry it to you. Beloved, we must cry out this message loudly and clearly through songs, music, sermons, poems, dramas, books, articles, and every possible way. We have to make sure that the people hear that He's their Bridegroom. He's coming with consequences, and we have to exert energy to meet Him. It won't be automatic. We have to exert ourselves to meet Him. Now it really picks up. We're not going to spend a lot of time on this because we could go on forever. There are so many principles here.

"GO BUY OIL FOR YOURSELF; TAKE THE TIME TO KNOW HIM FOR YOURSELF"

"And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out'" (Mt. 25:8). The foolish ministries are very sincere. They said to the wise ones, "Hey! Could you please give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." Now the principle here is that our personal preparedness can't be transferred to another person. I can't give you my heart connection with God; you can't give me your heart connection with God. You're the only one who can love Jesus with all of your heart. He wants love with all of your heart, and no one else can give it to Him but you. It's totally unique. "Give us some of your oil." It's this misnomer: go to the prayer line. I wrote a book called *Passion for Jesus*, so people say, "Please, Mike, please pray that I get passion for Jesus."

I say, "Well I could pray that the Lord will touch you in a catalytic way to help you a little. It may inspire you, and it might last a whole twenty-four hours. But I can't impart love in your heart back to God. It doesn't work that way. The very nature of love has to be your voluntary response. I can't give you passion for Jesus. I can pray that the demons oppressing you would lift for a moment so you could make some choices, but you have to make your own choices. You can't give me your personal history and I can't give you mine."

NO ONE CAN GIVE YOU YOUR OWN PERSONAL HISTORY IN GOD

They said, "Give me some of your oil." Beloved, it doesn't work that way. Then they made the cry, "Our lamps, our ministries are going out."

Beloved, I prophesy to you this alarming reality: ministries in the final decade or two that aren't connecting in a deep way with the Bridegroom will go out. They will diminish. Beloved, there are many big ministries, and the issue isn't size, but there are many big ministries that are gathering the people by promising them wealth and happiness. They promise them that things will get easy. "Things will get better and easier in your circumstances!" That's their primary message. "You can have more friends, more money, and more honor!" They say, "Come to this church, and we promise you more friends, more money, more honor, and there will be more comfort. It's coming; just hang in there!"

Beloved, the kingdom of God is a whole different message than that. There's an element of that that occasionally happens, but beloved, that's not the message of the kingdom. You could gather massive amounts of people by promising them more money, more friends, more honor, and more comfort. You can get more people, if they're foolish enough to believe you week after week, who think things will somehow be better for

them if they keep coming.

But with massive mega-ministries, when the trouble breaks out, and when the glory of God breaks in at another level, these very people are going to say: “I need something that will help me in the great trouble. These pep talks aren’t touching my heart anymore.”

Others are going to say, “I have a deep, ravenous hunger for God, and I don’t want pep talks. I want a man or woman who knows God to feed my spirit on deep things of God.” The hunger is going to increase, and the despair is going to increase as well. Even though they offer motivational speaking pep talks; none of these things will ever meet the need of the coming crisis or the coming hunger for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They just won’t. People will go after their hunger, and they will go where there are answers with power in it, because the crisis that’s coming can’t be answered by pep talks.

WHAT WE GAIN TODAY IN GOD CAN BE LOST TOMORROW

Many lamps are going to go out. Many people who don’t have any kind of ministry at all will be launched in ministry, and some of them are going to be huge. Beloved, huge isn’t necessarily good, because huge is the setup for your lamp going out later if you don’t steward it rightly.

Some people think, “Well, if it’s huge, then I’ll go for it.”

I say, “Man, *huge* could mean that you defile your soul. If you can’t steward your soul in increase, you don’t want increase. You really don’t.” The message here is this: what we gain today in God can be lost tomorrow. Beloved, what we gain today in God can be lost tomorrow. That’s the message of this verse. The only way we can keep the ground that we’ve taken in the Spirit is to take more ground. Our life in the Spirit is not static.

IF YOU DON’T KEEP GOING FORWARD IN GOD, YOU WILL BACKSLIDE

On a scale of one to ten, I can’t get to a level three, hypothetically speaking, and then put the flag in the ground, and say, “I’m staying at level three because I made it here.” It doesn’t work that way. If you don’t make it to level four, you will go back to level two in the next year or two. The only way you can keep the ground that you have in God is if you take new ground. There’s no possible way to be static and stay where you are.

So they said, “Our lamps are going out.” The wise answered, and they gave a brilliant answer. It seems like a cruel answer, but it’s a brilliant answer rooted in humility and revelation.

The wise said, “No. We’re not going to give you our oil. Number one, we can’t. It doesn’t work that way. I can’t give you my secret life in God. I can’t give you my secret history in God. My history doesn’t transfer to you. It doesn’t work that way. No, lest there should be not enough for us and you, but rather go to those who sell and buy it yourself.”

MATTHEW 25:9: “BUY FOR YOURSELVES”

Now I love this phrase, “Buy for yourselves” (Mt. 25:9). Now Jesus is talking about a natural setting of a wedding feast and going out to the store to buy oil. He doesn’t mean to buy oil in the sense of earning it. Jesus Himself said, in Revelation 3:18: “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see” (Rev. 3:18). In Revelation 3:18, Jesus told us to buy “gold refined

in fire” and white garments. To buy doesn’t mean to earn. To buy means to invest ourselves in a costly way, the God-ordained means in the Word of God of getting oil. To go buy means that we acquire it in the God-ordained means by investing ourselves in a way that’s truly costly.

Jesus says, “Go do it. Invest yourself. Go buy it. Go buy gold refined in fire.” In Mathew 25, oil equals gold refined by fire in Revelation 3. They’re nearly synonymous.

Now the wise said, “No; you go get it yourself. That’s the only way you can get it, lest there should not be enough for you and us.” This is a really critical principle.

NOT HAVING A MESSIAH COMPLEX AND ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO GO TO GOD

This is where many of us stumble. I’ve stumbled at this point a handful of times. I’m a lot more alert to it now. It’s called the “messiah complex.” It really is. “I’m the only one with the answer.” I arrogantly think, “If it’s not me, it’s no one.”

Sometimes it’s the will of God, but more often than not, it’s propping up and feeding our skewed sense of self-importance, or need for self-importance. It’s not even about compassion; it’s about feeling good about ourselves. Or it’s merely the fear of rejection that if we say no, they will get mad, and then our feelings will be hurt. I tell you, and you know it yourself, if we’re going to get oil, there’s a time limitation of a twenty-four hour day where you must turn down opportunities. You must even turn down needs, like Jesus did, over and over again in order to fulfill the divine order and the will of God in your life.

People will get really mad at you, and they will really be against you for not doing what they ask. You will really feel rejected. You will lose opportunities to network your ministry. You will lose opportunities from many things. You will even lose opportunities to feel good about yourselves in many ways.

JESUS DIDN’T HAVE TIME FOR EVERYONE

The Lord has spoken this to me a number of times over the years, that if I don’t confront the messiah complex, I’ll never go deep in God. This idea that Jesus had time for everyone is absolutely false. That came out of some self-help book somewhere. He didn’t have time for everyone. Read the gospels. He turned away so many people so that He could go into the presence of God. They were angry with Him. They were angry at Him at the end. They said, “Crucify Him” at the end. They also hated John the Baptist; they said John the Baptist had a demon (Mt. 11:18-19). They rejoiced in John the Baptist for a season, and they turned on him at the end. This idea that Jesus had time for everyone, that’s certainly not in the Bible.

At the right hand of God, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus does have time for everyone. However, during His earthly ministry, He doesn’t: He turned people away; He turned crowds away. He said no time and time again. He knew that He had a limited amount of strength and time. He knew He was limited in what He could say yes to and do the will of God, and stay connected to the Father in the way that He was in His humanity.

IF YOU CAN’T SAY NO, YOU WILL NEVER GO DEEP

We have to say no. If you can’t say no, you will never go deep, and I promise you, they will get mad at you. Sheep bites are real. It hurts. We think, “What are they going to do without me?” Well, I don’t know what they’re going to do. I recognize just how much I’m a weak, prone-to-distraction human being. I don’t know what the world is going to do with everything. I’ve got a very small assignment on planet earth, and I had better

obey it.

THE MESSIAH COMPLEX AND THE FEAR OF MAN WILL KILL YOUR LIFE IN GOD

The messiah complex trips more people than you realize. The fear of man also hurts people. They just can't say no because they can't bear the rejection. They're willing to sacrifice their life in God for years to stay popular in their little group. I tell you, it's not worth it. At IHOP-KC here, I'm constantly talking to our leaders: "You have to quit being so popular. You think you're so compassionate; it's called the fear of man driving you, and it will destroy your life in God."

With close friends, I can talk to them like this. "Your life in God is diminishing while you're networking, pushing more doors open, and answering everyone's questions. Stop it. Go deep in God." I want to offer them an example. I have to make sure that I'm an example.

TO GO OUT TO BUY MEANS TO ACQUIRE INTIMACY

"But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' 'But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Mt. 25:9-13).

They went to buy, which means they were in a season of acquiring intimacy. They went to pay the price to invest themselves, and the Bridegroom came. Those who were ready—circle the word *ready*—were prepared. They went in to Him and the door was shut. And afterwards, the virgins came after and said, "Lord, open the door."

And He said, "Assuredly I say to you, I do not know you."

And Jesus says, "Watch therefore."

In Matthew 25:12, Jesus isn't saying, "I never knew you." This isn't the same exhortation as in Matthew 7 where Jesus says, "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Mt. 7:23). What He's saying is this: "I don't know you in the intimacy that the Holy Spirit is emphasizing right now. We've never conversed in this way. We've never connected on this level. I don't know you in this way."

The word *know* in this passage means the very concept of intimacy. You have to understand the ancient Jewish custom for a wedding. It was very common for a wedding to linger on for seven nights. The first night of the wedding was the most exciting night. It was only for the relations that were the closest to the bride, the groom, and their families. Those who had the closest intimacy and the closest relationship came the first night; the second night, more were added. The third night, more were added, and the final night is when the multitudes, when everyone was added. This is the first night of the wedding feast. They knock on the door and the Bridegroom says, "I don't know you well enough for you to be here at this time."

In other words, there will be an increasing wave after wave of the Holy Spirit mounting up that will lead to the second coming of Christ. Waves of the Spirit will increase. For example, there will be a wave of the Holy Spirit

where the Lord is going to anoint singers and musicians, preachers, writers, play writers, and others on the subject of intimacy. There's going to be an anointing, a power that comes on it, and a lot of people who are going to say, "Here I am, Lord."

The Lord will say, "I know you, I love you, but I don't know you in this message and in this reality. You've never done it. You've only read a book on it, and you took out the notes from ten years ago from a conference you attended. Therefore, I don't know you in this way. No. We're here in the first wave, or the first night of the feast, and I say no. You go receive. I could have used you right now, but you don't know anything about this dimension of the Holy Spirit right now. Therefore, go and buy. Go acquire a history in God."

Maybe the second night, the third night, the fourth night, they'll come in. This is tragic, but there are people who are in the Body of Christ—there might be some of you here, and let's pray by the grace of God this isn't true of anyone here—and God has ordained that you would have a place of impact. Not that there are seven waves and seven nights. That's just a figurative way of saying that there's a series of celebrations of the Holy Spirit, or waves of the Spirit. I want to be involved in every one of them. I don't want to be the leader of them, but I want to be involved in every wave of the Holy Spirit.

MODERN-DAY WAVES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I remember a few years ago, when the Lord blew through the land to a number of different ministries. Up in Toronto, then in Pensacola, and then with Rodney Howard Brown; there were waves of His Holy Spirit released. He came, not in all of those places the same way, but He came as joy, laughter, and healing of the heart.

The vast majority of the Body of Christ knew nothing about Jesus as the Healer of the heart with joy. They knew nothing of that dimension or reality of who He is. They could go to the back of the meetings, and they gawked or they criticized because 90 percent of the Body of Christ didn't know Him in that way. Because they didn't know Him in this wave, they couldn't go with Him in that wave. So they stood in the back and the Lord said, "Go learn about Me. Just let that wave go. Maybe on the next wave, you will be ready."

YOU CAN HAVE AS MUCH OF GOD AS YOU WANT

I felt the whisper of the Lord say, "There are three little outbreaks going, and never in any of them was it perfectly right, because there are mere humans leading it. However, you had better learn from Me. I'm doing something bigger than you."

I'm thinking, "Oh, Lord!"

He whispered to my spirit, "I would that you would know Me in all the ways in which I'm going to move. You can if you want. You can have as much of Me as you want." I tell you, beloved, that we can miss opportunities. We can be too late. Many—I don't say most—will simply be too late when the waves begin to break out.

The Lord will say, "Go, buy, acquire some life, some history in Me, and we'll see during the next wave that comes."

Amen. We're going to end with that. In Matthew 25:13, He says, "Watch therefore," which is the same exhortation as Matthew 24:42. Let's stand.