

Title: PREPARING FOR THE KINGDOM AND FOR LIFE, MATTHEW 25:1-30
(Chatham, NJ; 11/13/11, AM) [Pc – Narrative Analysis]

Theme: The characteristics of living demonstrated in the Parables of the Ten Virgins and the Talents prepare us for successful living in this life as well as successful entrance into the Kingdom of God in the next life.

Purpose: To point out the character traits that Jesus extols and to encourage us to live by them.

Introduction:

1. These parables are about preparation, preparation for entering the Kingdom of God.
2. They also prepare us to live righteously in this world, and that isn't inconsistent with the ultimate goal of entering the Kingdom.
3. It is the people that make these stories interesting and meaningful.
4. We'll look at those characters, the character traits they exhibit, and how chronology affects them.

I. Characters: two groups in each parable

- A. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins: the wise versus the foolish
 1. A category from the Book of Proverbs (see 2:1-8)
 2. Wisdom transcends intellect and education; it is a category for guiding behavior
 3. It has to do with accepting teaching, proper speech, and control of one's passions and temperament among other things.
 4. Jesus has already used these in the story of two builders: a tale about hearing and heeding
 5. The wise virgins bring extra oil whereas the foolish do not make adequate preparations.
 6. Then the foolish expect the wise to bail them out of their predicament.
- B. In the Parable of the Talents: the industrious versus the lazy
 1. Also part of Israel's wisdom literature, Proverbs 6:6-11
 2. Two of the servants went to work right away (it didn't matter that one had less than the other, he doesn't express jealousy) [class warfare is essentially jealousy dressed up in righteous garb]
 3. Both succeeded with what they had been given.
 4. One servant failed in his duties
 5. The master calls him wicked, lazy (26), and worthless (30)
 6. He excused himself under the cover of fear: unwilling to work, distracted by worry, swayed by evil desires (In Titus Paul demands that the church in Crete transcend their natural tendency to be lazy, gluttons by doing good works.)

II. Characteristics

- A. Personal responsibility
 1. The foolish virgins took the risk of not bringing oil and suffered for being irresponsible
 2. The five wise virgins were not responsible for the plight of the foolish
 3. Two of the servants took their responsibility seriously and worked hard, and both received a reward for their efforts
 4. One was punished for his irresponsible behavior
 5. There are consequences for irresponsibility
 6. If you are faithful with a little you will be given much (that works in all of life as well as in the Kingdom of God)
 7. Galatians 6:4-5 tells the church that each one must "bear his own load."

B. Accountability

1. We are not autonomous individuals: we were hard-wired to live within a community of people.
2. We must abide by certain rules of communal living.
3. Furthermore, no one is their own arbiter of right and wrong; we don't get to set the rules for morality.
4. Democracy ends where the moral laws of the universe begin.
5. God is the authority; the universe is a hierarchy.
6. The servants were accountable for what they had been given.
7. We will be held accountable for our words and deeds when we are called to face the Lord

III. Chronology – time runs out in both situations

A. The Ten Virgins

1. The bridegroom came at an inopportune time
2. It was too late to make up for their foolishness
3. The Lord said, "I do not know you."
4. The lesson was, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."
5. "Be prepared" is the Boy Scout motto, and it should be ours also.
6. Time will not continue, and even if it does, our time here will run out at some point.
7. Are you ready for that to happen?

B. The master returns

1. He will not stay away forever
2. When he comes back, there will be an accounting to give.
3. Whether he arrived soon or late, the servants had to keep working
4. What was the last servant doing all that time?
5. It was too late to change anything by then.
6. Time ran out; the game was over.
7. The lazy servant was ejected.

Conclusions:

1. God prizes wisdom over foolishness and industry over laziness.
2. Personal responsibility and accountability play a role in determining our actions.
3. Be ready; you don't have all the time in the world.