

Articles and Sermons :: Being Ready for The Coming of the Lord by Zac Poonen**Being Ready for The Coming of the Lord by Zac Poonen - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2021/6/4 18:43**

When Jesus told His disciples about His return in Matthew 24, He emphasised more than once that they should be on the alert (Matt. 24:42,44; 25:13). To be spiritually alert and ready at all times is then the all-important thing - not the knowledge of prophetic facts. In Matthew 25 (which follows on from the prophecies of Matthew 24), Jesus deals with three areas where we are called to be alert and faithful in order to be ready for His coming.

1. Faithfulness in The Hidden Life

(Matt. 25:1-13). In this parable, Jesus spoke of ten virgins. Notice that none of them were harlots (See Jas. 4:4 for a definition of spiritual harlotry). They were all virgins. In other words, they had a good testimony before men. Their lights were all burning (Matt. 5:16). Their good works were seen by others. Yet among all these virgins, only five were wise. But this was not obvious to everyone at the beginning. Only five had taken oil with them in their flasks (Matt. 25:4).

That oil in the flask was not visible in the night, like the light was, and speaks of our hidden life before God that men can not see in the darkness of this world. All of us have a flask. The question is whether we have any oil in it or not. Oil is used throughout the Scriptures as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and refers here to that life of God that the Holy Spirit communicates to our spirit. The outward manifestation of that life is the light (John 1:4). The inner content is the oil. Many are taken up with their outward testimony alone. This is their folly. It is in times of trial and testing that we find that the outward light alone is insufficient. One needs an inner content of the divine life to carry us through triumphantly.

"If you are weak in a crisis, you are weak in reality" (Prov. 24:10). The crises of life show us how strong or weak we are. In this parable, the crisis was that the bridegroom delayed his coming. It is time that proves the reality of our spirituality. He who has faith endures until the end and is saved. It is time also that proves who has an inner content in his life and who does not. Many are like the seed that sprouted up immediately but have no inner life. There is no depth of soil in their hearts (Mark 4:5). This is why it is difficult to assess new believers concerning their spirituality, or their wholeheartedness. Time will reveal everything, if we have the patience to wait. The way to be ready for Christ's coming, then, is to have an inner life of purity and faithfulness before God's face - in our thoughts, attitudes and motives, which people around us cannot see. If we do not have this, we are deceiving ourselves if we think we are ready for Christ's coming.

2. Faithfulness In Our Ministry

(Matt. 25:14-30). In the second parable, the emphasis is on the faithful use of the talents that God has given us. These talents represent material possessions, money, natural abilities, opportunities in life, spiritual gifts, etc. Not all are equal in this area - for we see in the parable that one got five, another two and another only one. But all had equal time to be faithful with what they had received. To whom more is given, from him more is required. Therefore, the one who multiplied his two into four got the same reward as the one who multiplied his five into ten. Judgment however fell on the one who buried his talent 'in the ground' (Matt. 25:18) - that is the one who used his God-given talents for this world and not for God. No one can say that he has received nothing - for all have received some talent or other from God. The question is what we use these talents for. What we use for ourselves is equivalent to the talent buried in the ground. What we use for the glory of God alone is what will be counted as eternal riches. By this standard we can see the poverty of the vast majority of believers. Our motto should be "All for God and nothing for self". Then we will be ready for Christ's return. We cannot be Jesus' disciples if we have not forsaken all that we have. One who is not using all his God-given possessions and gifts for the Lord is only deceiving himself if he claims to be ready for Christ's return.

3. Faithfulness in Serving Our Fellow Believers

(Matt. 25:31-46). In the last section, it is our attitude towards our fellow believers in need that Jesus deals with. That need may be spiritual or physical. Here we see that some inherit the kingdom because they served their fellow believers as unto the Lord. Their service was so much in secret that their left hand did not know what their right hand was doing (Matt. 6:3). So much so, that when the Lord reminds them of the good that they did, they do not even remember it! (Matt. 25:38). Jesus also taught here that any service that we do to the least of His brothers is considered as service done to Him (Matt. 25:40). It is significant that He speaks of the least here, for our tendency is to serve the most important believers and to ignore the poor and the despised! Those who are occupied with eating and drinking, buying and selling, and building and planting for themselves alone, will certainly be left behind when Jesus returns (Luke. 17:28,34). Only those, whose service for the Lord involved a loving concern to serve their fellow believers, will be taken up. In another passage (Ma

tt. 7:22-23), Jesus spoke of another group of people - who are a contrast to this group. These are the ones who remember all the good things that they have done in the name of the Lord. They are also at the judgment seat, and they remind the Lord that they have expelled demons, preached, healed the sick in Jesus' name, etc. But they are rejected by the Lord, even though they did all these things, because they lacked the very first requirement, of a hidden life of holiness before God. They were taken up with the greatness of their gifts.