



Nov 12, 2023 Mt. 25: 1-13 & Joshua 24:1-3a  
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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)  
Stone, Naomi. [This is not a night to sleep](#)  
Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Guidelines for the Long Haul](#)  
[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#) 11/12/17  
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#### **ENTERING THE SCENE:**

"The marriage was arranged by the fathers under the powerful influence of the mothers; it was ratified with a contract negotiated between the mothers but signed ultimately by the patriarch. The purpose of such a marriage was to join two families. When the partners were old enough, the long marriage ceremony was celebrated. The highpoint of the ceremony occurred when the groom, accompanied by his relatives, went to the family house of the bride to transfer her to his home. It is here that the rest of the wedding ceremony and celebration took place. ...The groom has gone to fetch his bride. Ten young teenagers, very likely the groom's

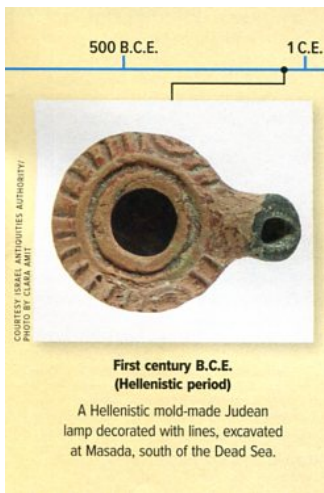
sisters and cousins, are awaiting his return." Pilch, John J. [The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle A](#). The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 1995. Page 160f.

#### **Mt. 25:1-13**

1 At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like **ten virgins** who took their **lamps** and went out to meet the **bridegroom**. 2 **Five** of them were **foolish** and **five** were **wise**. 3 The **foolish** ones took their **lamps** but did not take any **oil** with them. 4 The **wise**, however, took **oil** in jars along with their **lamps**. 5 The **bridegroom** was a **long time** in coming, and they all became **drowsy** and fell **asleep**. 6 At **midnight** the cry rang out: 'Here's the **bridegroom**! Come out to meet him!' 7 Then all the **virgins** woke up and trimmed their **lamps**. 8 The **foolish** ones said to the **wise**, 'Give us some of your **oil**; our **lamps** are going out.' 9 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.' 10 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**. 11 Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. '**Open** the **door** for us!' 12 But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't **know** you.' 13 Therefore keep **watch**, because you do not **know** the **day** or the **hour**.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** The groom didn't know the bridesmaids who were not there to welcome him. Am I someone the groom would recognize?

**PRAYER:** Wise Jesus, you ran into people who thought they knew everything about your Father that they needed to know, and were foolish enough to reject your wisdom. You also encountered those wise enough to know that their current understanding of your Father was inadequate and welcomed you with open arms and hearts. Help me to always be wise enough to open myself to your continuing revelation of the Father's love. Amen.



**WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:**

**TEN:** The number ten signifies completeness of order. Nothing is wanting and the cycle is complete. The people were waiting for the completion of God's kingdom in the return of Jesus.  
*What is needed yet for the kingdom to come for you?*

**VIRGINS:** To be a virgin in biblical times was absolutely essential. It represented the worth of a girl who was still under the discipline of the father.  
*How does Jesus shape the story by using the example of virgins? Does this image enlarge the meaning of this parable for you?*

**LAMPS:** In a culture that depended heavily on lamps, it would have been natural to bring along extra oil.  
*What do you rely on today, that prompts you to bring along extra just in case?*

**BRIDEGROOM:** In the early church, Jesus was often imaged as bridegroom and the church itself as the bride.  
*Does the image of bridegroom work for you when thinking about Jesus? Do you see yourself as a bride*

*of Christ?*

**LONG TIME:** The settling of the bride price was taking a long time, indicated that the family highly esteemed the daughter  
*In what ways do you experience how much God loves you?*

**FIVE:** This number was used to signify grace or favor, which is truly divine in its source and character.  
*What symbolizes something that has its source in divinity for you? Would you use a number or another symbol?*

**FOOLISH:** To be foolish often comes when a person thinks they know something and therefore do not need further information.  
*In what ways are you foolish when it comes to your faith life? Are its roots in something you learned long ago that is not adequate for your continued growth?*

**WISE / KNOW:** To be wise is to know something but not everything.  
*Why do you think that five of the virgins came prepared for a long wait, where the others did not? What might that say about the relationship of the different young women to the bride and groom?*

**OIL:** In this parable, the oil seems to stand for the lived experience of the young women, five knew how precious the bride was to her family, and five others apparently did not.  
*Does this help you understand why the request to share the oil was denied by the five? Have you ever become wise without learning something for yourself?*

**COMING:** The church of Matthew's day was becoming anxious over the delay of the second coming. An element of despair and doubt permeated the faithful, especially after the persecutions began.  
*What in the parable helps with this question? Does it help to study the gospels as you deal with life's questions?*

**DROWSY:** The virgins became drowsy because of the extended wait for the bridegroom.  
*Do you get 'drowsy' in your faith because of the long periods of 'dryness' in your spiritual life?*



**ASLEEP:** The entire ten fell asleep. The ones with extra oil could rest because they had prepared for such a wait.  
*How do you prepare for the waiting periods in your spiritual growth? What enables you to rise quickly and attend to God's Spirit when the Spirit comes?*

**MIDNIGHT:** In Israel, the day began at sunset. Weddings were held at night.  
*Does this information give you new insights into the parable? What are they?*

**ENOUGH:** No oil means no banquet. The responsibility of the virgins was to make sure that the preparations were adequate and this demanded light for the entire night.  
*How are you preparing for your 'wedding banquet'? Are your daily reflection times and prayer providing 'enough' oil for when the bridegroom comes?*

**READY:** Even though all the virgins were asleep, some were ready some were not.  
*What helps you get ready for the time when God comes to and for you?*

**WEDDING BANQUET:** A wedding banquet is a favorite metaphor for Jesus when talking about God's kingdom. It is a condition of joy with abundance. Jesus began his ministry in John's gospel at a wedding banquet. *What about a wedding banquet helps you understand God's realm? Is there another metaphor that would work better for you? If so, what is it?*

**DOOR:** The bridegroom refuses to let them in because he doesn't know them. To shut up a house in the days of Jesus was an elaborate ritual. Once the house was shut it would take an emergency to warrant opening it up again. *How do you feel about the parable not including the virgins who come late with their oil? What implications for you might this response have?*

**SHUT:** To be shut is to be closed. *What shuts you off from knowing the bridegroom? What shuts you off from knowing the bride?*

**OPEN:** To be open is to admit someone or something. Some of the Jews thought they knew all they needed to know about God. The Gentiles were open to the new information. *How does a premature closing off of information hamper a person's ability to hear the new? What enables you to be open to the message of this parable?*

**WATCH:** To watch is to be alert for someone or something, and knowing what to look for. *What are you looking for in your faith life? What enables you to keep alert?*

**DAY:** The wedding was scheduled for a certain day. This narrowed down the time of watching and waiting. Our lives on earth have a certain length to them. Entering into God's realm is seen in scripture as the day of the wedding. *Does this image help you? If so, why? If not, why?*

**HOUR:** The hour further specifies the time of the wedding. It gives us information on how much time we have to get ready for the big event. *If you don't know exactly the hour, how can you prepare yourself?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mt. 25:11// Lk.13: 25; Mt. 25: 13 // Mt. 24:42; Mk. 13:33-7;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Wis. 6: 12-16; [Ps. 63:2-8](#); 1 Thes. 4:13-18; Mt. 25:1-13; Revised Common Lectionary: Josh. 24:1-3, 14-25; [Ps. 78:1-7](#); 1 Thes. 4:13-18; Mt. 25: 1-13;

**SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

Only Matthew has this parable, but some similarities can be found in Luke 12: 35-36 and 13:25. Fr. Beck treats of this parable in [Banished Messiah](#) on page 172.

Keep us, Lord, so awake in the duties of our callings that we may sleep in Thy peace, and wake in Thy glory. John Donne (1573-1631), Works of John Donne, vol. V

"If you observe anything evil within yourself, correct it; if something good, preserve it; if something beautiful, foster it; if something sound, maintain it; if sickly heal it. Read unwearingly the precepts of the Lord and, sufficiently instructed by them, you will know what to avoid and what to pursue. - St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Within us is the soul of the whole, the wise silence, the universal beauty, the eternal One. Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Wisdom is your perspective on life, your sense of balance, your understanding of how the various parts and principles apply and relate to each other. It embraces judgment, discernment, and comprehension. It is a gestalt or oneness, and integrated wholeness." – Stephen R. Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

Gower, Ralph. [Manners and Customs of Bible Times](#). Moody Press. Chicago, IL. 1987. Pages 34-5; Information on lighting with oil lamps. Pages 66-69; information on wedding feasts and the customs. Pages 116-117; information on olive oil, its production and uses.

WEDDING:ME *wedden* < OE *weddian*, lit., to pledge, engage < *wed*, a pledge, akin to Ger *wetten*, to pledge, wager < IE base \**wadh-*, a pledge, to redeem a pledge > L *vas* (gen. *vadis*), a pledge ©1995 Zane Publishing, Inc. ©1994, 1991, 1988 Simon & Schuster, Inc.

**Hippolytus** of Rome (160-235 CE) wrote a 10 volume catalogue and refutation of heresies. He went so far as to accuse the bishop of Rome as a heretic and eventually his followers appointed him as a kind of a rival pope. In the treatise called "Apostolic Traditions" he quotes Matthew 25:1-13 as he instructs his followers on how and when they are to pray. He seemed to be interested in how the early church was to organize itself. This gives us information on how difficult it was in those early days to decide whom to listen to. Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998.

**I DO NOT KNOW YOU** was a stock rabbinic phrase used for a tardy student who was late and a notice of a 7 day expulsion from classes.

“Holy One, how shall I know the difference between knowledge and enlightenment?” The Holy One said” When you have knowledge, you light a torch to find your way. When you have enlightenment you become a torch to show the way.” Zen saying

The gospel remains the most authentic affirmation of the mystery of the Church in which Jesus does not attempt to define or even explain, but says, “the kingdom of heaven is like” and proceeds with parables to draw people into the experience of the kingdom of heaven. In the end, Jesus simply says that the community of believers in him, the people of the Gospel way of life, who are willing to risk taking him who is the Word at his word, are his Church. Parr, Raymond. Process Person Presence. Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1990. Page150.

In a chapter titled “End of the world and kingdom of God” there is an examination of the new earth and the new heaven in Christian, Jewish and Islamic traditions. Kung, Hans. Eternal Life? NY. Garden City. Doubleday & Co. 1984. Page 218ff.

The way of wisdom and contemplation is a journey without maps leading one into rugged mountainous country where there are often mists and storms, and one is more and more alone. Yet, ascending the slopes in darkness one meets at times other travelers on the way, belonging perhaps to other lands and traditions. Thomas Merton

The older I get, the more I realize that God is an ocean. A vast ocean. There is no far shore I can see, no bottom. The picture, you see, is always bigger; the ocean just goes on. Fr. James Flye

“The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your own riches, but to reveal to their own.” Benjamin Disraeli

The scene contains a strong element of ambiguity, secrecy, and deception. Ambiguity: while all have lamps, five have oil and five do not. Neither the maidservants among themselves nor we the audience can distinguish at this point who is wise and who is foolish. All appear the same, and so we cannot see beyond appearances to know who has oil and who does not. Secrecy: the time of the bridegroom’s return is hidden from them (and us). Deception: yet ambiguity is too mild a word to describe this scenario, for deceit and masquerade are being practiced. Things should be otherwise than they are: all maidservants should be prepared with oil in their lamps. While some are indeed prepared, others pretend readiness. If all goes well, that is, if the bridegroom comes quickly, the unpreparedness of the five foolish maids will escape detection. They shall have successfully deceived the groom and entered his household under pretense. The foolish maidservants are not simply unprepared; they hope to deceive the bridegroom, hide their fault and be fraudulently rewarded. They are, in short, masquerading their moral deficiency. And up to a certain point, their ruse succeeds. Jerome H.Neyrey

Our technological society has no longer any place in it for wisdom that seeks truth for its own sake, that seeks the fullness of being, that seeks to rest in an intuition of the very ground of all being. Without wisdom, the apparent opposition of action and contemplation, of work and rest, of involvement and detachment, can never be resolved." Thomas Merton: *Faith and Violence*: 217-218

25.1–13: Parable of the bridesmaids (Lk 12.35–36). Cf. 22.1–14; Rev 19.7–10; b. Shabb. 152b–153a. 1: Bridesmaids, Gk “parthenoi,” “virgins.” They accompany the bridegroom to the house of the bride and then escort both to the house where the wedding and the feast will take place. Bridegroom, 9.15n. 3–4: Oil, metaphor for righteousness or good deeds (Ps 119.105; Prov 6.23; 13.9; Job 18.5; 2 Bar. 59.2; 4 Ezra 14.20–21). 13: Keep awake, 24.42. Pg. 46. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope. -Thomas Merton

Though holy doctors have uncovered many mysteries and wonders, and devout souls have understood them in this earthly condition of ours, yet the greater part still remains to be unfolded by them, and even to be understood by them. We must then dig deeply in Christ. He is like a rich mine with many pockets containing treasures: however deep we dig, we will never find their end or their limit. Indeed, in every pocket new seams of fresh riches are discovered on all sides.

St. John of the Cross (1542-1591), *The Spiritual Canticle*

[Practice Makes you Ready](#)

#### **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

##### **Responsible**

There is a me / what a awesome responsibility /it is easy to pass over the you they and thems / but when it come to me / that at times is awesome / sometimes it is a burden but / imagine me responsible for me / at times responsibility for others must be assumed / but me i can't give away / i can't sell / i can't barter / all these things are tried over and over / i will never be unemployed / i have me to take care of (by Mary Eleanor Rice) Janice, Ed. .Images. . Winona, MN. St. Mary's College Press. 1976. RESPONSIBLE: Pg. 22

**WHEN I CAN'T FIND MY IGNORANCE I HAVE LOST MY WISDOM**

Jacob was wakened before dawn by thunder. A dark rain danced on his roof. We wrapped himself in the weather and his prayers. The thunder crashed again. He touched memories of his mother telling him it was only God moving furniture. Jacob wondered what was being rearranged on this morning. He bent his body into the rain and toward the bakery. Lightning fractured the sky, then retreated to the blackness. A student was waiting in the rain to see Jacob's advice. The boy ran along side of Jacob and matched his stride. "Jacob, hat are the limits of a man?" "Ask the man!" said Jacob, without losing his pace. "And what if the man acknowledges no limits?" "Then you've discovered his." "But," the student persisted, "what then is the route to wisdom?" "Humility!" came the reply. "How long is the route?" And Jacob answered, "I don't know.

.benShea. Noah. Jacob the Baker. NY.Villard Books,.1989. WHEN I CAN'T FIND MY IGNORANCE I HAVE LOST MY WISDOM: Page 44F.