

An Empty Lamp

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[0 : 00] With the Lord's help, we hope over the next couple of weeks that you just have a short mini-series on the subject or the theme of lamps in Scripture.

And there'll be three different aspects to these lamps. Firstly, as we'll look at today, an empty lamp. Secondly, it'll be a well-filled lamp that Lord willing we'll look at next Lord's Day.

And thirdly, finally, a lamp put out. So we'll be looking at the theme of these lamps over the course of the next couple of weeks. And we come this morning then to the first of these.

And we take as the subject matter or the portion of Scripture that illustrates this, the first part of Matthew 25. Now, of course, as most you'll be aware, this isn't the first time we're preached on Matthew 25.

Amongst you, it's a very popular passage, and particularly this parable of the wise and foolish virgins. But it is to illustrate this point about the lamp. And here in this passage, you have a perfect example of a lamp that is empty.

[1 : 06] And the first question that we have then is, why is the lamp empty? Why are the lamps of the foolish virgins empty? Well, clearly they did not begin empty.

In verse 1, We read then shall the kingdom of heaven be like an unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. Nobody goes out to meet the bridegroom with an empty, dry lamp.

The lamps may not have been that big. They'd have a certain amount of oil in them. But you go out ready. So they wouldn't have been empty to begin with. In first century Palestine, marriages were ordinarily conducted in the evening.

And there would be selected young men, for example, would attend upon the bridegroom. If you think of, this is what Jesus means in Mark chapter 2, at verse 19, where he says, And this is what he means by the children of the bridegroom.

The selected young men. The companions for the bridegroom. And as long as they've got the bridegroom with them, it's a time of festivity. They can't be mournful. They can't be fasting at that point.

[2 : 19] Likewise, John 3, verse 29. John the Baptist speaks and says, He that hath the bride is the bridegroom. But the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth it, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice.

This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. Again, the friend of the bridegroom, the companions. And just as the bridegroom would have his, the bride would have hers. Likewise, again, if we were to go back to more ancient times, the time of the judges.

Judges 14, remember when Samson has his ill-fated marriage. And there are 30 companions who are given to him from amongst the Philistines. And these are to be his friends, his supporters, at the time of his nuffshots.

And these are the children of the bridegroom, the children of the bridegroom, in that sense, of the bridegroom. And the supporters, the friends, the companions of the bridegroom. And as there are for the bridegroom, so there are for the bride.

So, similarly, young unmarried women, virgins, obviously, at that stage in culture, attended the bride at her father's house.

[3 : 26] Now, we must presume, I think it's legitimate to presume, 10 to be the standard number. Remember that the silences of Scripture also speak to an extent.

You might not be able to say, oh, they're not as authoritative as what is written, but you can still draw certain conclusions. And in the silences of Scripture, we see that nobody ever questions Jesus about why there are so many, or why there are so few.

You know, they don't say, 10? Why do you ask an awful lot? Come on, Jesus, nobody has 10. Nobody says that. Nor do they say, come on, only 10? Sure, if it's a wealthy man, it'll be 25 of them. No, nobody says that.

10 is obviously a standard recognised number. Nobody ever questions it. So we must assume it to be a cultural norm. A random number is less likely.

If Jesus were just to pluck a number, say, oh, let's say 10. 10, virgins, 10, virgins. They'd say, come on, 10? That's a silly number. It's too many or too few. Nobody questions it at all.

[4 : 27] So we must assume it is a cultural norm. It's not just a random number. Now, perhaps the initial feast or party is held separately.

Perhaps the bridegroom maybe had his initial festivities. It's sort of, you know, ongoing kind of stagnant. It goes into the next day. And maybe the bride has her own festivities with her own handmaidens and so on.

And then the bridegroom comes to the bride's father's house. And then they come together. And then the wedding is finally celebrated together properly. We don't know the details of how it was done in first century Palestine.

But perhaps there are the beginnings of separate festivities apart before they come together.

Certainly, when the bridegroom arrived at the house of the bride's father, the bridesmaids attending the bride would go out to meet him with their lamps to light the way.

Remember, the wedding is in the evening. It's at night, we might say, in that sense. And that's standard because people had their working days. They couldn't afford to take masses of days off and so on.

[5 : 36] So they go out with their lamps to light the way and to accompany him and his companions into the house, into the bride's father's house, and so to be brought into the bride.

They are not going all the way to his house, but they are waiting at the bride's father's house so that when the bridegroom comes, they go out to meet him, they guide him in with their lamps lit.

Now, it is possible that their duties to the bride didn't formally begin until the bridegroom arrived, or perhaps they had preliminary duties with the bride, which once accomplished their next task, there was nothing perhaps left to do but to wait for the bridegroom and bring him into the house.

Perhaps it was still light early evening when they began to wait. We don't know any of these things. But once everybody was inside, once the bridegroom arrived, that was the end of the waiting period.

The door was shut, and in the Middle East, there would be a sort of courtyard. A house would have a kind of courtyard with a wall, and then when the gate's shut, the door's shut. That's it. Everybody who's meant to be there is inside.

[6 : 49] Anybody who isn't inside isn't meant to be there. The door's shut, and that's the end. No others have admitted. And this, again, must be a cultural norm.

Because, again, nobody says to Jesus, oh, come on. He would have known these extra bridesmaids. He would have realised. These five girls turn up with their lamps, you know. They're not just saying, come on, we want to deep crash the party.

They're wanting him because they're meant to be there. Surely he would have realised that. Surely he would have said to his betrothed, he would have said, are these girls with you? Are they part of your bridal group?

And she'd say, yes, yes, let them in. Nobody questions it. Nobody asks. The fact that the door is shut, the fact that nobody else gets in, as though that is an absolute, unquestionable truth.

Nobody argues. Nobody asks. Nobody says, but wait a minute, Jesus, why is this the case? In other words, they take it as the norm.

[7 : 50] When Jesus says that the door is shut, and the bridegroom is in, and he says to the people outside, I don't know who you are. This must be something that rings true with them.

Just as Jesus' parables about, you know, the person, the next one, about a man travelling into a far country, and he calls his servants, delivers to them his goods, people don't say, oh, come on, that would never happen.

This is something with which people are familiar. Yeah. These are scenarios, like the agricultural parables that Jesus teaches, or the fishing parables, that are dragging the net with all the different kinds of fishes.

These are things people can picture in their minds. And when Jesus tells it, the people say, yeah, yeah, right, no, that's true. He uses these illustrations because they ring true.

So it's not a case of Jesus telling us, oh, there's a really nasty bridegroom in this one, and he doesn't let anybody else say, oh, how terrible, oh, how bad. This is the norm.

[8 : 51] The door is shut, and that's it. No one questions it. Clearly then, as we said at the start, none of the lamps began empty.

But why are the lamps empty now? Why are the lamps of the five foolish virgins empty now? Because the bridegroom was late. Well, it doesn't say that he was late, of course, only that he tarried.

You know, in a sense, in a sense, he can't be late because the thing doesn't start until he arrives. The final celebration doesn't start until he is there.

You know, sometimes if we're rushing for church or whatever, let's be, communions or whatever, then as we're driving along in the car, we're going to see at the visiting ministry, it's all right, they're not going to start without you.

And what I mean is that even if the clock says, oh, go on, they should be here by now, nobody's actually going to say, right, kick off the service, start right away, we'll open with prayer, we'll have the opening psalm, and if they come, they come.

[9 : 55] No, they're not going to wait until he arrives. I remember once being at a church meeting that I was meant to be cheering, and I arrived just, just in time and somebody said to me, oh, it's good to see you thought you were going to be late.

And I said, well, I can't be late because the meeting hasn't started until I constitute it. If I'm the chairman, it doesn't begin until I constitute the meeting. The wedding doesn't actually begin to take place properly until the bridegroom arrives.

Why am I bothering to go down on this line? Because by definition, he can't be late. They didn't have watches in those days. They didn't have the sort of precision time that we had.

They just knew he was going to come that night sometime, and their business is to be ready. He cannot be late because he is the one who defines when it begins.

But yes, he tarried. But he doesn't say he was late. Habakkuk chapter 2, we read it verse 3. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie.

[11 : 00] Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come. It will not tarry. In other words, it won't go beyond the appointed time.

The fact that a thing is certain does not necessarily mean that it will happen soon. The bridesmaids themselves have no great difference in appearance.

We're not told some were beautiful and some were plain. We're not told some were tall and some were short. That some were thin and others were heavier. We're not told anything about them.

There's no difference in appearance of which we are told.

They are all of them virgins. That is, they are socially pure, not defiled socially in any sense. There's nothing wrong with their qualifications for the job.

They have all been called. They have all been invited to fulfill this honorable duty and privileged because 10, with all the numbers that we gather from extended families at a village wedding and that culture and time, there'd be hundreds of people there.

[12 : 03] Loads of people. Most of them are related to each other. So 10 is quite a small number.

So to be amongst that 10, that's a privilege. You know, that's good. You know, if you're the bridesmaid for one of your friends' weddings, you know, most people might only have maybe two or three bridesmaids, perhaps nowadays at the most.

But even so, when you walk in with your nice bridesmaids dress and your bunch of flowers and so on, maybe everybody's not really waiting for you. They're really waiting for the bride. But still, when you make your entrance, you're still momentarily the centre of attention.

No way. The bride is coming either behind you or else she's going in ahead of you and you're following up behind her. But you're still kind of there in the spotlight. You're still kind of part of the centre of attention.

You're still there in the photographs. It's still a privilege to be asked, a privilege to be there. They have been invited to this privilege and that means they all qualify for it.

They're all perfectly virtuous young girls. They're all perfectly suited for the task. They have all been invited and they're all perfectly well qualified.

[13:11] Is it that the foolish were content with the privilege of the ceremony rather than with the doing and fulfilling of the job?

Because although it's a privilege, yet there's a job to do as well. There is a purpose to fulfill here. Verses 3 and 4 tells us, they that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them.

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. It's not just for show. They have a purpose as well. Now these verses 3 and 4 tell us why the lamps of the foolish are empty now.

They weren't empty to begin with, but it tells us why they're empty now. Their vessels are separate from the outward lamp. Read verses 3 and 4 again. They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them.

Not in them, with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. The vessels are separate from the outward lamp.

[14:16] Now, nobody's going to say, look, here's my vessel. Look, here it is. It's well filled. No, you keep it separate. You keep it private out the way. It's unseen. This previously obtained supply of additional oil, no doubt, from exactly the same sources to which the foolish were then sent later on.

You know, when they said, no, go and buy from those that sell. These would be the very people from whom the wise virgins would already have got their oil. They didn't send to some far country. They didn't go to some distance in a marketplace. They got their oil locally, we must assume. Just as the foolish are told to go and buy their oil locally.

Their previously obtained supply from the very same sources to which the foolish were too late to go means that the wise are prepared if need be for the long haul.

I'll say that again. The wise are prepared if need be for the long haul. When I was younger, I used to do hill walking quite a bit.

[15:23] And, you know, you would take your map and your compass and you might have a perfectly clear day. You didn't need your compass perhaps and you could see clearly. If the fog came down, then you needed it. You took your waterproofs, you took your cagules, your waterproof trousers, your boots and everything, and you hoped you would get a lovely day where you could roll up your cagule and put it in your rucksack.

Well, you wouldn't need your waterproofs. Well, you wouldn't need your emergency shelter or your survival bag. Well, you wouldn't need to get the compass out because you wouldn't be lost. You hoped all these things would be unnecessary but you took them with you anyway.

You still stuck them in your rucksack. You still carried them with you in case of an emergency. And here the wise are prepared if need be for the long haul.

It's part of the definition of preparation. It's not for what is definitely going to happen. It's for what might happen. It's for the unforeseen circumstances. The wise are prepared if need be for the long haul.

Think of the parable of the sower in the number of Jesus. You know, right there, cultural, agricultural illustrations. It's there. Thin soil on the rock scatters the seed on it and because the soil is shallow the seed springs up quickly.

[16:39] And right there, it's there. It springs up in it. Oh, look, this is showing real good growth but it withers away just as quickly because it has no depth of path. In the acronym TUIT, which some of you may be familiar with, which sums up the headings of the reformed faith of Christianity, total depravity, purti, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints, T-U-L-I-P.

I'm sure most of you are familiar with that particular sort of acronym in that way. No doubt we can do a certain series of it sometimes. But the final point is the P, perseverance of the saints.

Prepare, if need be, for the long haul. If need be, for whatever might go wrong, if need be, for the fact that they may need more supplies.

Now, obviously, this is a parable. It's not just about wise and foolish virgins and oil and lamps. It's to illustrate a deeper spiritual truth. What is our oil?

What is it with which we must be filled? It's like the coal bucket when we're talking with the children there. A coal bucket is meant to be filled with coal. The lamp is meant to be filled with oil.

[17:58] What is it that the believer, and we are all made in the image of God and invited and called to serve him, that is the ultimate dignity for which we are designed, is relationship with God.

What is the oil that is meant to fill us? I would suggest to you it is the inward grace, the spirit of grace, which always points us to Christ.

in Zechariah chapter 12, verse 10, we read, I will pour upon the house of David, upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications.

And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

In other words, if it is truly God's spirit that is in you, it will point you to Jesus. It will give you a vision of his sufferings and death and a recognition that this is done for you.

[19 : 05] And that will cause you both at the one and the same time that exquisite joy and exquisite pain. This bitterness of soul, mourning and grieving that Christ should have endured such agony upon the cross for a sinner like me.

Now it is the spirit of God that puts that in people's hearts. It cannot be the spirit of the living God, the oil, his grace, if it says, oh yeah, God has spoke to me, he says, you don't need Jesus, you don't need the cross.

Ah, no, you follow the self-prophet, you follow the self-religion, or you treat all religions the same.

That doesn't come from the true God. That is not his spirit of grace, that is not his mercy, his truth.

I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications. They shall look upon me who may appear. It points us to Christ.

God's spirit, his oil of grace being within us will always point us to Christ. It will not point us necessarily to our denominational allegiance.

[20 : 17] You can have that outwardly, and you can have that corporately, a whole body of people and have a corporate allegiance to a denomination or to a flag or to a country or whatever, and that country may officially be a particular religion, and they can say, oh yes, we're not religion.

That's what we follow up to, we believe in, but that's not the spirit of Christ within you, because that will point you not to your flag, not to your country, not to your denominational badge, not to your church, or even your congregation.

It will point you ultimately to Christ, because he alone fills the needy soul. Aaron and his sons in the Old Testament were anointed with oil as a symbol of what?

When oil was for light in the tabernacle, Exodus 25, verse 6, oil was for light, it was a symbol also of the Holy Spirit, a symbol of the Spirit, the giving of light, the oil of gladness, Hebrews tells us, chapter 1, verse 9, thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy thoughts.

The Spirit of grace and of Christ will always bring with it a joy the world can never give. What are our sources for this oil, this joy that is to fill us?

[21 : 46] Well, I'm going to say prayer alone as individuals, prayer and worship together as families, and we'll come to that in a second. But the more I go about praying, well, that's because he wants us to do prayer, he wants us to do more prayer, okay, well, that's what we do, as if it's a kind of chore.

But it's not so much about the doing of the thing, it's about what we have access to. Think of it this way, think of a sort of domestic household situation, you get up in the morning, you're in the kitchen, what do you do, maybe fill the kettle, put it under the sink, fill the kettle with that, maybe wash up the dishes or soak them or rinse them or whatever, what are you doing every single time you do that?

When you put dishes in the sink or when you rinse out a cup or when you fill up the kettle or you fill a glass up, you're going to the tap, you go to the tap, you go to the tap, you go to the tap. And if I were to say to you every day you go to the tap, you'd say, okay, change, you don't have to keep saying it, any time you need water you go to the tap, you don't think about it.

Now when your grandparents day they had to go to the well, they had to lower down the bucket, they had to haul it back up, they had to lug the buckets back to the house, there was no running water, it was a chore.

And there was a day when the Lord's people, they had to go to the tabernacle, sheep and their goats, they had to burn their incense, they had to circumcise their children, they had to keep the Passover, they had to do all these things.

[23 : 07] And it was a chore. No doubt it was a privilege too. Nobody likes not to have water. If we have to go to the well to get it, then do it, it's good to have the water. But, now it's just down on the

tap, you go to the tap, you go to the tap, you go to the tap, you go to the tap.

And nobody thinks about, oh what a chore that is going to the tap. You don't even think about it, the water's there. The Lord gives us of his grace, of his spirit. You go to the Lord, you go to the Lord, you go to the Lord, you go to the Lord.

I go to the tap. That's where the source of life is. So if I say that prayer is that which we need to do, it's going to the tap. It's not a big chore, it's not a big deal.

The access that we have to have to that light, to that oil, to that supply of grace, prayer, alone as individuals, we need to be crying with the Lord.

Prayer and worship together as families. We need that in our families to glue them together, to strengthen and build them. For surely only when family religion is recovered in our homes will families again become the strength and the bedrock of our society.

[24 : 20] How many families are in worship day by day together? And public worship, the prayer meeting, how can a professing Christian be absent with a just cause from the prayer meeting and the Lord's day?

How can we ever replenish our lamp if we neglect the sources of the oil of grace and gladness?

You go to the tap, you go to the tap, you go to the tap.

You go where the source is and you turn it on and you fill up and you don't even think about it. If you are in Christ, you don't even think about how often you go to the tap.

You should be doing it every day just as you fill up your kettle, just as you wash your dishes, just as you rinse a glass, just as you fill a glass of water, you go to the tap. You go to the Lord.

You go to the source. How can we replenish our lamp with oil if we neglect the sources of the oil of grace and gladness?

[25 : 25] If you are a Christian, beware of emptiness. If you are not yet a Christian, fill up on the oil and its sources and pray the Lord to strike a match because the sources are there for you and the filling is there for you.

You might say, oh, well, I haven't had Damascus road and I haven't had the Lord, hasn't given me the groom, the Lord hasn't done this, the Lord hasn't done that. You fill up on the sources and you pray the Lord to strike a match if you're serious about it.

When the foolish plead with the wise for help, the answer given might perplex us. You know, accustomed as we are to think of Christian grace always teaching us to give and to share whatever we have without asking anything in return.

We would think that when Jesus is telling a parable like this, that the foolish would say, there was a lot of you know, and say, sure, don't bother, I'm stumbling, I'm have, you take some, you love some, we'll all share together.

That's what we would kind of expect, isn't it? A wee bit, well, maybe you're not, but I'm a wee bit perplexed. You know, surely they ought to share, you know, it's a good thing to share.

[26 : 40] Why wouldn't they want to share here? I would suggest to you that the answer from the wise, who have not forgotten why they are supposed to be there, might be paraphrased as follows.

If we do as you want, there may not be enough for either of us, either us or you, so both our lamps will go out and the bridegroom will arrive in darkness, unwelcomed and with none to escort him in. Now, there's meant to be ten of us. At least if there's five whose lamps are lit, we can guide and escort him in, but if there's none of us, because all of our lamps have gone out, he's going to be arriving in darkness. Ultimately, why are we here?

We're not just here for the privilege of being bridesmaids. We're here to bring the bridegroom in. That's our job. That's our task. Some of us have got to do it. If we give you our oil, none of us will have enough.

All our lamps will go out. There will be nobody left to bring the bridegroom in. But go quickly. Our first duty is to him, but go quickly.

[27 : 48] Buy what you can. There may yet be time. And there's two things I'd like us to notice here. One is, if the wise are saying, that won't be enough for us and you, does this mean, and I would suggest to you it probably does, that even the wise are almost out.

He has carried so long that those who have been well prepared and well filled and have taken every possible measure to be ready in advance, they've kept their vessels topped up, they've topped up their lamps, they've kept them burning, they've been ready, they've done everything they possibly could, and he has tarried and tarried and tarried.

And now, even the wise are almost empty, almost out. There's just enough to bring him in, just enough to go out to the bridegroom and bring him in, but if they tip out half of the little wee bit they've got left, nobody's going to have anything.

Nobody's going to have enough. I would suggest to you, the wise too are almost dry, almost gone. I think you'll remember what it says in Psalm 73, you know, truly God is good to Israel, even as such as are of a clean heart, but as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped, but I was envious at the foolish.

And so, at verse 14, we read, for all the day long have I been plagued, been chastened every morning, I'm almost out of oil. Verse 26, my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

[29 : 39] My steps said well nigh slipped. My strength was almost gone. My oil was almost dry. Even the wise are almost out.

When the Lord comes, there will be just enough time, just enough resource, just enough of all that we have expended of ourselves and our souls to meet him.

But not enough to subdivide that. And I think, yeah, okay, but you're still meant to share, aren't you? It doesn't sound good, does it? I mean, it doesn't sound very friendly.

The other thing we need to recognise, the second point is, our spiritual source, this spirit which the oil symbolises, cannot be each other.

Much as we are to love one another and support one another, the source of our spiritual oil cannot be each other. It can only be the source of oil, that is the Lord.

[30 : 47] The number of people that think they will stand well before the Lord because they have a godly grandmother, or because their parents always did the books, or because they are a Christian upbringing, and they know the fact, and they know the Bible inside out, and because of somebody else's godliness, they think they will be okay.

And because somebody else is holy and faithful and devout, they can sort of ride the coattails of that, give us some of your oil, and our lamps have gone out. You can't.

You cannot be the source of somebody else's supply. I cannot, you cannot, nobody can. All that we can do is point them to the true source of supply.

The only source of oil, spiritually speaking, is the Lord. Go to the tap, go to the tap, go to the tap. Go to the Lord in prayer, in private, in families, in public, in a prayer meeting on the Lord's day.

Go to the tap, go to the tap, go to the tap. Fill up, be washed, be cleansed, be slake your thirst, get your lamps lit, get your vessels filled.

[32 : 04] The source is there. There is abundant supply. Our first duty is not even to one another.

Jesus said, you know, look at that this evening. We look at Mark chapter 12, you know, somebody said, what's the first and greatest commandment? The first and greatest commandment is love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength.

The second is like it, love your neighbor as yourself. That's the second one. The first one is the Lord. Our first duty is to the bridegroom. Our first duty is to go quickly, buy what you can, and we yet be tired.

In the end there was no time. It was, if you think about it, it was the only thing on which there was a limitation.

Even at midnight, if you look at the panel here, there is no suggestion of shops and traders being shut up or unwilling to sell. You know, nowadays, shops have got very set hours.

[33 : 02] They open at a certain time, they close at a certain time. Outside of the trading hours, you can't get what you need. But in those days, people sold from the houses. They sold from the outside of their homes.

They set up a table. They just traded from their own premises and they would open up at any hour of the day or night to do business. Business is business. A wedding party, it's kind of like a coach party if you're catering.

If we're somewhere, a coffee shop, a great big coach comes in and sort of groan and think, oh no, we're getting the board then. But for the trader, I think, what's going to go? 50 odd people coming off this coach.

They're all going to buy stuff. They're all going to be business. And for a wedding party, anybody selling oil, five bridesmaids turn up at midday, right? Five loads of oil. Here we go.

Fill your vessels. Thank you very much. No suggestion that there's a lack of oil. No suggestion that the traders wouldn't sell to them at midnight. No suggestion that there isn't money. There are none of these things are cited as an obstacle.

[33 : 58] There is oil supply available in the village. There are traders, there are those that buy and sell, and we must assume that the bridesmaids likewise have the wherewithal to buy it. Because none of these things are cited as an obstacle.

The only obstacle is time. But there was no longer any time. And for us too, oil is not unavailable. The spiritual oil of God's grace is not unavailable. There is grace abundant. There is trade to be engaged in. The Lord desires to do business with our souls, but our resources are plenty, despite the lateness of the hour.

Isaiah says in chapter 55, O everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye by and eat. Yea, come by wine and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Harking diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

[35 : 10] Incline your ear and come to me. Hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

And thus far, whilst there is supply, while there is resources, while there is a willingness in God's part to supply all our need, thus far there is also time.

Thus far, awake from slumber. They all slumbered. The virtuous, the wise, the foolish, they all slumbered. We can't say, oh, the wise are wise, because they stayed awake.

And they were bright-eyed and bushy-teamed. It doesn't say that. They all slumbered and slept. But awake from slumber, an act, replenish your man. Isaiah again, chapter 60, first three verses.

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people.

[36 : 11] But the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

In Luke's account of the gospel, Jesus says this in chapter 12, verse 35, let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants from the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Verily I see unto you, and he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meet, and will come forth and serve them.

And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. When the bridegroom arrives, when the master returns, all things will be measured by that event.

The commentator Matthew Poole said, quote, as our life leaveth us, judgment will find us, unquote. Now we think judgment, the old doom and gloom, and fire and brimstone.

[37 : 25] It's not necessarily judgment in the pronounced sense of the pronouncement of doom. It is judgment in the sense of discernment. God is able to discern between the sheep and the goats, between the chaff and the wheat, between the vile and profane, and between that which is devoted to him.

God is able to see past and outward show. He is able to see the difference between a lamp that is empty but looks good, and a lamp that is full and burning. He is able to see and discern and judge. As our life leaveth us, judgment will find us. And as Ecclesiastes puts it, where the tree falls, then will it lie. Chapter 11, verse 3, whether it lies to the north or the south or the west, wherever it falls, then it will lie.

When the bridegroom comes, the door is shut. That chilling verse in Revelation 22 has it, he that is unjust, let him be unjust still. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.

He that is righteous, let him be righteous still. He that is holy, let him be holy still. We cannot remain, of course, in a constant state of readiness, except except we be replenished constantly.

[38 : 47] Watch therefore, Jesus says, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh. In chapter 24 of Matthew we read at verse 44, therefore be ye also ready for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.

And at verse 36, but of that day and hour knoweth no man, know not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. Outward symbols will not be enough. Outward allegiance will not be enough. The outward form of a lamp will not be enough. Just as somebody can't say, oh yeah, my manages, my great save, look, look at the band of gold on my hand, see, look, I've got the ring on my finger, that proves everything's fine.

It doesn't actually. Because you might have problems, you might have difficulties, you might be fights or whatever. This is just the outward symbol of a fact. Likewise, the outward symbols of bread and wine, as last Lord said, the waters of baptism, whatsoever it may be, these are the outward symbols.

But the outward symbols are not enough on their own. You may have your lamp in your hand, but what state is it in? Is it weighty and full? Is it lit?

[39 : 59] Is it giving light? Light? Or is it empty and lightweight? Fill it up. Keep it filled.

Be not one who holds an empty lamp. When the source is needed, go to the tap. Go to the tap. Go to the tap. Prayer is the access point to all the source and resource that you could possibly need. When he comes, he will enter into his glory and he'll do it with those he does have. He'll do it with those who are ready.

With us or without us. But he will come. And we must be ready. And the lamp that he has put into our hand and the privilege that he has called us to of waiting upon him is that which we can only carry out in the dark if our lamps be full.

And even then, it may take every last drop that we have. But we must be ready for the cups.

Because come, you will.

[41 : 14] That's right. That's right.