

Series: "SUMMER SCHOOL: Lessons from The Parables of Jesus"

For Message: Matthew 13:45-46, 25:1-13; Luke 16:19-31; Acts 16:31, 20:24; 2 Corinthians 6:2

Message Title: "Lessons About ETERNAL LIVING"

Introduction: Good morning, BACK ROADS CHURCH! Glad you are with us today as we CONTINUE our SUMMER SERIES ... **"SUMMER SCHOOL: THE PARABLES of JESUS"** ... The IDEA is WE CONTINUE to LEARN about TRUTH from the PARABLES of JESUS!

**The TRUTHS of Today's PARABLES will AFFECT US for a LONG TIME ...**

GRAB YOUR NOTES and let's START with our DEFINITION of a PARABLE of JESUS ... **WHAT IS A PARABLE? An EARTHLY Story with a HEAVENLY Meaning.** "KINGDOM of HEAVEN..."

Have you EVER been ILL-PREPARED for something? WEDDING REHEARSAL ... Mike? Mark? Matt? Didn't FILL out my NOTES! EMBARRASSING! NEVER AGAIN!

Ben Franklin = "**FAILING to PREPARE is PREPARING to FAIL**".

In TODAY'S PARABLE, JESUS TALKS about something BIG we NEED to BE PREPARED FOR! The PARABLE is "**The PARABLE of the TEN BRIDESMAIDS**" From MATTHEW 25 ... PEN READY to WRITE down ACTORS ... **MATTHEW 25:1-13 =**

**"Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.** (There is going to be a WEDDING and the GROOM is coming. It is the RESPONSIBILITY of the BRIDESMAIDS to be PREPARED in case it gets DARK and the PARTY needs LIGHT ... LAMPS) **2Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3The five who were foolish didn't take enough olive oil for their lamps, 4but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil.** (1<sup>st</sup> ACTORS = **5 FOOLISH BRIDESMAIDS** ... Why Foolish? They did NOT have enough OIL for their LAMPS. NOT PREPARED ... The 2<sup>nd</sup> ACTORS = **5 WISE BRIDESMAIDS** ... Why WISE? They were PREPARED with ENOUGH OIL) **5When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. 6 "At midnight they were roused by the shout, 'Look, the bridegroom is coming! Come out and meet him!'** (3<sup>rd</sup> ACTOR = **The BRIDEGROOM** ... Represents JESUS and His SECOND COMING. WE are the BRIDESMAIDS ... some are PREPARED, and OTHERS are NOT) **7 "All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. 8Then the five foolish ones asked the others, 'Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.'** (Hit the PANIC BUTTON! ILL-PREPARED. MOMENT when you SAY the WRONG NAME!) **9 "But the others replied, 'We don't have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.'** **10 "But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. 11Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, 'Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!'** **12 "But he called back, 'Believe me, I don't know you!'** **13 "So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.**

**The ACTORS:**

HOLD ... This PARABLE does NOT have a Happy Ending for ALL. The 5 FOOLISH BRIDESMAIDS were NOT Prepared ... SHORT on OIL and by the TIME they GOT BACK to the WEDDING FEAST, it was TOO LATE ... LOCKED OUT ... **"I DON'T KNOW YOU!"**

Jesus is CLEAR / STRONG: ***“This is URGENT! PREPARE NOW for your ETERNITY – BEFORE it is TOO LATE!”***

NOTE ... This PARABLE is GENIUS / A MASTERPIECE. Pay attention to HOW many things the 10 BRIDESMAIDS have in COMMON: FIRST, ALL 10 received an INVITATION. As GOD INVITES ALL of US to RECEIVE SALVATION through JESUS on a CROSS, all 10 Bridesmaids RECEIVED an INVITATION to the WEDDING FEAST. God wants ALL of us in HEAVEN for ETERNITY.

SECOND, **ALL 10 RESPONDED** TO THE INVITATION. They ALL wanted to ATTEND! And I think we ALL want to GO to HEAVEN. Even people who DON’T BELIEVE there IS a HEAVEN ... IF there IS ONE, they want to GO!

NEXT, ALL 10 BRIDESMAIDS were **EXITEDLY WAITING** for the BRIDEGROOM. The 5 FOOLISH MAIDS did NOT HATE God. They were NOT ATHEISTS.

Finally, ... Do NOT MISS THIS ... they **ALL FELL ASLEEP**. They were ALL HUMAN and FLAWED and NEEDED REST and they ALL had 24 HOURS in a DAY. Not like SOME were PERFECT ... ALL FLAWED HUMANS.

SO ... they were SIMILAR in MANY WAYS ... ALL EXCEPT ONE ... **FIVE** were **PREPARED** and **FIVE** were **NOT**. That is our ACTION. We get to CHOOSE ...

**The ACTION: PREPARED for ETERNITY vs. UNPREPARED for ETERNITY**

Jesus SAYS there may be PEOPLE who have HEARD about JESUS and EVEN LIKE His TEACHINGS. There MAY be PEOPLE who ATTEND CHURCH and even BELIEVE JESUS is the Son of God! And, LIKE the BRIDESMAIDS they *may have RESPONDED* in some way to God’s INVITATION ... ***BUT they are NOT PREPARED to MEET HIM!***

They may be GOOD PEOPLE with GOOD INTENTIONS, but they have NEVER experienced the INWARD CHANGE / TRANSFORMATION that COMES when you TRULY FOLLOW JESUS ... when you GIVE your LIFE to HIM ... NOT just LIP-SERVICE but PUTTING your WHOLE WEIGHT on HIM ... TRUSTING HIM as LORD / DISCIPLING. When Jesus is LORD, we GROW our WHOLE LIVES and become MORE **CHRIST-LIKE!**

And for THIS PERSON who is GOOD with GOOD INTENTIONS, this PARABLE is a WARNING from JESUS. **There is NO more DANGEROUS PLACE to be than to THINK you are GOING to HEAVEN when you REALLY ARE NOT!** IS that YOU? Do you THINK you are READY to MEET the BRIDEGROOM—to STAND before GOD, but you are NOT? ***MAYBE you THINK BECAUSE you ATTEND a CHURCH or BELIEVE in GOD or you are a GENERALLY GOOD PERSON that at the END of your LIFE you are GOING to HEAVEN. Well, according to JESUS, that is NOT HOW it WORKS.***

This PARABLE is CLEAR. On the OUTSIDE, these 10 BRIDESMAIDS APPEARED to be EXACTLY the SAME ... BUT when the BRIDEGROOM RETURNED, the DIFFERENCE was EVIDENT and the 5 FOOLISH BRIDESMAIDS who THOUGHT they would attend the BANQUET were LEFT OUT.

**This parable poses the question that all of us need to answer... *Am I prepared for eternity?***

As your PASTOR, I do NOT want you to spend another DAY UNCERTAIN about your ETERNITY. I want to be SURE EVERYONE here KNOWS HOW to be READY for ETERNITY ... According to JESUS! Today, FOUR TRUTHS about our ETERNITY to help SETTLE this QUESTION: ***“AM I READY?”***

**FOUR (4) TRUTHS ABOUT MY ETERNITY:**

## **#1 = One Day MY LIFE on Earth Will END.**

Throughout history, HUMANS have searched for WAYS to LIVE LONGER or even FOREVER. A while BACK, I was READING about some BILLIONAIRES INVESTING in ATTEMPTING to SCIENTIFICALLY “*SOLVE DEATH*”. Trying to find a way to LIVE ON.

I’VE looked at some STATISTICS and here is what I DISCOVERED. As throughout HISTORY, still TODAY, the HUMAN DEATH RATE is 100%! We all die.

IF we are going to be PREPARED for ETERNITY, we must FIRST ACCEPT that YOUR LIFE on EARTH will END. In FACT, no matter how you slice it, THIS life is SHORT! 70-80 YEARS on AVERAGE? COMPARED to ETERNITY, that is a DROP in the OCEAN. The UNIMAGINABLE MAJORITY of your “LIFE” will be SPENT on the OTHER SIDE of your EARTHLY DEATH!

***We MUST PREPARE ... only a FOOL (last week) would WASTE what LITTLE TIME we have HERE NOT PREPARING for an ETERNITY that NEVER ENDS!***

AND we PREPARE for 2 REALITIES: The FIRST is our EARTHLY DEATH. None of us KNOWS that DAY. The BIBLE says LIFE is like a VAPOR ... it’s HERE for one MOMENT and then GONE. The 2<sup>nd</sup> REALITY is that JESUS might COME again in His KINGDOM BEFORE we DIE. EITHER WAY ... No GUARANTEES of TOMORROW!

Therefore, JESUS tells us it is WISE to PREPARE for ETERNITY TODAY! BECAUSE, when your EARTH LIFE ENDS, you WILL STAND BEFORE God and be ACCOUNTABLE for the LIFE you LIVED.

**MATTHEW 25:13 = “So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.”** Memory Verse!

We do NOT KNOW WHEN we will LEAVE this EARTH, so we MUST be PREPARED TODAY! To say you will WAIT a WHILE and LIVE HOW you WANT and GET BACK to GOD SOME DAY is FOOLISH. TODAY is the DAY to PREPARE... #2 =

## **#2 = What I Do in THIS LIFE Determines Where I Will SPEND ETERNITY.**

You know there are MANY OPINIONS out there about HOW to GET IN to HEAVEN and MOST of them are INACCURATE, according to the ONE who RUNS IT. MANY believe their ELIGIBILITY for HEAVEN lies in their GOODNESS. If they are GOOD, they get to GO to a BETTER PLACE. Or “*We ALL GO to a BETTER PLACE*”. Not true!

In JESUS’ PARABLE, the Bridesmaids KNEW the GROOM was COMING ... 5 were PREPARED and 5 were NOT PREPARED. And the CHOICE to NOT PREPARE is what PREVENTED the FOOLISH BRIDESMAIDS from getting INTO the BANQUET.

IN the SAME WAY, YOUR CHOICE about what you DO with JESUS in THIS LIFE will DETERMINE WHERE you spend ETERNITY. IF you BELIEVE JESUS DIED on a CROSS for YOUR SINS and in His RISING from DEATH and leaving an EMPTY TOMB, He PROVED His DEFEAT of DEATH ... AND, IF you ask JESUS to become LORD / LEADER of your LIFE ... you will be SAVED / PREPARED.

BUT IF you REJECT JESUS as LEADER / LORD of your LIFE and ATTEMPT to get into HEAVEN by just BEING a GOOD PERSON, you will be SHUT OUT of HEAVEN like the 5 FOOLISH BRIDESMAIDS ... “*I DON’T KNOW YOU!*”

When we DIE, the BIBLE says there is SEPARATION ... a SEPARATION PHYSICALLY and SPIRITUALLY. Physically, DEATH SEPARATES LIFE from my BODY. We are SEPARATED from LOVED ONES. But the BIBLE also speaks of a SPIRITUAL SEPARATION. An ETERNAL SEPARATION from GOD IF we have NOT PREPARED!

Jesus TELLS another PARABLE about DEATH and PHYSICAL and SPIRITUAL SEPARATION. It is the STORY of a RICH MAN who was SELFISH and did NOT PREPARE

for ETERNITY and LAZARUS, a POOR MAN who DID. From Luke ... LUKE 16:22-26 =  
*“Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to sit beside Abraham at the heavenly banquet. The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and he went to the place of the dead. There, in torment, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side. 24 “The rich man shouted, ‘Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames.’ 25 “But Abraham said to him, ‘Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish. 26 And besides, there is a great chasm separating us. No one can cross over to you from here, and no one can cross over to us from there.’”* CC!

Jesus is CLEAR ... WHAT you DO in THIS LIFE DETERMINES your ETERNITY! And, like the RICH MAN, once you are DEAD, it is TOO LATE to PREPARE. It's FINAL! PREPARATION HAPPENS in THIS LIFE! IF you are SEPARATED from GOD in THIS LIFE, you will be SEPARATED from GOD in the NEXT LIFE / FOREVER!

*“But Pastor Stan, I GREW UP in a CHRISTIAN HOME. My PARENTS were CHRISTIANS.”* SO? Just because your PARENTS or GRANDS were FOLLOWERS of Jesus does NOT MEAN you are! AND I'm finding it is NOT GOOD ENOUGH for MY FAITH to be JUST LIKE my PARENTS. The BELIEFS are the SAME, but my FAITH JOURNEY is DIFFERENT because GOD is VERY CREATIVE! God is PREPARING ME for what He wants ME to DO ... NOT what my DAD / MOM DID!

YOU need to have your OWN FAITH. And LIKE the 10 BRIDESMAIDS and the RICH MAN and LAZARUS, you MUST CHOOSE in THIS LIFE before it is TOO LATE.

Are you PREPARED for ETERNITY? Have you placed your TRUST in JESUS to SAVE you from your SIN by His CROSS ... AND ... ARE you FOLLOWING HIM? OR are you PROCRASTINATING GETTING READY? Have you been TRUSTING you are a GOOD ENOUGH PERSON or COPYING your PARENT'S FAITH to get you into HEAVEN?

The RICH MAN and LAZARUS TEACH us something ELSE TOO ... #3 =  
**#3 = Time is RUNNING OUT to TELL OTHERS About JESUS.**

Listen, WHAT you DO in THIS LIFE determines WHERE YOU will spend ETERNITY, but that is NOT where our FAITH JOURNEY ENDS. There's MORE. Once you CHOOSE to FOLLOW JESUS and PREPARE for YOUR ETERNITY, Jesus wants you to HELP OTHERS do the SAME. **IT BECOMES your PRIMARY MISSION in LIFE!**

That is WHY GOD puts PEOPLE in your LIFE who are NOT FOLLOWING JESUS. It is INTENTIONAL on God's part ... so YOU can HELP THEM get to HEAVEN TO!

The RICH MAN figured this OUT, but it was TOO LATE ... LUKE 16:27-29 = *“Then the rich man said, ‘Please, Father Abraham, at least send him to my father’s home. 28 For I have five brothers, and I want him to warn them so they don’t end up in this place of torment.’ 29 “But Abraham said, ‘Moses and the prophets have warned them. Your brothers can read what they wrote.’”*

The RICH MAN realizes he can NOT save himself but wants to HELP SAVE the ONES he LOVES. BUT ... it is TOO LATE. He's in ETERNITY. The SAME will be TRUE for US. The day will come when we can NO LONGER HELP OTHERS into HEAVEN.

Remember the BRIDESMAIDS? They ran to get MORE OIL, but it was TOO LATE ... OPPORTUNITY LOST, FOREVER! As FOLLOWERS of JESUS, we are given

OPPORTUNITIES ALL the TIME to SHARE our FAITH with a FAMILY member or INVITE a FRIEND to WORSHIP with US.

There is TOO MUCH at STAKE for the PEOPLE around us for US to NOT SPEAK UP and TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY we HAVE. There is NO GUARANTEE for TOMORROW. We have TODAY and this is the ONLY LIFE we have to SHARE our FAITH and HELP OTHERS get into HEAVEN.

When YOU get to HEAVEN, you will NO LONGER be able to HELP your FRIENDS and FAMILY get there. PAUL talks about HIS opportunities ... ACTS 20:24 = *But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.*

Paul is CLEAR ... There is NOTHING more IMPORTANT we can DO in THIS LIFE than help someone ELSE get INTO HEAVEN through JESUS.

Keep it SIMPLE. INVITE someone to WORSHIP. “*BUT it’s DIFFERENT!*” SO? IF you are WAITING for NORMAL to RETURN BEFORE you LIVE your FAITH, you are WASTING NUMEROUS OPPORTUNITIES... Finally, #4 =

**#4 = TODAY is the Day to PREPARE for YOUR ETERNITY.**

The PARABLES we’ve looked at TODAY have SHOWN, there is NO GUARANTEE for TOMORROW. Let’s USE TODAY! IF you have decided to just PUT it OFF and LIVE for YOURSELF for NOW, and MAYBE LATER get things RIGHT with God ... you’ve been LIED to! One of SATAN’S greatest WEAPONS is to CONVINCe YOU there’s PLENTY of TIME. We are REMINDED by GOD that TODAY is the DAY ... 2 CORINTHIANS 6:2 = *For God says, “At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.” Indeed, the “right time” is now. Today is the day of salvation.*

Are you WAITING for the “RIGHT TIME” ... it is NOW! Listen, I’ve heard all kinds of EXCUSES for NOT FOLLOWING JESUS. “*I need to get my LIFE in ORDER FIRST...*” NO. That is GOD’S JOB! Or “*I’m GOOD ENOUGH. I don’t NEED JESUS*” JESUS = “*I am the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE and NO ONE goes to the FATHER / HEAVEN without Me...*”

Some are AFRAID of what their FAMILY / FRIENDS might THINK. How FOOLISH to CARE MORE about what THEY THINK than for YOUR ETERNITY (and eventually theirs).

“*Failing to PREPARE is PREPARING to FAIL*” ... No where more important than in our ETERNITIES! JESUS has done EVERYTHING necessary on the CROSS. WHEN will you BELIEVE? Jesus says this about himself ... MATTHEW 13:45-46 = *“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. 46When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!”* CC!

Searching for something? Meaning? Purpose? Jesus IS the PEARL. You have FOUND IT! It is JESUS! And you can be PREPARED for ETERNITY TODAY. Turn from your SINS and FOLLOW JESUS ... ACTS 16:31a = *They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved,*

Let’s Pray!

Next Steps:

*Memorize Matthew 25:13.*

*Read Luke 16 and/or Matthew 13.*

*Prepare for my eternity by believing in Jesus for the first time today.*

## Hosting (Closing)

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at Back Roads... Glad you've been here with us!

- Or NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**)
- You can drop that card in the offering basket.

### **IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today**

- We are so glad you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you.

It's this book "**UNSHAKABLE**" and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS...

- all you need to do is **HIT "SEND"** your COMPLETED Connection Card

+++++

- I just want to remind you that ... STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP ... we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... AND it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!
- STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... **ACTS 16:31a = They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved,**
- FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the 1<sup>st</sup> place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! I get paid ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!
- God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!
- As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.
- **MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?!
- Next Week: **The GREATEST STORIES EVER TOLD ... RADICAL COMPASSION!**

"God **whispers** to us in our pleasures, **speaks** in our conscience, but **shouts** in our pains: it is His **megaphone** to rouse a deaf world." — C.S. Lewis

*"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."*  
Special thanks to Andy Stanley, Nelson Searcy, and R.A. Pegram for outlines and ideas for this worship series.