

Worship Material
What is important and urgent now?
Materials from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 12th November

Begin with an opening prayer

Lord God, we feast upon your goodness.
You are our source of never-ending hope.
You are our helper, our redeemer.
We rejoice in you.
Our hearts are full of your love for us,
and we brim with joyful expectation
as we glorify your holy name.

Amen.

Read Matthew 25.1:13

Bible notes

In Matthew's arrangement of Jesus' last days, Jesus has spent some time speaking out against the religious leaders who are leading people astray, lamenting the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which is God's dwelling place, and talking about the 'end of the age', noted elsewhere in today's readings as the 'day of the Lord'. Having spoken of persecution, war, famine and earthquake, he warns his hearers to be ready for what will come. Today's parable of the bridesmaids illustrates the need for this.

The role of bridesmaids in weddings at that time was to escort the bride and groom to the place where the wedding and feast would take place. Following the feast, which would last well into the night, the bridegroom would take his bride to his parents' house, where the bridesmaids would await their arrival and escort them, with lamps, to the bridal chamber. At a surface level, then, this parable tells of the bridesmaids who prepared to carry out their role by ensuring they had plentiful oil to wait for the end of the feast, and those who were unprepared, ran out of oil and so missed out. Oil is sometimes used to symbolise righteousness, or living in keeping with the kingdom. In this picture of the kingdom of heaven, there is a great celebration of God's kingdom. Jesus, the bridegroom, arrives (returns) for the celebration, and only those who have lived fruitful lives as God's people are ready for him. For the others, it is too late.

Jesus tells several stories highlighting that the timing of his return is unknown: like a thief in the night, like a master returning from a long trip, like waiting for

a bridegroom – or in today’s world might that be a bride? – to arrive, the timing is not made clear. It is necessary to always be ready.

Prayer

A prayer of confession and commitment

Forgive us, Lord, for our complacency:
for putting off until tomorrow what needs to be done today;
for failing to prepare, relying instead on the generosity of others; for not turning to you, but seeking a quick fix, only to be let down; for neglecting the needs of others or lacking commitment;
and for all the times we’ve let you down.
Lord God, forgive us.

Help us to live a better life of faith, and to be more disciplined, to discern and respond to opportunities made available to us, to give hope, encouragement and comfort to those in need. May our lives reflect you and bring others to you before time runs out and we miss out on heaven’s banquet.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Go now from this place.
Be alert to needs – your own, and those around you.
Be agents of the change you pray for.
Always be ready to meet Jesus.

Amen.