

I. Introduction

- A. Let's get right into God's Word today, the Bible. By the way, can I say a word about the Word, a word about the Bible? And I want to say this, because I've had some conversations with different Christians and pastors even over the last few weeks, and I get a knot in my stomach whenever I hear the written, inerrant, perfect Word of God being diminished.
- B. Here's what I want to say; here's where we plant our colors, here's what we claim as a truth worth fighting for.
- C. We believe the Bible is the written Word of God, and it is the supreme and final authority for what we believe and how we live. No other word from God, no hunch, no impression, no dream, and no vision is even in the same league as the Bible. Our denomination, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, states that same truth this way:
 - 1. "The Old and New Testaments, inerrant as originally given, were verbally inspired by God and are a complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men. They constitute the divine and only rule of Christian faith and practice."
- D. I think it's important to go back over and over again to first principles. Because once you demote the Bible, even a little, then anything goes among the people of God. And sincere people will follow anybody who says, "God said..."
- E. There's an old hymn that says this:
 - 1. How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He has said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?
- F. The Holy Spirit doesn't contradict Himself. If He's going to say something to you today, it will be in perfect harmony and alignment with Scripture. If it doesn't align with Scripture, it's false. If it does align with Scripture, it's redundant so stick with Scripture.
- G. The worst thing that can happen is when people who don't know the Scriptures deeply start following any other word from God sacrificially. They have no standard by which to evaluate that word from God, because they have set God's Word on the back burner in order to bring man's word or woman's word to the front.
- H. Never teach people who are unfamiliar with Scripture to trust their instincts, because their instincts haven't been trained to discern good and evil (Heb 5:13-14)
- I. We love all the family of God, even when we disagree. For us it is enough that God has spoken decisively, once for all, in His perfect, unchanging Word.
- J. And now, with that little rant, let's look at one of Jesus' weirdest parables.

II. God's Word for Today

- A. *1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.*
- B. *6 And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' 7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'*
- C. *10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' 12 But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming"* (Matthew 25:1-13, NKJV).

III. You, Inc.

- A. I told you it was a weird parable.
- B. Welcome to our fourth and final week in a series called You Inc. Everything you have, and everything you are, belongs to God. You're living on borrowed time. You're living on borrowed breath. You're living on borrowed money, borrowed intelligence, borrowed life.
- C. It ain't yours. It's God's, and it's all going back to Him someday.
- D. And what you've done with His stuff in this life gives shape to your eternity.
- E. You, Inc, is all about your bottom line. One day, God's going to detonate planet earth, explode this cosmos, and create a new one. And the big question we all have to answer is what's going to last forever? What kind of person do we need to be to make the most of eternity?
- F. When Jesus told this parable, He tucked the answer to that question into it. So let's work it backwards.

IV. The Party

- A. The parable ends with a party, a great wedding celebration. In Bible days, this would go on for up to seven days: food, drink, dancing, celebration.
- B. Jesus told a whole bunch of parables that ended with a party. Either you were in or out of the party:
 - 1. The Prodigal Son
 - 2. The Lost Coin
 - 3. The Lost Sheep
 - 4. The Wedding Banquet
 - 5. The Ten Virgins
- C. There are more, but you get the idea from Jesus that the Father's whole goal for the cosmos is a party. And that the greatest sin is joining the ranks of the Prodigal Son's Elder Brother and all the other cosmic party poopers of all time. We'll come back to that.
- D. There's a party, and some get in and some are left out. In fact, they can't get in, because v. 10 says "the door was shut." Again, this is a biblical custom. Because crowds would come to the door, and a servant was stationed there to only let in the invited guests and once the party started, that's it. Nobody else gets in.

- E. And I just want you to tuck away this little truth into your heart: nobody gets to tell God “maybe” forever. I mentioned that a couple of weeks ago.
- F. We’re all for thinking about God, and investigating Jesus, and checking out the claims of Christ. Think, debate, argue, but realize this: right now you have an open door, but one day that door will shut. And while you’re considering whether or not to give God the pleasure of your company forever and ever, don’t forget that a clock is ticking, and in effect, your NON-RESPONSE is a NEGATIVE RESPONSE.
- G. But you say, how could the bridegroom refuse entry to the five virgins just because they ran out of oil? Isn’t that kind of harsh?
- H. Let’s rewind to the beginning of the story.

V. The Virgins

- A. There are ten virgins. These would be something like bridesmaids, but they had a job besides just looking pretty.
- B. Since the wedding feast took place at night, they needed light. That light most likely came from torches. These would be rags tied to a stick and fueled by oil. Remember, no electricity. Someone has to keep the torches lit, and that was the job of these 10 virgins.
- C. They would hang out at the bride’s house. And then, without warning, the groom comes with his posse, and there’s a big fat Greek wedding dancing in the streets, escorting the bride and groom to their feast.
- D. And all the lighting comes courtesy the ten virgins, thank you very much.
- E. Now, let’s do some decoding.
 - 1. The groom, let’s say that’s Jesus.
 - 2. The bride, let’s say that’s all the people who have entered the family of God throughout the ages—let’s say that’s you and me. Now, when Jesus tells the story, He leaves the bride out, and I think there’s a reason. That is because we are the bride, but for this story, He needs us to play a different role. So He omits the bride, leaving us scrambling for our part, which would be...
 - 3. The ten virgins. That’s us.
- F. And notice, there are two kinds of virgins.
 - 1. Five are wise. The Greek word is phronimos (not, sophia, the normal word for wisdom). I love this, because while phronimos can mean sensible, and discerning, that’s not what I think it means here. The word also means to be in your right mind, to be a sane, rational person (Liddell and Scott’s Lexicon for this definition).
 - a) So I like the idea of “sane” here. Five virgins are sane.
 - 2. Five are foolish. The Greek word is moros, from which we get moron. It means dimwitted to the point of culpability. It’s not just about being ignorant of facts; it’s worse. It’s about willfully, stubbornly ignoring what you know to be true. The Strong’s Concordance even uses the word “blockhead.”
 - a) So five are sane, and five are morons.
 - 3. The five morons prove their moron-hood by taking their lamps, but not taking their oil says Jesus in verse three. The five sane people bring lamps with oil. This would mean they’re lugging around an extra five gallon bucket with lamp oil.
 - 4. So they all get to the bride’s house, and they’re chattering and snacking on Ritz crackers and cheese, sipping wine and they keep checking their watches for the groom. But he doesn’t show.
 - 5. No problem, because they make an overnigher of the deal, and one by one drop into sleep—ten women snoring, quite a picture, thank you Jesus.

VI. The Groom

- A. Jesus says in verse five the bridegroom was delayed. The problem is that’s not exactly what Jesus said in the original language. The passive voice gives you the idea that unexpected problems came up, and he couldn’t get to the bride’s house as soon as he intended.
- B. But the original Greek doesn’t say he was delayed (passive voice), it says he delayed (active voice). In other words, he took his own sweet time and his own sweet time was longer than the any of the virgins planned on.
- C. How many of you know that Jesus is taking His own sweet time? And how many of you resent Him for that?
- D. He’s taking His own sweet time . . .
 - 1. to heal your loved one.
 - 2. to get you that job.
 - 3. to win you the lotto.
 - 4. to sweep you off your feet with the person of your dreams.
 - 5. to end your addiction.
 - 6. to cure your depression.
 - 7. to come again and right the wrongs of this world.
- E. And I love that Jesus said this because, a) it feels so much like real life, and b) He takes full responsibility for the delay.
- F. Dear Christian who is waiting impatiently for Jesus to show up into a dreadful situation, please know this, there ain’t nothing holding Jesus back but Jesus. No foe can stop Him, no enemy surprises Him, no problem alarms Him, and no force delays Him.
- G. His delays are part of His plan, and His plan is timed out perfectly. And if Jesus has not yet come into your dark situation, then I would suggest: a) look deeper, because He’s probably there in ways you haven’t noticed; and b) keep your lamp lit, He’s coming in a big way someday soon.
- H. So the groom shows up, and the five morons realize what morons they’ve been.
- I. Thus begins the . . .

VII. Panic

- A. And this is where we start getting into the meat of You, Inc.
- B. The bridegroom shows up on his own schedule, and the virgins hurry to light their lamps.
- C. Five lamps—the sane ones—flare up nicely, and cast a beautiful glow over the wedding couple.

- D. But the other five lamps—the moron’s lamps—they light, get all smoky, and burn up the wick, because there’s no fuel. It looked like a torch, but it wasn’t a torch, it was just a dry rag wrapped on a stick.
- E. Now what is Jesus saying? He’s saying one of the big truths He’s said a hundred times before:
 - 1. God isn’t impressed with an outward religious appearance. You might look good and sound good. You might know all the Christian lingo. You might know how to make just the right noises when someone else prays. You can be an expert at religion and a failure at God. You are a torch with no fuel. When Jesus comes, you will flame up and burn out just as fast. You have no staying power because you have no reality.
 - 2. You’re a fake, a fraud, a hypocrite.
- F. And God loves you anyway, right? Didn’t you get an invitation to the party too? Didn’t He make you one of the honored torch-bearers?
- G. Please stick with me, because we’re building up toward the defining question of the whole parable, really the defining question of your whole life, especially of You Inc, your life as a steward of God’s stuff.
- H. So the five morons can’t light their lamps, and that leads to:

VIII. Pathetic whining

- A. *8 “And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’”*
- B. The five crazies race to the five normals and ask for oil.
- C. Now, if you were a good, spiritual, giving, self-sacrificing Christian, how would you have the five normals respond? I mean, honestly, wouldn’t you have them sharing their oil? Any kindergartener knows how to share. But that’s not the story Jesus tells and He makes the non-sharing sane people the heroes!
- D. I love it when Jesus blows our categories.
- E. *9 “But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’”*
- F. Are they mean or what?
- G. No, they’re not mean. The five sane virgins give the only answer they can give.
- H. Listen, because this is important and it sets up the mother of all questions, and I guarantee, I’m gonna make you squirm. But it’s good.
- I. **WHATEVER THE OIL REPRESENTS, IT REPRESENTS SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BE SHARED.**
- J. This commodity, whatever the oil stands for, by definition, can’t be shared. Now, follow a string of questions, and let’s see where we come out:
 - 1. What did the sane virgins tell the moron virgins to do?
 - a) Run to the quick mart and buy some of their own oil.
 - 2. So, what had the sane virgins done earlier so that they would have enough oil for the party?
 - a) They ran to the quick mart and bought some of their own oil. In other words, they had already done with they told the morons to do.
 - 3. When the sane virgins bought their oil earlier in the day, how did they probably pay for it?
 - a) With their own money.
 - 4. Where did they get their money?
 - a) From their jobs.
 - 5. Where did they get their jobs?
 - a) Ultimately, from God.
- K. When the sane virgins filled their torches with oil, and filled a five gallon bucket with extra fuel to light the party all night long, they were giving of themselves; they were dedicating their own resources to the party and the groom.
- L. In other words, they gave themselves to the groom and that is a quality no one can share. Either you do it for yourself, or you don’t do it at all, but nobody else can do it for you.

IX. The Mother of All Questions

- A. So this leads to the mother of all questions, the question that I said will make you squirm.
 - 1. **WHAT DID THE FAILURE TO OBTAIN OIL SAY ABOUT THEIR PERSONAL INVESTMENT IN THE GROOM?**
- B. It says they didn’t care about him.
- C. It says they cared more about keeping their money than pleasing their Lord.
- D. It says they didn’t invest in the groom’s priorities, instead they hoarded their treasures and time and talents for their own agenda.
- E. And here’s the funny thing: if they had only gotten into the party, they would have realized that no matter how much they spent on some stupid old oil, the groom gave it back to them a thousand times over in a party to end all parties, a party so extravagant that it would make headlines on all the tabloids at the grocery store today.
- F. But, no, they were too busy hoarding their little pennies, because they didn’t respect the groom.
- G. And when they finally woke up some poor shopkeeper, and whined enough for him to sell them some oil—proof, by the way, that they always could afford the oil in the first place, they just didn’t want to cough up the cash—when they finally got to the party, it was too late.
- H. And notice what the groom says:
 - 1. *11 “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ 12 But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’”*
- I. He does not say, I don’t love you. He does not say, I don’t approve of your works. He does not say, I hate you. He does not say, I never called you, I never died for you, and I never drew you to myself with cords of love.
- J. He says, I do not know you and the only reason I do not know you is because you never cared enough to know me.

K. It's about RELATIONSHIP, get it?

X. You Inc.

- A. And this brings us back to You, Inc. It's important for me as a pastor and for us on a church to operate on a firm footing, spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and financially.
- B. So every January, we spend some time talking about stewardship and finances.
- C. I want to read a Bible verse and then suggest a truth that might blow your mind:
- D. No, let me say the truth first, and then read the Bible verse.
 - 1. What you have with money, and with all your stuff, is a relationship, just as if it were a person.
 - 2. And that relationship with money will compete with every other relationship in your life.
- E. Jesus said:
 - 1. *24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24, NKJV).*
- F. Mammon means materialism. God isn't against you having money, He's against materialism: you loving money, and loving it more than you love Him.
- G. And isn't that exactly what the crazy virgins did?
- H. And isn't that why they got tossed on their fannies outside the celestial party?

XI. My worst story

- A. So I have a confession, and it embarrasses me. This is probably the worst story I've ever told on myself, but here goes.
- B. Many years ago, some friends of mine went to Irian Jaya, a big mass of islands, as missionaries. Before they went, they gave me power of attorney, and asked me to watch over their bank accounts and money and property. They would be out of contact and not have internet or phones, so I took care of stuff.
- C. So I had their checkbook, and their bills came to my house, and I paid their bills and watched over their stuff.
- D. This, by the way, was before I was married to Margi, but I was already a pastor.
- E. Then one day, I needed some tires, and didn't have enough money to pay for them. So I wrote a check from my missionary friend's account to pay for my tires.
- F. Horrible, right?
- G. But then I did it again and again. And I paid for food. And a TV, and all kinds of stuff I couldn't afford. I always meant to pay it back, but I did all that without their permission.
- H. I know, I know how could you ever have me as your pastor?
- I. I loved their money more than I loved them.
- J. I valued my relationship with money and stuff more than I valued my relationship with these good people, these self-sacrificing missionaries.
- K. One day, I started adding it up and it came to over \$6,000, and they were coming back to the States, and I couldn't pay them back. And I freaked out.
- L. I had a meeting with them, and I just didn't know how to tell them, so when they came back to the states, do you know what I did?
- M. I avoided them. I made it impossible for them to reach me. I pulled away. I stalled. I didn't answer phone calls. I ignored them—all the while faking like I was good Christian.
- N. Isn't that story horrible?
- O. Wouldn't that make me the biggest jerk in the whole world? I mean I should absolutely burn in hell for that.
- P. It would be horrible, and it would make me the biggest jerk in the world IF IT WERE TRUE, BUT IT'S NOT TRUE.
- Q. I made it up. Really, the whole story is all made up; it never happened, none of it.
- R. But I tell you this story to make this point:
 - 1. Jesus Christ, who loved you to death, gave you His checkbook, and went away.
- S. Who do you love more: Jesus, or His checkbook?

XII. Conclusion

- A. He's coming back, and you're going to sit down with Him—did you by faith invest your life in Him and His agenda or in you and your agenda. Was your life about the kingdom of God or about plasma TV's, and bass boats, and hardwood floors, and nice clothes?
- B. You, Inc. is ultimately about relationship. Do you know Jesus? Do you know who He is? Do you have any clue of who you are in Him? Do you really understand the riches of His grace? Do you believe all that He stands ready to do in and through you? Do you know His love, His mercy, His grace, His power? Does your heart beat for Jesus; does your love for God flow out of a deep knowledge of His love for you?
- C. I could stand here and tell you how to get out of debt. I could stand here and teach on tithing. I could stand here and explain how to be a steward of your time, your talents, and your treasures.
- D. I would rather stand here and tell you that you have a Savior who loves you, and whose provision for every day of your life will be perfect. You have a Savior who will outspend you a million to one, and anything you invest in your relationship with Him will come back to you countless times over.
- E. He's left you His checkbook.
- F. Manage it with Him in mind: the quality of your life in heaven depends on it.
- G. Manage it with Him in mind: That is sanity.
- H. Anything else is just plain crazy.

