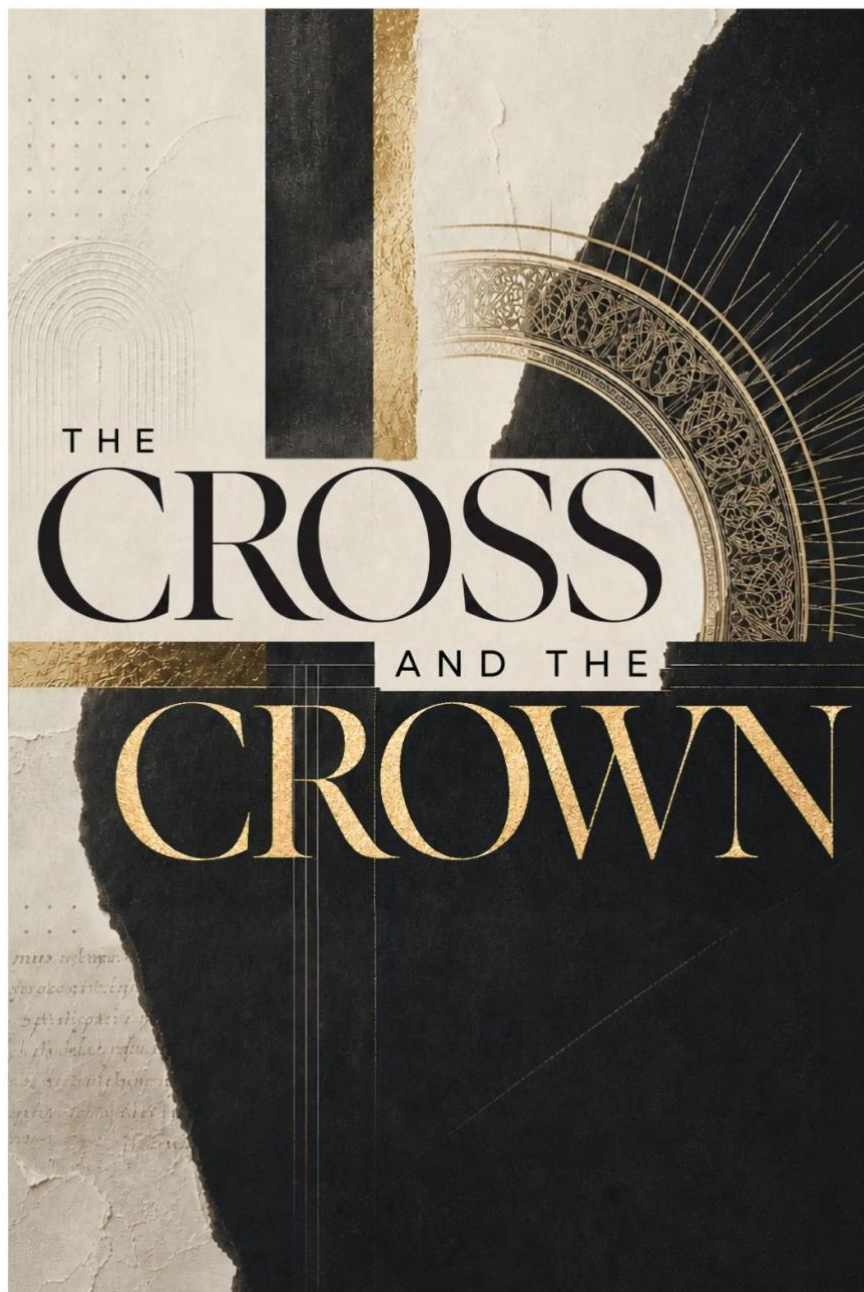


WORD TO LIFE // WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL



MATTHEW 24:1 - 25:13
WEEKS 1-4



Word to Life studies are sermon-aligned study guides, created to help the church dive even deeper into the passages we study together on Sundays.

Each week there will be five studies to help you prepare for the upcoming weekend sermon. This will also be a great discussion tool at your next LifeGroup meeting.

We hope you enjoy and grow deeper in your faith!

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Week 1: Matthew 24:1-14

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 24:1-14

Instructions: Spend time reading Matthew 24:1-14 and complete the activities and questions below.

Activity: While reading, include some observations in the space below.

Question: Why was the destruction of the Jewish temple so significant for the Jewish people?

Question: If you were a disciple, would you want to know when the end is coming? Why do you think the disciples were interested in asking Jesus this question?

Question: Do you think that verse 5 means that people will be claiming to be Jesus specifically or just “the chosen one”?

Question: Why do you think so many people are alarmed when Jesus says that we are not to be alarmed?

Question: What is the significance of birth pains?

Question: Why do you think that all nations would hate the followers of Christ?

Question: What does Jesus mean when He says that the gospel will be proclaimed throughout the whole world?

Activity: Read Luke 21:5-24 and write down the similarities and differences.

Week 1: Matthew 24:1-14

Day 2: How did we get here? What is next?

READ: Matthew 24:1-14; Revelation 21:1-4

EXPLORE:

We've been studying the book of Matthew for quite a while, so let's recap a little. Jesus is on the scene, now in Jerusalem, and is nearing the end of His 3 years of public ministry. He has gathered His 12 apostles, traveled across the country performing miracles (healing the multitudes, feeding the five thousand) and Matthew has spent many chapters of his Gospel account recounting Jesus' teaching in the form of parables (rich young ruler, the wedding feast). Tensions have been increasing between the religious leaders and Jesus as they debate His authority, His power to perform miracles, and the truth of His teachings. The Pharisees (nationalists, lovers of the law) and the Sadducees (only believed the first 5 books of Moses, held political power) rarely agreed on much, but their combined forces against Jesus gave them power and influence. Not to mention challenges with His own disciples, who are still wrestling with understanding who Jesus is and often miss the point of His teachings. Jesus has begun predicting His death and resurrection, but no one has caught on to the meaning.

There are a few bright spots along the way as Peter declares Jesus as the Christ and Jesus has a triumphal entry into the city. But Jesus' cleansing of the temple and ensuing accusations of the religious leaders brings the pot to a boil. They have unsuccessfully tried many clever ways to trap Him in words and get Him to speak blasphemous things, but Jesus knowingly confronts them with undeniable truth and authority. This only fans the flame of their anger towards Him and they seek to kill Him.

Jesus' recent teachings have focused heavily on the kingdom of heaven and how that future shapes how we ought to live. Jesus warns of the seriousness of the temptations of this world and how

we ought to attack it and repent. Despite the appeal of riches on earth, Jesus reveals that they pale in comparison to the treasure of eternal life and following Him. He shakes up the expectations we may have for heaven by inverting the status quo – saying "the first will be last and the last will be first" – calling us to sacrifice power, riches, and even self for the kingdom.

We left off at the start of summer with Jesus' vehement rebuke of the religious elite and then His compassionate lament over a stubborn, unrepentant Jerusalem. The Lord desires the hearts of His creation but justice must come for those who will not turn and glorify Him.

Matthew 24 begins with Jesus' prediction of the end times. He does not paint a pretty picture... but He does remind us of two things: one, we must always be ready, but not alarmed or negligent. And secondly, that there is hope. Verses 13-14 say, "the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world...and the end will come". There is a present hope in Jesus, a future hope in the advancement of the gospel, and an ultimate hope in knowing that these tribulations will come to an end. Jesus' knowledge of these things proves His omniscience and reminds us that He is Lord over all, soon to make a new heaven and a new earth. Tribulations will come but we can remain steadfast in the midst of any chaos by remembering who is Lord.

BIG IDEA: Followers of Jesus are called to be alert and place their hope in the one true God who will sustain us until the end. The treasures of heaven outweigh any earthly treasure or trial.

APPLY:

- **Challenge:** Spend some time thinking about Jesus' call for us to be alert but not alarmed with regards to end times.

Week 1: Matthew 24:1-14

Day 3: The Birth Pains of the Messiah

READ: Matthew 24:1-9

EXPLORE:

In verse 8 we have Jesus using the phrase *beginning of birth pains*. The expression itself is found in verse 8, but it was a common belief in intertestamental Judaism that before Messiah would come there would be a period of anguish, of birth pains; just as the period before a birth is characterized by anguish, so the pain that occurs before Messiah's arrival would be followed by joy at Messiah's arrival. But what does Jesus mean? These are not specifically end-time events, but events that would happen throughout history for which His disciples must be prepared. Whereas this discourse does contain important knowledge about the end times, there are repeated exhortations of how to live in light of that reality.

Between 1936 and 1944, there were numerous books published that proved conclusively that the Lord's return was impending. And it was based, in part, on identifying Mussolini with the Antichrist and in the other part due to the sheer cataclysm of the war that was being experienced in the first half of the 20th century (70 million killed in WWII and another 20 million killed under Stalin). But Christ did not return!

What then are the essential characteristics of this period? First, Jesus tells us that there will be international rivalries (**verse 6**). Every now and then, we hear on the radio or see on TV some preacher, of exuberant mold, who uses these two texts to prove that the Lord's return must be near. But these verses prove exactly the opposite: that the end is not near – that is what the text says: '*See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, **but the end is not yet.***' (**Matthew 24:6**) Jesus characterized the *entire* period as one in which nations will rise

against nations, wars and rumors of wars, we ought not to think that these are characteristic of the period *just before* the end and therefore surely the Lord must be on His way. Because Jesus himself says these things must take place – but the end is not yet.

The second characteristic of the world at large during this period is that natural disasters will be plentiful. We read in **verse 7**: *There will be famines and earthquakes in various places*. Several conclusions can be reached from these few verses. In the first place, Jesus himself presupposed a substantial delay between his two advents. You don't have nations rising against nations, many earthquakes and many wars and many famines all taking place in a span of 30 seconds, or 6 months. The burden of Jesus' argument to this point is that this period would be characterized by all kinds of natural disasters and wars and they will go on and we should not understand them to be anything other than the beginning of birth pains, nothing more. The burden of the passage so far is that there will be a considerable delay and that we should not therefore pant too eagerly for his return. This is the case precisely because the kingdom has been only inaugurated. The kingdom is not yet here in its fullness. There will be opposition, there will be hatred, the devil will have large play. The kingdom of Christ will be contested by the kingdom of the evil one. The point is not to curb enthusiasm that Jesus is returning but rather to warn against false expectation of an early return.

BIG IDEA: Jesus wants us to be faithful in the midst of persecution knowing that this is in God's plan for the advancement of His kingdom.

APPLY:

- **Question:** How are you laboring to advance the kingdom of God in this interval of the 'birth pains' of the Messiah?

Week 1: Matthew 24:1-14

Day 4: Salvation That Endures to the End

READ: Matthew 24:1-14

EXPLORE:

Do you find joy in suffering? Do you smile and feel happy when one of your kids is throwing a fit in a restaurant? What about when your boss tells you the company is downsizing and you're out of a job? How about a close friend or family member that you no longer speak to due to division in the relationship? One of the most difficult teachings in Scripture is found in James 1, which says to "consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds." When I think of joy, I tend to think of fun – like playing golf on a beautiful mountain course or spending an evening eating dinner with family and friends. Going through difficult trials, having my patience tested, experiencing suffering, and having a joyful attitude in the midst of it all – that is tough! In our focal passage, Jesus is answering a question from His disciples. They've asked about when judgment will come from God and what the signs of the end of the age will be. He has said that sometime after He leaves them (John 16:5-7) and before the end comes (Revelation 19:11-15), many presumed followers of Jesus will fall away. Moral chaos will increase, and Christian love will seem to fade out of the world (Matthew 24:3-12). This leads to a hotly debated statement found in Matthew 24:13, which says, "But the one who endures to the end will be saved." What is the connection between *enduring* and being *saved*? Will some believers actually lose their salvation? How do we know if we will endure? All good questions I will try to address briefly. In this passage, *enduring* means to persevere under trials by holding fast to one's faith in Christ. That makes sense, but what if we fail along the way to endure? We must understand that salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Because it only comes by grace, it is also held in grace. Grace is a gift, not something we earn. Therefore, our salvation is held outside of our ability to

endure. Our salvation is not dependent on our endurance, but our endurance gives evidence of our sincere faith. Suffering tests our faith and builds our endurance, but it does not change the status of our salvation. The truth is that we all, like sheep, have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6). Peter denied Jesus three times. We all fail, at times, to endure. The real question here is this: Is your trust in Jesus Christ and what He accomplished on the cross and in His resurrection? Have you received the forgiveness of your sins by confessing your need for Jesus as your Savior? If the answer is yes, you are saved by grace and your salvation will endure to the end. As a believer, understand that you will experience suffering. During these times, the call is to endure this suffering by keeping your eyes focused on Jesus.

BIG IDEA: Salvation is by grace alone.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Have you trusted in Jesus for your salvation? If so, share that experience with a friend. If not, take time now to confess your life of sin to God and receive the gift of salvation in Jesus. Then tell a fellow believer.
- **Question:** If you answered yes to the above question, have you been baptized as a public profession of your faith? This is a commandment. If you have not, this is your next step. Please sign up for the next baptism class today.
- **Question:** Have you experienced a trial or temptation that has led you away from trusting in Jesus? Have you confessed that sin to God and asked for forgiveness? If not, take time to do so now and commit to endure as you experience the next trial or temptation. Share this with a trusted friend and ask them to pray for you as well.

Week 1: Matthew 24:1-14

Day 5: Christ Has Come

READ: Matthew 24:1-14

EXPLORE:

In 2010, our family arrived in Mongolia in the middle of the night. Being so tired from travelling, we were neither choosy nor observant and quickly fell asleep in a rented room with no windows. But when I woke up thirsty, I could not find the door in the pitch darkness. Waving my arms out in front of me and taking small steps, I tripped over some suitcases and landed on the floor. I was about to give up when I saw a small glow from under the door. What a relief! I moved towards it. The disciples must have felt something similar in this passage, trying to feel their way along the dark and unfamiliar shapes of the end times territory that Jesus was describing. They might have been disorientated and daunted by the persecution He promised. They might have wanted to give up before they even started. But, faintly in verse 13 and 14, a glow of hope makes them see what they must do, what they must move towards: Stand firm and preach the gospel of the kingdom! What is “this gospel of the kingdom” that Jesus was telling His disciples to preach? What is “this gospel of the kingdom” that we had gone to Mongolia to preach? Hebrews 9:28 summarizes it like this: **Christ came the first time to take away the sins of many, and he will appear a second time to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.** Naturally, no one likes waiting, and in verse 3 of today’s passage, the disciples ask when these things will be. Jesus’ answer is a vague one. The end will come only *after* this gospel of the kingdom is preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations.

Having established “what” they should preach and until “when” they should preach it, Jesus seems to give a reason “why” they should preach it: as a testimony to all nations. In court, eyewitness testimony helps establish facts and build credibility. In

world missions, Christ followers do the same! When we leave our relatively easy lives to share Jesus around the globe, we establish the fact that heaven is our ultimate home, and testify that we truly believed that the home we *most* long for is heaven! We give credible testimony about the transformative power of the Spirit of God living in us by allowing people to see how we deal with challenges and changes. We might trip up in the dark and fall over our suitcases, but we must go to dark places to share the light of the kingdom!

As David opined in Psalm 72 a thousand years before Jesus, and as Isaac Watts wrote in 1719, and as we continue to sing until Christ's second coming:

Jesus shall reign wherever the sun
does its successive journeys run,
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.

BIG IDEA: Though Jesus' words about the end times were frightening, there is good news that we are eager to tell: Christ has come, Christ has risen, Christ will come again. This is the gospel of the kingdom that has been spread to almost every nation, just as He predicted. Still, not every nation has heard the good news, and despite the darkness, we must stand firm and preach!

APPLY:

- **Question:** Are you willing to endure earthly darkness to help the nations see a heavenly kingdom?
- **Challenge:** Get out a map, place your hand on one region, and pray that the Lord will send His gospel light into that place. Consider going there or helping the church go there.

Week 2: Matthew 24:15-31

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 24:15-31

Instructions: Spend time reading Matthew 24:15-31 and complete the activities and questions below.

Activity: While reading, include some observations in the space below.

Question: What is the abomination of desolation?

Question: Who are “the elect”?

Question: If there are warnings about not being led astray by people who perform signs, why do you think so many people still ask the Lord for signs?

Question: How could “the elect” be led astray?

Question: How literal should we take phrases such as “lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west”?

Questions: Why would all the tribes of the earth mourn when seeing Christ? What does that describe about Christ’s second coming experience?

Activity: Read Revelation chapters 8-11 and write down what happens after each trumpet is blown. Is there a trumpet that corresponds to the trumpet Jesus mentions in Matthew 24, or no?

Week 2: Matthew 24:15-31

Day 2: The Coming(s) of Christ

READ: Matthew 24:15-31

EXPLORE:

The discussion of Jesus' return elicits many different emotions. There are a lot of unknowns around the subject, and the unknown can often lead to fear, anxiety, or avoiding the topic. However, the Scripture does not avoid it, so we should not either. We can learn more about Christ through this portion of Scripture, and for that reason we should instead study and ponder what is revealed. Thankfully, Jesus has already come once, so it may be helpful to compare and contrast His first and second coming. Starting with a similarity, both Jesus' first and second coming were prophesied about and long-awaited. The first prophecy of Christ's coming is seen in Genesis 3 and was waited on for over 4,000 years. Now we read in our passage that Jesus prophesies His second coming, and now, approximately 2,000 years later, we wait. Now to explore differences: when Jesus came first, He was slow to reveal His identity as Christ. He came humbly, born in a manger, and throughout the Gospels, He tells followers not to share about the works He performs or who He is. In contrast, when Jesus comes again, there will be no question about who He is or what He is coming to do. As revealed in this passage He will come in glory. Jesus' second coming will not be mistaken or missed. Not only will His approach be different, but the world's response to Jesus' first & second coming will be very different. The first time, Jesus came as a suffering servant to be sacrificed for us. He was rejected and eventually crucified. His second coming will be as sovereign king to judge, to defeat evil, and to establish His eternal kingdom. Another difference is Jesus' mission for His believers. When Christ is preparing to leave the Earth, He *sends out* His followers, calling them to go & make disciples of all nations. This calling applies to us now, in the waiting for His second coming, when He will *gather up* believers to be with Him eternally. That

brings us to our final difference: the Kingdom Christ comes to establish. Our very first series title when we started studying Matthew (yes, it was back in 2024!) was Kingdom, and we talked a lot about the “upside down” kingdom that Jesus came to establish when He walked the Earth. This is the Kingdom we live in now, one where we are called to be the lowly & meek. To sacrificially serve those around us so as not to put our hope in this world which will pass away. This kingdom we live in now in which we are still daily weighed down by sin in and around us. However, when Jesus comes again, He will establish a new Kingdom, right-side up. In a world that is no longer seeped in sin, the righteous (not of their own righteousness, but made righteous by Christ) will rule alongside Christ. There will no longer be warnings against laying up treasures where moth & rust destroy (Matt 6:19) because He will establish the new earth and new heaven. And this kingdom is worth every investment because it is eternal. There are many details we can’t be sure of regarding the end times and Christ’s second coming, but this is not new. Jesus’ first arrival was preceded by confusing prophecy and awaited with uncertainty, yet the Lord’s plan was more incredible than anyone could have imagined. In the same way, we wait. We wait in uncertainty, but we do not have to wait in anxiousness, knowing that Jesus fulfilled every promise of His first coming and will do the same in His second.

BIG IDEA: We should use our knowledge of Jesus’ first coming and our understanding of prophecy of His second to eagerly anticipate His arrival.

APPLY:

- **Question:** What worries you most about Christ’s second coming? What excites you most?

Week 2: Matthew 24:15-31

Day 3: The Abomination of Desolation

READ: Matthew 24:15-31

EXPLORE:

I (Stephen) may not have heard the professor's instructions, but I certainly heard my classmates' response when my name was called. Only a few minutes before, the professor informed the class that we would be assigned a chapter in a Gospel Account to memorize, to recite, and to perform a rhetorical analysis verbally. It seemed straightforward. Get a chapter, memorize, recite, and explain. It was all so simple until I was startled back to reality by the reaction of my peers. My name was just called, "Kimpel... you'll be memorizing and explaining Mark's Account of the Olivet Discourse. That is Mark 13." The audible reaction of my classmates made sense. I was intimidated. Memorizing and reciting was one thing, but it was quite another thing to confidently explain a text that has puzzled some of the most intelligent and typically aligned Bible scholars. More than a decade removed from that seminary classroom, and I am still humbled by and in awe of the brilliance of Jesus' teaching. Matthew's Account, as with Mark's and Luke's, is a wondrous, complex, and powerful moment in the ministry of Jesus. As a Word to Life Team, we've been trying to break down the passage and focus on particular bite-size portions each day. Today, we are going to take a brief look at Jesus' reference to Daniel's prophecy concerning what is called the "Abomination of Desolation." Let's take a look. Jesus' reference to the abomination of desolation is explicitly tied to the context of Daniel. In Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11 there are varying references to a vile profaning of what is sacred that runs hand-in-hand with destruction or desolation. In each of Daniel's references to the abomination of desolation, there is a disruption or distortion of a right worship that belongs to God alone. The temple is desecrated. Worship is violated. People are scattered as what was once whole is broken and what was full is left desolate. With the weight and severity of Daniel in mind, Jesus gives a severe warning about the abhorrent destruction that is going to take place. The question that students of the Scripture have long asked is, "What exactly is this abomination of desolation in history?"

Broadly speaking, there are opposite poles on a spectrum of interpretation. Some believe that Jesus is referring to the destruction of the temple which took place in AD 70. Proponents of this view claim this makes sense of Daniel's context and Jesus' response to one of His disciples' specific questions. Others view the abomination of desolation as an exclusively a future-oriented prophecy about a great deceiver and opposer of the church who is called the antichrist. Proponents of this view see the references to "he" and "him" in Daniel as a prophecy concerning events yet to unfold. Additionally, they see *the man of lawlessness* in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 as a future prediction that matches Jesus' teaching here with His disciples. Advocates of this perspective will often point to how prophecies have multiple so-called horizons from which the prophecy can be fulfilled and seen as such. In light of this conversation, there are still some who say, "Could it be both?" They might ask, "Could it be that the abomination of desolation is both a real reference to the temple's destruction in AD 70 and a real foreshadowing of an incredible opposition before Christ's second coming?" I am persuaded through the Gospels, the Pauline Epistles, and Revelation that this prophecy has been fulfilled in history and even still is awaiting a future fulfillment. I believe the answer to the "either/or" is "both" in this particular case. God can fulfill substantively what He has promised in history and even still foreshadow what is yet to come in our experience of time. I believe that is the case here. Now, for just a few sentences, let's emerge from the mist to see the gift of the Olivet Discourse. The point of Jesus talking about Daniel's prophecy is not so that we would be scared and it certainly is not to tell us that evil wins in the end. In fact, the point is the opposite. God is enthroned, evil has its limits, and the end is written. As a result, Christians participate in hopeful expectation, not hopeless speculation. Let's study humbly, pray fervently, and live diligently.

BIG IDEA: Understand the big picture, trust God with the details.

APPLY:

- **Question:** How can the Big Idea apply to your life today?

Week 2: Matthew 24:15-31

Day 4: The Elect

READ: Matthew 22:14

EXPLORE:

Our passage this week refers to “the elect” three different times. Such a seemingly simple term, but one that has been heartily debated, virtually since it was written! What did it mean? What does it mean? Am I one of the elect? Rather than running it through Google or ChatGPT, let’s first go to THE source. Let’s let Scripture interpret Scripture. The original word, *eklektos* (Strong’s G1588) is an adjective used only 22 times in the Greek New Testament in this form. It means selected, picked, or chosen. Depending on the translation you use, it is most often translated as “elect” or “chosen.” The authors of all 4 Gospels use this word, although John uses it only in his second letter, and in Revelation (not in the Gospel of John). Paul and Peter also use this word in their letters. James, Jude, and the writer of Hebrews are the only 3 (out of 9) New Testament authors that don’t use this specific word at least once. Jesus uses the word *eklektos* more than any other speaker in Scripture; Paul used it 6 times, Peter 4, John 3, and Jewish rulers once. *In parables*: The first time we see it is in Matthew’s account of the Parable of the Marriage Feast in 22:14. Jesus explains that the invitation of salvation is similar to a wedding invitation: many are invited; but ultimately, not everyone shares in the wedding feast. He also uses *eklektos* in a Parable on Prayer in Luke 18:7 mocking an unrighteous judge, saying “will God not bring about justice for His elect who cry out to Him day and night?” The next three times are in Matthew, and again, spoken by Jesus himself. [They are also repeated in Mark’s account.] In these uses (which are from our reading this week), Jesus explains very clearly that only His elect will be gathered together with Him when He returns. In Luke 23:35, the word is used in a mocking fashion, when the soldiers said, “He saved others, let Him save Himself if He is the Christ of God, His ‘Chosen’ One.” In Romans 8:33, Paul asks “Who shall bring charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.” In Titus 1:1, Paul introduces himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth.” In Timothy 5:21, Paul uses the word when referring to God’s chosen angels. (In contrast to the other angels (1/3) that chose to follow Satan

instead of God, according to traditional interpretation of Revelation 12:4). In other passages, like Romans 16:13, we are introduced to a man named Rufus, who was “chosen” in the Lord. In 2 John 1:1, John writes to a “chosen” lady and her children, and in verse 13, he refers to the children of your “chosen” sister. So, other than Jesus (the Chosen One), who are the elect? We know they are not just the 12 disciples, or even just the apostles that we read about in Scripture. Rufus is only mentioned twice, and the chosen lady and chosen sister aren’t even listed by name. Even 2/3 of the angels are referred to as chosen or elected...so, this term isn’t just reserved for mankind. Could elect simply mean ‘those that follow God?’ Could this word be a way to refer to what we now call “Christians?” Could His “chosen” people be those that have accepted His free gift of salvation and picked up their cross to follow Him? If you’ve ever grown a vegetable garden, you didn’t plant it just for *some* of the vegetables to grow. You didn’t plant some vegetables just to watch them burn. Your intent, your hope, and your prayer was that the whole garden should flourish. So, when the harvest comes, which ones will you select to take home with you? All of them? Of course not. You will choose/select/elect to harvest the ones that are ready for the purpose of the harvest. In a similar way, eklektos simply means ‘chosen’ or ‘selected.’ The word itself doesn’t tell us why something was chosen; only that it was chosen for a purpose.

BIG IDEA: God is love. God loves His people. Not all people love God.

APPLY:

- **Challenge:** Read Romans 1:16, 5:8, and 10:13, and John 3:16.
- **Question:** Based on the passages above, how does Scripture describe “the elect”? Who are they? Follow-up: For whom did Christ die? Whose blood did His sacrifice cover?

Week 2: Matthew 24:15-31

Day 5: End Times

READ: Matthew 24:15-31

EXPLORE:

When it comes to End Times, there are various approaches to Matthew 24:15-31 and the book of Revelation. The 4 basic views are Preterist, Historic, Futurist, and Allegorical (Idealist).

The Preterist View: This view holds that the descriptions in Matthew and Revelation were fulfilled during the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

- Abomination of desolation: The Roman armies desecrated the temple.
- Great tribulation: The siege of Jerusalem and persecution of Jews and Christians.
- Coming of the Son of Man: Christ's judgment on Jerusalem and Israelites, not the final second coming of Christ.

The Historical View: This view holds that the descriptions in Matthew and Revelation have been unfolding throughout church history.

- Abomination of desolation: corruption entering the church and its theology.
- Great Tribulation: Extended periods of persecution during the Roman Empire, medieval era, and modern-day persecution by Roman Catholics, communists, and Islamists.
- Coming of the Son of Man: The final Second Coming after centuries of fulfillment.

The Futurist View: This view holds that the events described in Matthew and Revelation have not yet occurred but will take place in the future.

- Abomination of desolation: Antichrist will be involved with a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and claim to be God.

- Great Tribulation: A literal seven-year tribulation will take place in the future.
- Coming of the Son of Man: Jesus will return bodily and visibly to the entire world.

Allegorical (Idealist) View: This view holds that Matthew and Revelation are symbolic depictions of spiritual realities rather than literal events.

- Abomination of desolation: Worldly ideas and agendas will infiltrate Christian theologies and church.
- Great Tribulation: Ongoing suffering of the church from the world in various forms throughout history.
- Coming of the Son of Man: Jesus will return literally, but the preceding events are symbolic patterns.

BIG IDEA: Some believers strongly hold to one of these views while others embrace a blended perspective. Yet all these views ultimately point to the same central truth: Jesus will return, evil will be judged, and the everlasting Kingdom of God will be established. The Bible speaks about the End Times not so that we can predict the exact moment or become dreadful about a dark future, but to give Christians hope, confidence, and a desire to prepare.

APPLY:

- **Question:** How are you preparing for the second coming of Jesus?
- **Challenge:** Write down one way you will prepare for Jesus' second coming and ask the Spirit to enable you to follow through.

Week 3: Matthew 24:32-51

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 24:32-51

Instructions: Spend time reading Matthew 24:32-51 and complete the activities and questions below.

Activity: While reading, include some observations in the space below.

Question: What is Jesus' main point about learning from the fig tree?

Question: Which generation was Jesus talking about and have all of those things taken place?

Questions: Why do you think the Son did not know the day nor the hour? Do you think that Jesus still does not know or that He only did not know while on earth?

Question: What can we learn from the days of Noah that apply to our time today?

Question: Why do you think Jesus uses people who are at work to illustrate His point? Why do you think He describes both men and women?

Question: What does it look like for us to “stay awake” for the Lord’s coming?

Question: What are we called to be doing in preparation for Jesus’ second coming?

Activity: Write down everything that you do that would not honor Christ if He were to return in those moments. Repent and pray for God to reveal to you what you could be doing instead.

Week 3: Matthew 24:32-51

Day 2: Being Found Faithful

READ: Matthew 24:32-51

EXPLORE: This section of scripture can feel a little ominous, filled with both certainty and uncertainty. Jesus has just shared with the disciples a series of warnings, and now He is doing what He does best, weaving in a parable and an example to help them make sense of the Old Testament prophets He's quoted. He wants them to be certain that the Son of Man is coming and yet reminds them that the exact details are unknown to them. Isn't it just like Jesus to ask us to hold fast to a foundational truth of what *will happen*, while trusting Him with the *how it's going to happen*. In this passage He shares both a parable of the fig tree, and an example of a master and servant, something they would all be very familiar with. Let's explore how Jesus talks about workers in these scriptures.

Jesus contrasts two types of servants in verses 45 – 51. He describes the first as faithful and wise, and the second as wicked. The first servant internalizes a deep understanding that the Master could show up at any time, and his job is to be found faithful in his duties. He asserts that this servant will be effectively promoted and put in charge of much. We'll see Jesus echo this in the weeks ahead when He tells the story of a faithful servant who had stewarded what he'd been given well and in turn is trusted with more. This servant continues to do the right thing, regardless of whether his master is physically present. The second servant takes advantage of his master's perceived absence. He selfishly does whatever he wants to whomever he wants, with no regard to the consequences. If he'd been born in the 1990's, you might have heard him proclaim, "YOLO!" His behavior reflected a "what feels good right now" mentality. Regardless, Jesus does not mince words about what the servant's master will do to him. He

calls him a hypocrite and says he will experience incomprehensible punishment.

As we wrap up today, I am reminded of the scripture in Colossians 3:23 that says, “Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.” All the spaces where we exist from our homes to our offices, as believers, we should strive to be examples of honest and God-honoring workers. We must spend our days with the acute awareness that what we do matters for eternity. Living lives that reflect the character of Christ, means that we continue doing what God has called us to do; that we neither abuse nor take for granted whatever power, responsibility or authority God has granted us. It may be employees or children, but our day-to-day activities should be a witness to those around us that not only does God see but He could come back at any moment. And when He does, may we be found faithful.

BIG IDEA: Every moment matters for eternity, and we must live in a way that we would be found faithful.

APPLY:

- **Question:** How often do you think about eternity?

- **Question:** What are some areas of your life that you’ve lived with more of a careless attitude than a faithful one?

- **Activity:** Take a minute and ask the Holy Spirit to show you areas of your own work, day-to-day life, where you can be found faithful.

Week 3: Matthew 24:32-51

Day 3: Jesus Christ the God Man

READ: Matthew 24:36; Philippians 2:5-11

EXPLORE:

Have you ever heard the phrase, “been there, done that”? Like if someone you knew was obsessed with skydiving and said, “You haven’t lived until you go skydiving! Come on let’s do it together. It’s scary but don’t be a wimp.” And in your mind, all you can think is, “been there, done that.” It probably used to be scary for you but once you experienced it, it was no big deal to you. That is what having a robust theology of the Christian faith can be like. At first, some may bring challenges to the faith that you have never heard of, but once you think about them and explore what Christians have said in the past those challenges fall flat. One common challenge to an aspect of the historic Christian faith is that Jesus is not God. An often touted “proof-text” for someone claiming Jesus is not God is that He did not know the day or the hour. That can be a gotcha, if you have never heard of it before, but hopefully after this WTL whenever you hear it, you can say, “no worries I know what to say; been there done that.”

The foundation of Christian theology is the Trinity. God is one essence and three persons. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. The objection raised about Jesus raises the question on if Jesus really is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. When a challenge to Jesus’ deity is raised, it is important to go to the texts that establish it in the first place. John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Jesus later is identified as the Word (John 1:14). Verse one states that Jesus is not God the Father and yet still God. Thus establishing the second person of the Trinity. But what about in Matthew? Well, Jesus was conceived from the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:21). He was called Immanuel meaning “God with us” (Matt 1:23). He is identified as God’s Son (Matt 2:15). John the Baptist is

said to prepare the way for God Himself (Matt 3:3). Jesus accepts the title of Lord from those seeking to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 7:21). He rebukes nature and listens to His voice instantly (8:26). Jesus forgives sins (Matt 9:6). Jesus claims to be the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8). He applies to Himself a prophecy about God (Matt 21:16). All authority is given to Him (Matt 28:18).

All of these verses only make sense if Jesus is actually God. So, what about the passage in question? How come Jesus didn't know? To answer we must go to Philippians 2:5-9 "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Jesus emptied Himself and became a man. In becoming a man, Jesus could limit His full power and ability. Yet, He never ceased being God. In His humanity, He did not know the day nor hour, despite possessing the ability as God. One reason He may have done this is to show us how to trust God when we do not know His timing.

This text in Matthew was no issue for the early church's view of Jesus. They understood that the overwhelming testimony of Scripture shows that Jesus is in fact God. When an objection against Jesus' deity arises, think back to what you read here and say, "been there, done that."

BIG IDEA: Jesus is God.

APPLY:

- **Question: Why does it matter that Jesus is both fully God and fully man?**

Week 3: Matthew 24:32-51

Day 4: Is the Rapture Real?

READ: Matthew 24:32-51

EXPLORE:

If you look at the recent history of the Church, eschatology has become much more about politics than proper biblical exegesis. Meaning that people like to grab a hold of a few concepts and parade them like slogans to show how silly other views are. One idea that some Christians like to make fun of is “the rapture”. They ridicule the idea mostly because of the Left Behind series, but almost never take the time to figure out what the Bible actually says about it. Believe it or not, all Christian traditions hold to a rapture. Why? The word is in Scripture! It is the Greek word *αρπαζω* (*arpazo*) found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and it means “to grab or seize suddenly.” And the verse is stating explicitly that this will happen to all believers. The question up for debate is not *whether* there is a rapture but *when* there is a rapture.

The passage for this week is relevant because it seems to describe a type of rapture—a snatching. Who will indeed be taken and who will be left? Due to Jesus’ many metaphors there is much debate over to what exactly He is referring to. In an attempt to be thorough over simple, all the main views will be represented.

- 1) This event refers to the snatching up of the Church to Christ before any future tribulation occurs.
- 2) This event refers to unbelievers being removed after the tribulation occurs, leaving only believers at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.
- 3) This event refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. where many were destroyed but a remnant was preserved.
- 4) This event refers to the final judgment of non-believers immediately preceded by the new heavens and new earth.

The question always must be asked as to how to decide between these views? Is eschatology even possible to understand? It is my (Brayden) opinion that most people do not want to take the time to look into these views and determine the merit of each of them. I understand the inclination to throw your hands up. It is difficult to understand how to judge between the different views because they are often understood paradigmatically. This means you have to figure out how your understanding of one passage fits into your understanding of another. You have to make your overall interpretation of what happens in the end work with many passages and verses that appear in very different parts of Scripture. For now, let's just try and stick in our passage. Jesus compares His return with the days of Noah. Meaning some will be saved and others destroyed. What makes the difference? Those who are waiting and are ready for the end.

Whichever view you take on this passage in Matthew it's important to note that Jesus' coming will be completely unexpected for many. This suggests that either there will be no apparent signs preceding His coming or people will be so blind that they still will not see signs right in front of them. Either way we should seek to be alert not based on what is happening around us but based on us following the commands given to us by Jesus. Do not seek to be alert by looking at the world but seek to be alert by looking at God's Word.

BIG IDEA: Be ready for the end by looking to Christ's Word.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Which view do you think is correct?
- **Challenge:** Write down 3 reasons why having a view on the end times could be important.

Week 3: Matthew 24:32-51

Day 5: Living a Ready Life

READ: Matthew 24:32-51; Genesis 6:11-7:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

EXPLORE:

I (Sarah Wilson) have been in the medical field since I was 17. This is grim, but I encountered my first dead body when I was 18. It was my prom date's father. Girls were on one side of the house, boys on the other, my parents were willing to let me spend the night because we were good kids. It was about 6 am when my friend woke me up and said something was wrong, and he needed me to hurry and come look. Delirious, I followed my friend and my prom date into his father's bedroom where a man I had just met the night before laid stiff as a board. I rushed to assess and knew there was nothing I could do, rigor mortis had set in. This event shaped me, and many more events that year, as I finished training for EMS and began work as an EMT just before college. Ever since, emergency preparedness has been a passion of mine. A friend asked me to throw her a birthday party once and said "you can do whatever, just make it fun". But, if you know me, I like to make grand events. I threw an emergency preparedness party. That may sound boring to you, but trust me, it is one of my all-time greatest parties I have thrown, ask me about it later. Here in the text Jesus continues to talk to the disciples, walking them through many signs and steps regarding the end times. In the verses we just read, Jesus uses Noah as an example and his readiness with the flood, highlighting as well, those who were not ready. How was Noah so ready for this disaster? Because God told him it was going to happen. He gave him instructions on the measures to take, step by step, every detail needed to keep himself, his loved ones, and God's creatures safe. Notice what information is not given initially...the exact day and time (he got one week's notice, he should have at least given him two!). Could you imagine being told this sudden and frightening news? But Noah was faithful to act just as God commanded him. He didn't push back,

make excuses, or freeze in fear and doubt, it was a calm and simple “yes, sir!” and he got to work. This parallel shows that God does not change the way He instructs us or warns us. God told Noah directly what was going to happen and gave him the tools and skills and instruction he needed, and He came through on His promise to protect and provide. God has not changed His methodology from the beginning of time, not in Matthew 24, and not even now. He may not speak to us one-on-one so directly to let us know His plans, but that’s because we have God’s Word to tell us! So how can we live a ready life? As a nurse, I maintain my training, keep up with new skills and knowledge, and perform mock codes. As Christians, we read God’s Word to know what He says about His return so we don’t fear, panic, or get confused or deceived. Daily, we should be praying for the lost, those we know and don’t know. We should partake in apologetics, practicing how to evangelize in today’s particular climate, and put forth effort to understand what God has said, and what He is doing now. My hope is that you are already aware of the critical status of those around you who do not know God. Daily they are on their deathbed. Will you tell them about the flood ahead, and invite them into security with Christ?

BIG IDEA: We can live a ready life by daily committing to know God’s Word, praying for others, and evangelism.

APPLY:

- **Question:** On a scale of 1-10, how familiar are you with what the Bible says about the end times? On a scale of 1-10, how afraid are you when you consider the end times?
- **Challenge:** Share your ratings with a close Christian friend of yours, and commit to learning more about God’s Word regarding the end times to gain a better understanding, and to obtain a spirit of sound mind, rather than of fear.

Week 4: Matthew 25:1-13

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 25:1-13

Instructions: Spend time reading Matthew 25:1-13 and complete the activities and questions below.

Activity: While reading, include some observations in the space below.

Question: Why do you think Jesus used a wedding to illustrate the second coming?

Question: Why do you think the foolish and wise were split evenly five each?

Questions: Why do you think five of the virgins took no oil with them? What do you think that could reasonably correspond to today?

Question: What is the significance behind the fact that they were all drowsy and slept?

Question: Why do you believe the wise ones could not help the foolish ones?

Question: Why do you think the bridegroom did not wait for the other virgins?

Questions: Why do you think Jesus had the bridegroom say, “Truly, I say to you, I do not *know* you”? What is the significance of Jesus saying “know”?

Activity: Write down three other versions of this parable in a way that someone in our culture might more easily understand.

Week 4: Matthew 25:1-13

Day 2: The Parable of the 10 Family Men?

READ: Matthew 25:1-13

EXPLORE:

This WTL is dedicated to all you fellas out there. The kingdom of heaven will be like 10 family men living in League City. There is a hurricane a couple of days out that the meteorologists predict will likely hit Corpus Christi, but the European model alone says there is a slight chance it might make a last minute turn towards Galveston. Therefore all 10 men dust off their generators just in case. Five men were wise and immediately filled up their gas cans while the other five decided to wait and see. At midnight that night all 10 men are awakened to those horrible siren noises from their phones with weather alerts that the hurricane made the turn overnight and was heading for Galveston. The five wise men were ready to fill up their generators and start them up when the power goes out while the five unwise men turn desperately to the wise men asking for gas from their cans. The wise answer saying, *'since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the gas station and buy for yourselves.'* Unfortunately the storm is too close and so they all return to their homes to safely wait out the storm. After the storm and the power is out, the unwise men take to the streets only to find that all the gas stations are boarded up and closed. When each unwise man returns home with an empty gas can, he finds a note from his wife saying that the A/C-deprived family has gone to stay with his mother-in-law and that he has to stay home to take care of the dog.

This week's actual parable is foreign to us, as our wedding rituals are very different. The parables that Jesus told made a lot of sense to his audience at the time. Thankfully with a good study Bible we can usually get the gist of how his original audience would have related to the story and don't need a hack like me (Michael) to attempt to modernize it. Hopefully you enjoyed my

attempt at modernizing the parable whether you were laughing with me or at me.

Today I ask you to focus on the behavior of the wise in our two parables. The wise represent those who are prepared for Jesus' second coming. They have repented of their sins and have placed their faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and I pray that is who you identify with in the parable. Notice that the wise virgins are not staring out the window, wide awake with anxiety, match in one hand and lamp in the other. They go to sleep just like the unwise, but with the comfort of knowing that they are prepared whenever the bridegroom arrives. While this parable does ask all to not put off accepting the gift of the Father's grace, we are not supposed to live our lives anxious as to when Jesus will return. The unwise sleep out of an ignorance of or unwillingness to accept the judgment that will one day befall them. The wise sleep with a faith that their sins have been forgiven and the eternity with the Father that they will experience at some point in the future. Live your life like the wise in these stories and lead others who are like the unwise to do the same.

BIG IDEA: Salvation should be sought assuming Jesus could return at any moment. Once you are prepared, do not be concerned as to the exact timing of when it will occur.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Does the thought of Jesus' return make you anxious? Is it because you doubt your own salvation? If so, seek out a mature believer to disciple you. Is it because you have loved ones that would fall into the "unwise" camp? If so, pray for them and opportunities for you to help lead them to salvation.

Week 4: Matthew 25:1-13

Day 3: Spiritual Oil

READ: Matthew 25:1-13

EXPLORE:

Delays often lead to complacency. The further out an event, the longer we put off the tasks necessary for it thinking we have all the time in the world. The bridegroom's delay in this passage reminds us of our waiting for Christ's return but, also, of our seasons of uncertainty or doubt. It is in these times that we tend to become drowsy, distracted, or lazy in our spiritual discipline. When we become frustrated or impatient, we tend to lose our vigilance in maintaining the very spiritual habits and rhythms that support our joy and intimacy with Christ.

This passage is filled with urgency and severity. Though the virgins waited and slept while the bridegroom was delayed, his arrival necessitated an immediate response. The foolish virgins who did not come prepared missed the wedding feast. The wise virgins were welcomed in and celebrated with the bridegroom. An interesting and important note about this passage is that both the wise and the foolish virgins fell asleep. They both grew weary, and both took needed rest. The sleep was not the issue; the issue was the lack of intentionality from the five foolish virgins who did not anticipate or prepare for the bridegroom.

Verse 13 says, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." We, too, are commanded to watch. We are to be vigilant and prepared. We know that Jesus is coming back and we must not only be ready for His return but prepare others as well. Ephesians 5:15-16 says, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil." If we are not careful, we will fall into complacency and wickedness because that is how the world around us

operates. We are not of this world, however, and are called to diligence and righteousness as we await Jesus' return.

What is our spiritual "oil" that needs tending to, needs preparation? Are we meditating on the Word, faithful in prayer, serving one another with joy, and bringing others into the knowledge of salvation? When you reflect on your past week or past month, is it clear that you are ensuring that you and everyone you meet are spiritually prepared for Christ's return? Or are you simply satisfied with your salvation and not interested in persevering until the end (Matt. 24:13)? The bridegroom's declaration of "I do not know you" to the very virgins that were selected for his bridal party should convict and challenge us to "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." We must remain steadfast, faithful, and prepared for what we know is promised to come.

BIG IDEA: Because we do not know when Christ will return, we must remain spiritually vigilant by faithfully preparing ourselves and those around us.

APPLY:

- **Question:** If Jesus returned in the next 5 minutes, what would He find occupying your time, thoughts, and priorities?
- **Question:** Are you actively pursuing Christ in your daily life or are you relying on your previous spiritual experiences? What fruit are you currently producing to reassure you that you are enduring until the end?

Week 4: Matthew 25:1-13

Day 4: Abandon Man's Predictions, Trust God's Timing

READ: Matthew 25:1-13; Job 38:1-21

EXPLORE:

I'm really bad at predicting the future, and so are most people. Old pieces of media like *Back to the Future* optimistically placing hoverboards in 2015, Wall Street's false sense of security before the housing bubble popped, and even a sunny weather forecast not matching the thunderstorm reality are classic demonstrations of our inability to see what the future really holds. The Bible is also littered with stories of people trying to guess God's plan for the future, but instead of patiently trusting Him to accomplish His ends in His time, they divert to their own means and rather painfully miss the good heart of God in the process (see Genesis 16-17, 1 Samuel 13, Matthew 16:21-23, etc).

God's great redemptive plan is detailed across the entire narrative of Scripture with a beautiful culmination in Revelation 7:9-10, but what isn't really detailed in Scripture is *when* this ending will come to pass. That hasn't stopped people from trying to foretell it! Famously, *The Watchtower* magazine, managed and published by the Jehovah's Witnesses, falsely predicted the end of the world over seven times throughout the 20th century, revising dates and back-interpreting after the fact. Some distorted churches in third-world countries today put billboards up heralding the coming of the "messiah" at their local church on a specific time and day to drive up attendance. No matter what, there's no shortage of sensationalist American pastors who have offered updates and years of their own for any variety of motivations. Even many well-meaning Christians have poured over the book of Revelation and deeply studied individual statements made by Jesus and the disciples in an attempt to pin down when exactly the second coming will be. All attempts have come up dry so far.

The trouble is... what exactly would we do with this information if we could get it? It's natural to want to know when Jesus will come back in power and glory, but if we knew that it wouldn't happen for many, many years, would we use that as an excuse to not live with gospel urgency? What if we knew it was tomorrow? The disposition of the wise virgins we see in the parable is one of continual preparedness: *since* we don't know the hour or the day, our lives should be ever marked by the nearness of the bridegroom, a seriousness in stewarding our heart, mind, soul, and strength for His Kingdom purposes mixed with the peace that comes from knowing He is coming soon in long-anticipated victory to gather His church to Himself. What a glorious day that will be!

And still, it's hard not knowing. Job struggled not having the answers to his many, burning questions, but God didn't answer them directly. Instead, He revealed only a sliver of His true majesty, an overwhelming glimpse into the nature of His sovereignty to prove to Job that there wasn't anything more God *needed* to answer (Job 38-42). It might seem a dissatisfying response at first, but praise God that our Savior, the same one who fights for, intercedes for, and preserves us, is the same creator God whose ways are so much higher than any of us could begin to get our arms around! He stands outside of time and has *already* won the war, we can wait eagerly for His coming each day.

BIG IDEA: Humanity can't predict the day or the hour Jesus will come back, but we can trust Him and His timing.

APPLY:

- **Challenge:** Job chapter 38 through the end of the book is God's response to Job's questions. Read through God's answer and pray for Him to give you an unwavering trust in His ways and timing.

Week 4: Matthew 25:1-13

Day 5: The Ten Virgins

READ: Matthew 25:1-13

EXPLORE:

In this parable, Jesus continues teaching his disciples about the coming of the kingdom of heaven and the importance of being ready for its arrival. At the beginning of the parable, the kingdom of heaven coming is described as ten virgins who carried their lamps with them to meet the bridegroom upon his arrival. A distinction is then made about the group of women: five of them are wise and five of them are foolish. The idea of people being either wise or foolish is not an uncommon theme in the Bible and is most frequently found in the wisdom literature books, such as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, where humanity is categorized as either wise or foolish. These two divisions serve as one of the keys for understanding the parable. In verses 3 and 4, Jesus states that the five wise virgins brought oil to trim their lamps so they remain lit and ready for when the bridegroom arrives, but the five foolish virgins did not bring any oil to keep their lamps lit. Their lack of preparation becomes evident when the bridegroom arrives late at night after a delay and the foolish virgins' lamps do not have enough oil to be lit. When they ask the wise virgins if they could use the oil, the wise tell them to go out to buy their own oil because they did not have enough to share. While the foolish are gone, the bridegroom arrives and the wise virgins go into the wedding feast and then the door is shut. The foolish virgins then arrive begging the bridegroom to be let into the feast, but the bridegroom responds to them saying he did not know them and does not let them inside. For some readers, it may seem selfish and maybe even uncharacteristic for the wise virgins to refuse to offer their oil to the five foolish virgins. Wouldn't they want the other women in the group to enter the wedding feast with them? Why wouldn't they jump into action to do everything they could to ensure the foolish virgins could meet the bridegroom with their

lamps trimmed and lit? Despite what it looks like, the wise virgins are not being unreasonable or unkind by not offering their oil to the foolish. This is because they understood they had a responsibility to carry out the work of meeting the bridegroom and that keeping their lamps ready and lit was part of ensuring the procession reached the wedding feast. The foolish believed they could rely on those around them to borrow oil for the lamps at the last minute instead of being prepared for the arrival of the bridegroom. Jesus uses this parable as another illustration of how everyone should be ready for the return of the Son of Man and that when the time comes, you will not be able to rely on the faith of others. Often, it is easy to depend on the faith of others instead of growing in your own faith. This is especially common for those who have grown up in the church and are constantly surrounded by fellow believers. Instead of developing an individual relationship with Christ, it can become easy to go through the motions of Christianity by going to church, praying, participating in LifeGroups which can cause people to fall into the trap of believing that the faith of those around you is enough. However, this is not true. Each person is responsible for their own relationship with Christ upon believing in the Gospel so that they can be ready to meet Him one day – either in heaven or when He returns.

BIG IDEA: One day Christ will return and it is our responsibility to have a relationship with Him to ensure we are ready.

APPLY:

- **Question:** How does this passage change your perspective on Christ's return?
- **Challenge:** Identify where you have relied on the faith of others instead of growing in your own faith.



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