

Focus on Matthew 25:1–13

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Thomas D. Stegman, SJ

This parable is located in Jesus’ discourse on the end times (Matthew 24:1–25:46). It takes up key themes from the preceding context, most notably the glorious appearance of Jesus (24:30); its sudden and unexpected quality (24:44, 50); and the exhortation to be ready for it (24:42, 44). While the parable focuses on the maidens and their actions, it is important not to lose sight of its key figure, namely, the bridegroom. That the bridegroom is the Son of Man in glory will be made clear at the end of the parable, where he is called “Lord” (25:11) and speaks with divine authority (“Truly I tell you”; 25:12). In fact, Matthew has already pointed to Jesus’ identity as bridegroom in 9:15 and 22:1–10.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Mark Douglas

How does the story suggest we ought to live while awaiting the Son of Man’s appearance? Against claims that from this time forward it is only a matter of our working out the niceties of how to live in the kingdom that is already here, the text reminds us that this is not as good as it gets, that the bridegroom’s delay does not mean he will not come, and that the party will not really start until he arrives. It asks us to live in hope for what has been promised and what will be but is not yet.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” John Buchanan

It is significant that, near the end of his life, Jesus chose this most human event as the context for a parable: “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this . . .” (v. 1). In this parable, for whatever reason, the groom does not show up on time; the hours pass, and many of the waiting wedding party fall asleep. The early Christians had to adjust to the reality that Jesus did not return as they fully expected, and that their mission was to wait expectantly and in the meantime live faithfully, courageously, hopefully. It is our mission still.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”
Lindsay P. Armstrong

We need to learn patience—and this is particularly true when waiting for God. This parable speaks a profound word to a fast-paced twenty-first-century populace. Now is the time for active discipleship. The kingdom of heaven summons us to new life, improved commitment, casting away of false idols, active waiting in hope, and renewed vigor in faith. Faithful action done now prepares us to weather the unexpected timing of God, even as it prepares us for a heavenly celebration. The Messiah comes “at the right time” (Romans 5:6), and brings a party with him.