

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Preparedness For The Kingdom

by Dan Trygg

“Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.”

Matthew 24:42

“Thus, you become prepared also; for the Son of Man comes at an hour when you do not suppose.”

Matthew 24:44

“The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² And five were foolish, and five were prudent. ...Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”

Matthew 25:1-2,13

“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵

And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey... ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them... ²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.’... For to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the worthless slave out...”

Matthew 25:14-15,19,29-30

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, ...He will sit on His glorious throne... ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.... ⁴⁰ Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.”

Matthew 25:31,34-36,40

The preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God initially included two key ideas: Repent and Prepare. There was need to change the way you thought and perceived of the world around you, and what life was all about, because the reign and rule of God was *impending, on the verge, present and available*. For John the Baptist, it was soon to come. For Jesus, it was present and active in and through Him. For us, it is here *now*, because the Father *is working* in the world around us. It is *presently available* if we *join with Him, and partner with the operation of the Holy Spirit*, as He is leading us to advance and express God-at-work in this world. We are to break up the power-bases of the enemy, and expel him wherever he is entrenched by bringing the kingdom of light into the darkness. The gates of hades will not be able to stand against the people of God, as we move forward in the authority of God’s kingdom and the power of His Spirit. In order to recognize and engage in the kingdom, **we need to adjust our way of seeing and perceiving the world, and make ourselves ready and available for Him to work through. We will experience the kingdom as the Spirit works through us to accomplish God’s will.**

In Matthew 24 and 25, Jesus knew He would be leaving soon. Just days before His death, He conveyed five word pictures designed to communicate key ideas for remaining *kingdom-focused*, and *about the King’s business*, until He would return at the end of the age. Then, **we will give an account of what we have done with what is His.**

In the first word picture, Jesus is talking about the suddenness of His coming. No one knows the day or hour of His return. He will come in like a cataclysmic disaster, like when the flood came in Noah’s day. People will be going about their business as usual, then Jesus will come and people will be taken away in the cataclysmic events of His return. Luke’s account adds the disaster of Sodom to this word picture (Lk. 17:26-36). People were eating, drinking, buying and selling until fire fell from heaven and destroyed them. **We are to be *perceptive, alert and watchful, so that we recognize what is happening, and are not caught up in the disaster.*** Some people teach that Jesus will come secretly, with no warning, and it could be at any moment. That is not what the scriptures teach. Paul tells us that, although Jesus’ coming will be unexpected and sudden, like a thief in the night, to those who are *outsiders*, we who know Him will *not* be unawares, or be taken by surprise. We are not in darkness, for that day to overtake us like a thief (1 Thess. 5:2-6). There is a caveat, however. We must *stay alert and sober*, and not be caught up in the works of darkness, or we will *not* be so *perceptive*. Jesus said that if a householder knew when a burglar was coming, he would have stayed awake and been alert, and not let his house be broken into. So, **we are to be alert and watchful, so that we are not caught off guard.** While this teaching was meant especially for the end of the age, there have been many times through history where God’s people recognized what was happening in the world around them, and left their homes and cities. They avoided disaster because they were *perceptive*, alert, and watchful.

We are also to be being *prepared*, because the Lord will come at a time we do not fully expect. We won’t have time to straighten things out, clean up our act, or change our ways. **We must live in a state of *responsible readiness*.** We are to be faithful and mindful of our responsibilities, and be carrying them out. A servant who would think his master is delayed, and who begins to abuse other servants or misuse the master’s goods will be caught off guard, unexpectedly, and he will be punished severely, and assigned a place with the hypocrites (the ‘pretenders’). **Faithfully carrying out our responsibilities as servants of Christ is the best way to be *prepared* for His coming.**

The next parable about the wise and foolish virgins teaches us that **we are to be prudent**. In the parable there were ten virgins who had been informed that the bridegroom was going to take his bride from her parent's house to his house that night, for them to be married. They were probably friends of the bride, and wanted to be part of the processional. This marriage procession was one of the most important events of the entire marriage ceremony. The bridegroom procession was notorious for being a surprise, and for being held up for a number of reasons. Part of the festivities involved coming at any time of the day or night to do this. It was part of the fun. Close friends were told ahead of time, so they would be ready, and as the processional went along through the town the tidings and noise of celebration would accompany the parade. Of these ten virgins, five were prudent, and five were foolish. **The word for "prudent" means "thinking". They thought ahead, and therefore were prepared for a long wait, and were equipped with what they needed.** They brought extra oil, because they knew the procession could be delayed for some time. The "foolish" ones did not think ahead, and so their lamps were going out when the procession finally came. Consequently, they had to go purchase more oil for their lamps. While they were gone, the processional arrived at the bridegroom's house, all the other guests were there, and the door was shut. **We need to be prudent, and be thinking of being ready and prepared for the long term, ...not just the short term.**

The next word picture is the parable of the talents. A man was leaving for a journey, and gave his possessions to his servants. He gave five talents to one servant, to another two talents, and to a third one talent, each according to his ability. The first two servants *worked with* the money they received, and doubled it through their business practices. The third buried his 75 pounds of silver in the ground. After a long time, the master returned and settled accounts with them. He commended the first two servants for *being faithful* and *productive*, and advanced them in his favor and his service. The third servant however was rebuked. He was called evil, lazy and useless, and was thrown out into the outer darkness. From this parable, we learn that **God wants us to be productive with what He gives us**. He expects us to *work with* the resources and abilities He gives us to further His kingdom purposes. Although the parable involved money, **the point was about industrious faithfulness**. What we have been given is *not* 'just for us'. If we are servants of Christ, it is *His*, and **we are to take what God has entrusted to us and put it to work in accordance with what He values and desires**. Like so many other parables, God is looking for us to **produce something**, ...to bear fruit, ...to *put forth effort* to expand His kingdom according to our gifts, abilities and resources.

Finally, we have the word picture of the judging of the nations, ...like a shepherd separates the sheep and the goats. It was not uncommon for goats to be intermingled with sheep, although their needs and natures are quite different. Sheep are quieter, more timid, and tend to need more care. Goats are more independent, bold, curious and tend to wander more. One of the dangers of mixing sheep and goats is that often the sheep will wander off with the goats, as they go about nibbling on leaves. Usually at the end of a day a shepherd would separate the two species for the night, because sometimes they do not get along well in close quarters. People of Jesus' day saw the goats as more mischievous, lustful, willful and independent. In the parable, Jesus will separate the nations as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. Those who are "sheep" have walked in love with other people. They served people in need. **Their faith application was practical and personal**. The "goats" in the parable, however, ...even though they had *been among* the sheep, *lived with* the sheep, and *ate with* the sheep..., did *not* have a *personal, practical application of their faith* to any other individual. **Jesus is looking for personal acts of service toward other people**. He looks at how you treat others *as if* you were treating Himself the same way. The subtle message behind this parable is that these two very different animals were in the same flock together, ...in the church, or among the nations. **So, being in the church, the flock, is not the same as being in the kingdom of God. The church is a gathering of people, a group that can be a mixture of the genuine and the counterfeit**, ...the serious disciple and the "interested associate", ...or the committed follower of God and the one who only comes out of duty, or to impress others. **The kingdom of God is the reign and rule of God. It is where God's will is done. Kingdom people are doers of the will of God. Their faith is made evident by their actions. Others might have "right beliefs" intellectually, but the real nature of their faith is also made evident by their actions, as well.** Jesus said that we would know the genuine and the false by their fruit, ...by the outcome of their lives (Matt. 7:15-27). **A genuine faith will be evidenced by a personal walk of action.**

The preaching of the kingdom was accompanied with the admonition to "repent", to change one's perception, and to "prepare" the way of the Lord. *Then*, it was an expectation of something coming. What we have seen is that **walking in the kingdom to the end of the age requires the same kinds of things**. We need to be **perceptive**, open and aware of what God is doing, and what is happening around us; we need to **keep ourselves in a state of preparedness**, being ready to respond to God's will; we need to be **prudent, practically-mindful of the long-term nature of our endeavor** to advance the kingdom until the King returns; **and we must work to produce fruit** and expand the kingdom **by our personal choices to serve others**. To be *disciples* still requires a disciplined mind and heart, a proactive determination to *wait on* God, *watch for* God, and *walk with* God, by serving others.