



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 25: 1-13

KEY POINT: Christians should be prepared for Jesus to return today, but plan for a delay.

FOR LEADERS

- **Apprenticeship!** *As a Gospel-centered church, it's our hope that Emergence would be the leadership locus of our community, and as a Community Leader, you are very much on the front lines of that! Who are you personally investing in? Who in your group could lead in their own right if you gave them the proper guidance and encouragement? Pray about who God has placed around you and consider what a next step in their faith, their leadership and their ministry might be today*

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Communities Video:** Watch this week's community extras video!
- [2] Icebreaker:** What kind of a student were you in grade school? How has that made you who you are today?
- [3] Opener:** What stood out to you from the sermon this week? Did you find anything particularly helpful or eye opening?

HEAR THE WARNING

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 25:1-13.

In our passage last week we focused on how to live in light of the possibility that Jesus might return in any moment. This week's passage teaches us that we must also prepare for Jesus to take longer than we may expect.

- [1]** The Bible sometimes compares the Christian life to a race (e.g., 1 Cor 9:24; 2 Tim 4:7). In your experience, do you find that people more often tend to treat the Christian life like a sprint or a marathon? Explain.
- [2]** Hebrews 12:1 encourages us to "run with *endurance* the race that is set before us," suggesting that it may be best to view discipleship as a marathon, rather than a sprint. If that's the case, then why do you think we so often treat our walk with Christ like a sprint?
- [3]** What are some of the warning signs that we might identify in ourselves or others that could show that our walk with Christ is a sprint, and may burn out?
- [4]** What are some of the habits of someone who is being spiritually responsible, and wisely building a relationship with Jesus that's meant to last?
- [5]** Often, when someone is new or young in their walk with Jesus, there are many challenges which seem so far off that we don't plan for them. What do you think are some challenges of faith that are distinct to differing stages of life?
- [6]** Is there anything in your own walk with Jesus that perhaps you wish you'd done differently to better prepare you for what you face today?



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MASTERING THE BALANCE

In the sermon this week, Ryan suggested, very practically, that we should each take time to reflect on our walks with Jesus. He even suggested actually sitting down with a pen and paper to set our spiritual priorities and goals in our own lives.

- [4]** In your opinion, what makes for a good goal? What are some characteristics of good goal-making and poor goal-making?
- [5]** What are some spiritual goals that you have in your own life?
- [6]** What are some things that you do to exercise spiritual self-care and walk in disciplines of the faith? Where are some places that you hope to grow?
- [7]** How would you personally rate your own pace in your spiritual “race?” Are you sprinting and headed for burn out? Are you running too slow? Have you fallen away from the pack and are drifting from the course? Or, are you still hanging out at the starting line? Explain.

CARING FOR THE NEXT GENERATIONS

One critical characteristic of someone who is spiritually mature is that they care not just about their own walk with Jesus, but for the walks of others as well. In fact, according to Philippians 2:3-4, the only way to truly mature in Christ is to care for others. In the sermon, Ryan explained that this includes both those around us here and now, and the generations which are to come.

- [8]** Who has God placed in your life that you feel called to shepherd? How are you doing in this? Where could you use some improvement?
- [9]** In the sermon, Ryan pointed out Paul’s writing to Timothy in 2 Tim 2:2 as a call to disciple future generations. What are some ways that you can personally live this out? How do we do this as a church, both formally and informally?
- [10]** What are some of the ways that previous generations could have done a better job equipping us to run the race of faith, and how does that impact the way in which we disciple others today? How can we be sure to the lay foundation for future generations to prosper in their faith?
- [11]** What are some things that we can do as God’s people to ensure that we aren’t just making disciples, but making disciples who can make disciples?

PRAYER

- [1]** Pray that God would reveal to you the ways in which you may be running as a sprinter, rather than a marathoner.
- [2]** Pray specifically for those in your life whom God has called you to disciple.



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LEADER'S COMMENTARY

Understanding Parables

- Remember how parables work!
 - Not all things mentioned in a parable have “deep” spiritual significance.
 - Not all actions of the characters are things we’re meant to imitate.
- Often, the parable of the 10 virgins is over-analyzed to assume that the oil means something (good works for example), when Jesus is really just using a common tradition to convey meaning.
- Whenever we read a parable, we should ask ourselves this question – “What is the main point that the author is trying to convey?”
- In the case of our parable for this week, the meaning is quite plain – we should prepare ourselves for a marathon of faith.
 - Neither the virgins or the bridegroom are very Christlike in their attitudes.
 - This parable is not trying to teach us about sharing, or about forgiving others’ shortcomings.
 - The point is to simply highlight the importance of being prepared for Jesus’ return, which may come later (or sooner, as we saw last week) than we expect.
- Ensure that you glean the chief meaning from what we’ve studied this week
 - When Jesus returns, there will be some “Christians” who are not actually ready for Him, and it will be too late. Their lack of preparedness will prohibit them from entering the Kingdom of God.
- Remind your group of the question Ryan posed in the sermon this week:
 - “I know of Jesus, sure, but does Jesus know me?”