

**Foolish or Wise?**  
**Matthew 25:1-13**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So, do you consider yourself foolish or wise? Maybe it would help if I gave more information. What if I asked it this way, do you consider yourself foolish or wise in matters regarding fishing? A few of you here might feel you were wise to the ways of catching fish. The rest of you might admit that you don't know much about fishing, but to claim that you are foolish would be going a bit too far. We have an understanding of wise and foolish that is colored by our understanding of those words.

Scripture says it this way, "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding." (Psalm 9:10) Furthermore, Scripture also says, "The fool says in their heart there is no God." (Psalm 53:1)

Today we see examples of wise and foolish virgins waiting for the bridegroom to come. What is the difference between wise and foolish? The difference is that one group was so concerned with the things of this world that they had not really prepared for the coming of the bridegroom. When the cry was heard that the bridegroom was coming, they were not prepared and thought that they could get what was needed from others, or that they could go out and buy oil for their lamps.

My friends, Christ will return when we least expect it. We are to watch and be ready for we know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. My friends, we are to be wise. One key to being wisely prepared is to have a fear of the Lord.

What does it mean to have fear of the Lord? Fear of the Lord is knowing that God is a mighty God, powerful, and that at His speaking all things came into being, and that today, all that exists is sustained by His almighty power. It also means that we know He has righteous demands for us, and at the end we will answer for our obedience to those demands. Fear of the Lord begins with being afraid of what God will do to us if we are disobedient to His will and ultimately unrepentant.

Wisdom begins in the fear of the Lord, for it is in the fear of the Lord that we can understand all that God does – AND we are able to fully understand and marvel in His gracious deeds for us.

Today, my friends, there is not much fear of the Lord. God has been reduced to simply a 'loving God', and while this is most definitely true, there is more to go than that. One pastor explained this new 'loving god theology' this way, "The creative god who shaped the universe could not condemn His own beloved creatures to hell for all eternity. God is bigger than that. There is no hell!"

My friends, this is a denial of all the places in Scripture where Jesus states that there will be some who will be sent to hell for eternity. If they are correct, then Jesus must have been lying or He didn't really know the will of God. Fear of the Lord is knowing God's wrath and anger against sin, but and also knowing of His grace, mercy and love. It is only in understanding the fear of the Lord that we can see His greatest act of love for us; that while we were sinners, He sent His Son to die for us, and take the punishment we deserve for our sins upon Himself.

My friends, this "loving-god theology" I mentioned earlier is prevalent all over society. This thinking denies God's wrath against sin. But even worse, it diminishes His love. If God has no wrath against sin, then the sacrifice of His own Son upon the cross was for what purpose? If God is all-loving and has no anger against sin, then there is no reason to fear Him and we may as well do whatever pleases our sinful nature. Pastors and people who have a loving God with no wrath and punishment for sin ultimately lose the very love of God in Christ Jesus.

I have spoken in the past about my healthy fear of my father. I knew that if I stepped outside the rules the boom would be lowered, sometimes physically applied to my posterior. I also knew of my dad's great love for me. My fear of my father and his great love for me are not inconsistencies.

I don't know about you, but the times I got into the most trouble is not when I went out intending to break the rules, but the times I forgot to engage my brain, it was times I was not really wise. I would do foolish things which I wouldn't have done if I had been wise enough to think.

This same principle can be applied to the lives of Christians. We know that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and we know that the fear of the Lord means that we love Him first and foremost. Fear of the Lord knows that He is the beginning and end of our life, and that all revolves around Him.

Yet, how much of our life revolves around Him? My friends, we let this world's concerns overwhelm and consume us, we get caught up in them and become very foolish.

Let's consider at the last two months and one day of the calendar year, beginning with October 31. What day was that? Yes, Halloween! How many celebrated All Hallows Eve, or All Saints Day on November 1 – remembering those who have died in the faith and are a witness to us of a faithful life in Christ? Now, how much time and effort went into the celebrating of Halloween? How much of it was directed toward God? Did you know that one quarter of all candy sold in the U.S. is purchased for Halloween?

Next comes Thanksgiving. How much time and preparation will go into the celebration of this holiday? Here is a day our nation set aside to thank God for all His gracious physical gifts of feeding us and giving us all that we need to support this body and this mortal life. Yet, how many CHRISTIANS will skip the worship services offered in their congregations either Thanksgiving Eve or Thanksgiving Day, to really say thanks to Him? How much time and preparation will people put into coming to God's house and receiving His gifts that feed for eternal life?

Some people will make up a marvelous guest list for their Thanksgiving meal. Come, eat with us. Come celebrate all that we have been given. Come watch football all day with us. And there is nothing wrong with these things, as long as God comes first, but in all honesty, does He?

How about a guest list to invite to another thanksgiving meal, a Eucharistic meal? Did you know that Eucharist was one of the early church terms for the Lord's Supper? Did you know that Eucharist means "to give thanks"? We offer the greatest Thanksgiving meal being given, you have been invited to eat and to celebrate by the Son of God Himself.

Of course, then comes the greatest holiday of them all, at least as far as the retail business world is concerned. They thrive on how much money is spent on lights, decorations, and gifts for friends and family. Great preparation goes into this gift buying, doesn't it? We need to make sure that we don't spend more money for one person than we do for anybody else, otherwise, somebody might get angry with us for buying them a cheaper gift.

We again invite people over for great Christmas parties. Mighty preparations go into getting ready for this holiday. Yet I must ask, where is the fear of the Lord in this holiday? In fact, this holiday more than the other two ought to revolve solely around God's greatest gift, the one wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.

Yet, this holiday will see more attention paid to a fat cherubic elf dressed in red and a four-legged beast with antlers and a glowing nose - both of whom are not even real. Does Christ see as much attention, the only one of the three who is real, and I might add, the one for whom the whole holiday is named?

My friends, are you wise or foolish? Who comes first in your life? Be honest!

The wise virgins in our text were prepared for the coming of the bridegroom, it was their first and foremost concern. They weren't prepared or wise because of themselves, but because of Him who made them wise and prepared them for His coming. Even in their sleep, they were wise and had been prepared.

When we are honest with ourselves, we have a tendency to be sinfully foolish, too many things take priority and push our Lord and His will into second place or even further back in our life. I invite you, my friends, to sit back and take a look at the coming month and a half. What wonderful opportunities to be filled with God's wisdom. How many extra services to hear His Word and receive His thanksgiving meal.

Take these special days and say thanks to God for the gift of His Son. He walked upon earth doing all things, including all His thoughts, with the will of His Father perfectly in focus. Yet dear friends, for His perfect holiness and righteousness, He took upon Himself your sins and mine. He died to purchase forgiveness. He comes regularly, each week, to give to you His gifts that are able to make one wise unto salvation.

Today, we celebrate the Eucharist, we give thanks for the body and blood of Christ as we gather around His table for a feast of epic proportions. We are not alone, but those who died in the faith before us are also gathered around the table of our Lord in His heavenly mansion. Together, we partake of His goodness to us, and we rejoice in His marvelous deeds.

My friends, you are forgiven for your inconsistencies, for your lack of wisdom and fear of the Lord. You are invited here, to come to His house so that He might build you up in His wisdom. You are here so that He may prepare you for that last day, whenever it might be. Yes, it is indeed a marvelous God that we have, One to fear and love, who gives us great gifts to make us wise unto salvation. Amen.