

# The tarrying Bridegroom

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us turn now to the chapter we read in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew chapter 25, and this morning we are going to look at verse 5. Matthew chapter 25 from verse 5.

Let us read from verse 1. Verse 5.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. On two occasions, the disciples of the Lord Jesus asked him for an explanation of a particular parable, and he gave it.

Now, unfortunately for us, this parable before us here was not one of the parables which Jesus explained, patiently explained to his disciples.

There is much in this parable that we would love to know, and to know from the lips of the Lord Jesus, by way of explanation.

[ 1 : 34 ] For example, who do the ten bridesmaids really represent? Why ten? Why were they divided into five? Five equally divided into five.

Five wise and five foolish. What do the lamps represent? Where could the five have found oil at midnight? And why is nothing said in any part of this parable about the bride?

Only the bridegroom and the bridesmaids. There are various questions we would like to ask the Lord, as it were. But the fact that no explanation was asked of Jesus by the disciples, and the fact that no explanation was given by the Lord, I think is pretty conclusive for us that these questions we might ask are not of supreme importance at all, so far as the teaching of the parable is concerned. And there is therefore no need for us to stumble over these matters, and to get so engrossed with detail that we cannot see the wood for the trees. But what we do see in the parable, and what we must see in the parable, is the main lesson, and we must see that in every parable.

Avoiding all the details, and concentrating on the main lesson, which here is, the need for each one of us to be ready for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 2 : 54 ] For the last verse in the parable says, watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man is going to come. Now the parable in its entirety is full of instruction of the most solemn kind.

And I make no apology for being solemn, because we are living in solemn times, and life has its very solemn parts. Yet I am not going to attempt to deal with the whole of this parable, but only with the part that is stated in the text.

Now I recognize quite right away, that this verse 5 does not in itself teach the principal lesson of the parable, but nevertheless it is closely associated with the principal lesson.

And even when we isolate verse 5 from the rest of the parable, it has very much to tell us, very much to tell us, and has very much to do with the main lesson regarding the return of the Lord Jesus.

And the lesson of verse 5, of course, is confirmed and substantiated in other parts of scripture. So I want us now to apply what this fifth verse has to say to ourselves.

[ 4 : 15 ] While the bridegroom waited, they all slumbered, the bridesmaids all slumbered and slept. They grew weary because of the waiting of the bridegroom, because of the tarrying of the bridegroom.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And I want to apply that to ourselves in this twofold way. First of all to notice Christ and his tarrying.

And then man and his slumbering. These are the two things. First then Christ and his tarrying.

The bridegroom tarried. And the bridegroom is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ here in this parable. And the great moment in the parable is the coming of the bridegroom for his bride.

And for the commencement of the marriage and the marriage celebrations. Now so much is said about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the scriptures.

[ 5 : 16 ] That no one who reads the scriptures with almost any measure of intelligence. Can possibly question the fact of his coming. Or stand in any doubt about his coming.

If we read the scriptures intelligently at all. But, in the text, verse 5, we are to pause this morning to consider not the coming of the Lord Jesus, but the step before he comes.

Which is his present waiting. His present tarrying. The bridegroom tarried. His coming is future.

His tarrying is present. It's what is taking place now. And it is that previous step to his coming that I want to say something about this morning.

Now it may be helpful in this connection for us to remind ourselves of some of the marriage customs of the Jews. That before marriage, and I'm referring to the times of the Lord Jesus, before marriage there was the betrothal.

[ 6 : 27 ] And the betrothal was much more binding on a couple than our engagement. In betrothal, a Jewish couple were considered married, although they were not actually married.

And their betrothal was so binding that in any breach or breaking of the engagement was tantamount to divorce. And then following the betrothal, there was an interval of some time, perhaps a year, perhaps longer than a year.

And at the end of that interval, the bridegroom came from his own home or his parents' home to the bride's home to take her back in procession for the marriage and the marriage celebrations. And the celebrations, the feasting could go on from anything between 7 and 14 days.

Now it's not unlikely that that is what the Lord Jesus had in mind here. And he here uses the customs of Hebrew marriage to illustrate many important spiritual lessons in this parable.

And one lesson in particular which we are thinking of here is the tarrying of the bridegroom. The period before the marriage supper of the Lamb.

[ 7 : 45 ] Now one or two things for us to notice here. First of all, the place of the bridegroom's tarrying. Where does he tarry? The bridegroom tarried and the bridesmaids slept.

The bridegroom tarried. Now as in the Jewish marriage, the bridegroom stayed either at his own home or his father's home. So God's son is now in the presence of his father.

He is with his father in heaven. The Lord Jesus rose. He ascended and finally entered through the starry heavens into heaven itself.

That's where he is. And from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. Or in terms of this parable, from there he will come for his bride.

And this is exactly what the Lord Jesus said in the days of his flesh to his disciples in John 16 verse 16. He says, You shall not see me because I go to my father.

[ 8 : 54 ] And that's where the bridegroom is now, tarrying with the father in heaven. He is there at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens.

He is there in the heavenly places far above all principality and power and might and dominion and above every name that is named.

So that he who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death is now crowned with glory and honor. He is in the glory which he had with the father before the world was.

So it's a glorious bridegroom who waits to come for his bride. It's a bridegroom whose home is nothing less than heaven itself.

And the very atmosphere of which is glory. The glory which he had with the father before the world was. And then when the heavens shall be opened for the last time.

[ 9 : 54 ] The bridegroom shall descend from heaven with a shout. With the voice of the archangel. And with the trump of God. That's the place of the tarrying.

Notice now the significance of the tarrying. His tarrying in heaven is in fact the third phase of his exaltation.

He rose. That was the first stage. He ascended. That was the second stage. And now he is in the third stage which is his session at the right hand of God in heaven.

His tarrying there at God's right hand is the third stage of his exaltation. And this final stage will be his coming again. And this session at God's right hand lasts the entire duration of this present dispensation.

Of this present day of grace. His tarrying began with his ascension. And will not end until the heavens are opened. And he comes the second time without sin unto salvation.

[ 11 : 01 ] So that his session at the right hand of God corresponds with the duration of his tarrying. And from our side of things that interval between the betrothal and the marriage seems to us a long

time.

A long time for the bride and the bridegroom to wait. But then one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. Now we mustn't for one moment think of Christ's tarrying in heaven as a time of inactivity.

Of passiveness. Of unproductiveness. By no means. In the wonderful and gracious purpose of God it is anything but inactive.

For we are told for one thing that there in heaven Jesus sits. We sang that in Psalm 110. He sits at the right hand of the majesty in heaven.

In the heavens. To symbolize that his work on earth was completed. You sit down when your work is done and not until it's done. But it also symbolizes not only that his work on earth was completed.

[12:13] But that his rule as king had begun. Because he sat down with his father on his throne. And when he ascended and entered into heaven. He was installed at that moment in the government of heaven and earth.

And that's where the Lord Jesus is now. Our heavenly bridegroom is the king. Eternal. Immortal. Invisible. Invisible yes.

But invisible only for a. Not for very long. For the time will come when there will be no invisibility about him. But every eye shall see him. When he comes the second time.

But as far as we are concerned now. In his tarrying. He is invisible. But he is there as king. King of kings. And lord of lords. The lord is king.

Lift up thy voice. O earth and all ye heavens rejoice. From world to world. The joy shall ring. The lord omnipotent. Is king. And he sits on the throne.

[13:15] Tarrying. Waiting. Not only until all his enemies shall be made his footstool. But waiting until as the kingly bridegroom. He comes back for his bride.

He not only sits in heaven. But the bible tells us he stands. To symbolize that his work in heaven is a continuing work. He not only sits on the throne as king.

He stands before the throne as priest. To present his petitions for his people to his father's throne. He ever lives to make intercession for us. And in that same psalm 110.

We discover there that he. His priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek. Indicating its eternity. No beginning or ending. It's an everlasting priesthood. He ever lives to make intercession.

And to make intercession. He stands before his father's throne. But the bible also tells us that he walks. In the midst of the seven golden lamp stands.

[14:15] We find that in revelation 1. That although the lord Jesus is now in heaven. He is also with his church on earth.

Through the presence of the holy spirit. And he is with his church through the spirit. In order to bless his word to his church. To fulfill his promises to his church.

And to prepare his church and his people. For the place which he has already prepared for them. Where he already is in heaven itself. But then when his tarrying is over.

He will come for his church and for his bride. Personally. And will be in this world. Not only in the person of the holy spirit. But personally. But for the moment.

He walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Through the gracious operation of his own holy spirit. Now there are some of the significances. About the tarrying of the lord Jesus.

[15:15] That he sits and he stands and he walks. In other words the point is that he is not inactive. That he is not passive. But that a great work is going on. As the lord Jesus tarries.

The bridegroom says our text. The bridegroom tarried. Tarried. The place of it. Heaven. The significance of it. His activity there. And now notice the reason for it.

The reason for it. Why does he tarry? And why does he tarry so long. That scoffers have to say. Where is the day of his coming as was promised.

Where is the promise of his coming. Why does he tarry? Why does he tarry so long. That mature Christian believers can say. Even so come lord Jesus we are waiting. Why does he tarry?

Why does our lord seem to delay his coming? Well first of all. In order that his bride on earth.

[16:13] May make herself ready. We read about that in Revelation chapter 19. The bride has made herself ready.

And preparations for a wedding are not done overnight. They extend over quite a period. And the bride. The church of Jesus Christ. Those who truly love him. Belong to him.

Have here on this earth. To array themselves. They have to array themselves. In fine linen. Clean and white. And the fine.

White. Clean linen. Represents the righteous deeds. The righteous acts. The godly living. Of those who belong to the lord Jesus Christ. So that during this interval.

While the lord is waiting. The bridegroom is waiting. To come. The bride. Believers here must be concerned. About their salvation. About their sanctification. About their holiness.

[17:09] And their growth and grace. So that they may be ready. For the bridegroom when he comes. And that passage in Revelation 19. Tells us. That. Such clothing.

And such readiness. Are granted. It's not something the bride produces herself. It's something that's provided. For the bride. By the lord himself. And that means that while we wait.

And while the bridegroom waits. We must seek more and more of. That righteousness. Which is the. The fine linen. Pure and white.

With which the bride must be arrayed. On the coming of the bridegroom. And we must also be concerned. Of course. With our conduct.

With our character. And with our righteous deeds. I wonder then. Are we. In our waiting here below.

[18:07] Like Christ. In his waiting. In heaven above. Are we active. And not passive. Are we diligent. And not dilatory.

My dear friends. What a tremendous responsibility. Rests upon us. And lies with us. That we are to be prepared. We are to be prepared. For the coming of the bridegroom. And the bridegroom.

Is tarrying. Until the bride. Has made herself ready. Again. We can say this. That the bridegroom. Is tarrying. The Lord Jesus. Is tarrying.

Because he is not willing. That any should perish. As Peter tells us. In the second chapter. Of the second epistle. The third chapter. Of the second epistle. He is not willing.

That any should perish. So that. The tarrying. Of the Lord. Is a moving. Display. Of his goodness. And forbearance. And long. Suffering.

[19:02] Towards those. Who are rejecting. Him. There is a message here. Not only for the bride. But for those. Who was yet. Do not belong to the bride. Who are the enemies. Of the king. And he is. Tarrying. In his forbearance.

And long. Suffering. And goodness. In order. That those. Who are impenitent. May by the goodness. Of God. Be brought to repentance. I wonder. If such people.

Realize. That the Lord. Is doing this. In order. To give them. More time. For repentance. And amendment. Of life. That he is. Delaying his coming. That he is.

Tarrying. At the right hand. Of God. Until we have. Further opportunities. To believe. And to be saved. And will the day. Yet come. When the Lord Jesus.

Will have to say. To any one of us. I would have gathered you. Under my wings. As a hen gathers her chickens. But you would not. I tarried. And I waited. But you would have none of me.

[19:59] Remember the words of Paul. To the Romans. Paul said to them. Are you despising. The goodness. And long suffering. And forbearance of God.

Not knowing that the goodness of God. Lead you to repentance. Let those therefore. And never any here. Let those who do not believe in Christ. And who have been rejecting Christ.

Take this very much to heart. That he is tarrying. Because he is not willing. That we should perish. And that those who are rejecting him. Would yet embrace him. Before he comes.

May I say one other thing. About the reason for his tarrying. And it is this. That he is waiting. For his church to be completed. To be made up completely. Waiting until all the ransomed church of God. Are saved. To sin no more. And he will not come till then. Waiting until all for whom he died. Have come to a true knowledge of him. And he will not come till then.

[20:58] Waiting for the harvest to be fully ripened. And he will not come till then. Waiting for the last stone. To be placed on the temple. Which is his body. And he will not come till then.

But until then. But when he does come. He will come with shoutings of grace. Grace unto it. So he is tarrying. For two reasons.

One that those who do not believe. Might yet believe. And the other that those who now believe. Might through their faith. Become more and more like him.

And be able to say genuinely. So come. Lord Jesus. What a privileged people. Every one of us is. What great privileges we all have.

Every one of us. Whoever we are. You see the Lord could come swiftly to judgment now. And bring to a speedy end.

[ 21 : 55 ] Without any further warning this day of grace. The Lord could summon every one of us now. To his judgment throne. But in wrath.

He remembers mercy. And you see that's the meaning of his session. And his tarrying. As far as it affects us. He is waiting.

To be gracious. He is tarrying. In order that we might be all the more ready. For his coming. And of course the question.

Naturally arises. What make. What use are we making here. Of Christ's tarrying yonder. The bridegroom. Tarried.

Now we must pass on to the second thing. And notice not only Christ and his tarrying. But man and his slumbering. Man and his slumbering. While the bridegroom tarried.

[ 22 : 54 ] They all slumbered. And slept. And who are they all? Well the ten bridesmaids. And every congregation. Every church.

Is made up of those represented here. By the ten. The entire church of Christ. Is made up. By those represented by the ten. And two things are said.

About the ten. The first is. That they are not all the same. And the second is. That they all went to sleep. The first thing is.

They are not all the same. The first thing that's said therefore is. About their dissimilarity. Their dissimilarity. There is a dissimilarity. Among the ten.

This is stressed. Very obviously. In the parable. But what is not stressed. Nevertheless is there. Is however. Their similarity. You see.

[ 23 : 52 ] If we looked at the ten bridesmaids. We would know. Right away. That they were all going. To a wedding. They were all doing the same thing. They were all going to a wedding. They were all dressed the same.

They all had lamps. They all had lighted lamps. They were all waiting for the bridegroom. And they were all looking forward. To the festivities. And to the wedding itself. There was a similarity among them.

And in every church and congregation. There is a basic sameness. Among all who are there. We meet in the same place. We sit in the same pews. We sing the same praises.

We share in the same prayers. We read and hear the same word. We enjoy the same privileges. And we all have the same heaven. To win. And the same hell to shun.

In that sense. There is no difference. In any church or congregation. We are all alike in that sense. In those senses. But there the similarity ends. And the dissimilarity begins.

[ 24 : 49 ] And that is what is important. Because that is what is emphasized here. In this parable. The dissimilarity. Which of course is that. Five were wise. And five were foolish.

Five wise. And five foolish. And again. In every church. And in every congregation on earth. This obtains. It may not be half and half.

As in the parable. It may not be even at all. But it is not the evenness. Or the unevenness that is important. What is important is that.

In every congregation. There are those who are not. Among the wise. That is the point. And as far as this parable is concerned.

Only one thing. Caused the division. And that was that the wise had spare oil. And the foolish hadn't.

[ 25 : 49 ] The wise were ready and prepared for emergencies. But the foolish were not. That's what caused the division. Now notice the wise for one thing.

They had oil. They were ready. They were well prepared. And who do the wise represent today?

Who are the wise today? Well they are not the worldly wise. Because the wisdom of this world.

Says Paul. Is foolishness with God. It's not that kind of wisdom. But the wise are those who have received that wisdom. That is from above. That wisdom that is heavenly.

And spiritual. In other words. The wise are those who have received the oil of the Holy Spirit. They have been regenerated by the Spirit. They are indwelt by the Spirit.

They have been sealed by the Spirit. They are taught by the Spirit. And they know that without the Spirit. There is no life in them. No light in them. And because of the light.

[ 26 : 43 ] And understanding that the Spirit gives. Because of the wisdom that the Spirit imparts. The wise live their lives in the light of eternity. They see themselves day by day.

As living on the threshold of eternity. And all along. They have a great hope for eternity. And they also realize.

As they journey towards eternity. That there are multitudes. Who do not have this hope. And do not have this light. Because they do not have the oil. And their concern is. That others would receive the oil.

Of salvation. And the Spirit. Before the Bridegroom comes. Because when he comes. There is no opportunity. The door is shut. I wonder my dear friends.

How wise we are. And as the Lord Jesus looks down from heaven. Where he is tarrying. Now. Does he see us. Not as fools. But as wise.

[ 27 : 45 ] Redeeming the time. For the days are evil. And then there are the foolish. They have no oil. Without the Spirit. And the Bible says that.

That. That. That. That. That. If any man. Does not have the Spirit of Christ. He is not of his. He doesn't belong to the Bridegroom. No connection with the Bridegroom. And you see.

Outwardly. The wise and the foolish may look alike. But inwardly. The foolish. Do not possess. What the wise possess.

The Spirit of God. With the light of salvation. That that Spirit gives. And the result is. That the foolish are those. Who live for time. And not for eternity.

Who have their treasure. In this world. And not in heaven. And to whom the Lord Jesus. Is saying constantly. In his word. Thou fool.

[ 28 : 43 ] This night. Thy soul. Shall be required of thee. Now you see. In the light of this parable. It's plain folly. To sit loosely.

And lightly. To the issues involved here. May God. Make every one of us. Wise. Unto salvation. With that wisdom. That comes from above. So that. We are not. Among the foolish any longer. Who are in darkness. Who have no light. And who have no.

Knowledge of the things of God. But those who are wise. Because of the oil. Of the Spirit. And because of the. Oil. And the joy. That the Spirit's.

Salvation brings to us. That's the first thing. And their dissimilarity. It's all over the church. Wise. And foolish.

[ 29 : 36 ] Under the sound of the same gospel. Notice now. Finally. They're slumbering. They slumbered and slept. And notice this. That they all slumbered.

And slept. All the bridesmaids. Slumbered and slept. The wise. And the foolish. Notice that. The slumbering of the wise. Was unwise.

But the slumbering of the foolish. Was death. I never knew you. The door was shut. That's what the parable says. Now in the physical realm.

Sleep. Is a wonderful thing. It's a gift. From God. It's as indispensable to us. As our daily bread. It restores. It revives.

It renews. And very often. Sleep. Cuts our problems. Down to size. So that they. So that seldom. Are they. As formidable.

[ 30 : 33 ] As they were before. What a blessed thing. Sleep is. And. If. In the physical realm. Sleep. Is a great friend. In the spiritual realm.

It's a deadly. Enemy. It obliterates. Our sense of need. Our need of salvation. And.

It. Destroys. Our sense of accountability. Our accountability to God. It's our deadly enemy.

And in the spiritual realm. Sleep. Comes along. Under the guise of a friend. That is called by the name of. Peace. Who says to us.

Peace. Peace. When there's no peace. Sleep. Is a deadly enemy. Now notice for one thing. That the wise.

[ 31 : 30 ] Can sleep. And of course. The foolish do sleep. But the wise. Although it's unwise. Nevertheless. They can. They can sleep. The apostles slept.

At the mount of transfiguration. They slept in Gethsemane. And there must have been sleeping.

Christians in Rome. When Paul wrote to the Romans. Saying. It's high time. To awake out of sleep. Christian believers.

Can sleep. Well how do they sleep? Are there any. Telltale. Signs of. Sleep. Coming on. One. Well of course there are.

One. I'm just mentioning. One is that. Desire for the things of God. Fails. It gets weaker and weaker. Desire for prayer fails. Desire for.

The meeting for prayer fails. And the reasons. Given. Themselves. Herald. The oncoming of sleep. Love for the word of God. Fails. And half an hour.

[ 32 : 26 ] Seems an eternity. The spirit of Demas. Prevails. Demas who love this present world. These are signs and symptoms. Of the coming on of sleep.

And if we're believing people. Waiting for the coming of the Lord. Supposing to be preparing ourselves. In. In. In. In the garments of fine linen. Clean and white. Then. Sleep. Is out.

Paul says. To believers. Let us not sleep. As do others. And who are the others? Well the foolish. Of course the foolish sleep. The foolish sleep.

And the sleep of the foolishness. Means that the gospel. Is not good news to them. That sin. Is not exceedingly sinful. For that to them. And that eternity. Is not to be taken seriously.

And the foolish. Who sleep. Again. Are. Right. Throughout the church. Not confined to one church. Or one denomination.

[ 33 : 27 ] Or one congregation. But throughout the church. They are asleep. Under the sound of the word. They are indeed. Foolish. Now you see the incongruity.

Of this kind of thing. That Jesus is waiting. And tarrying. And tarrying. But the slumberer. Slumbers on. Death is coming. Judgment is coming.

The Lord Jesus is coming. But the slumberer. Slumbers on. The voice of death. And the voice of judgment. And the voice of Christ. In his tarrying.

And coming. All shout. Awake. But the slumberer. Slumbers on. What will such a person. Have to say. If when the Lord comes.

The Lord finds him. Sleeping. In view of all. The provision. That God has made. For us to be awake. And to be ready.

[ 34 : 25 ] At his coming. You see the whole. Purpose of Christ's. Tarrying. Is. That we might. Use it to advantage. Cash in on it.

As it were. Use it to advantage. Having in our minds. Clearly and distinctly. That the Lord is not willing. That we should perish. But that we should come to repentance.

And be saved. And be ready. For his coming. So the stage. That we're thinking of here. Is the present stage.

Of Christ's tarrying. That's where he is now. In heaven. Waiting. Let us make certain. That while he is waiting in heaven. We are not.

Misusing our time. Here on earth. By foolishness. And by slumbering. When we ought to be awake. And to be ready.

[ 35 : 21 ] For the coming of the Lord. Let us pray. O Lord our God.

Wilt thou put these things. Into our minds very clearly. And. Press them upon our hearts. And our consciences. Lest whilst thou art tarrying.

We are slumbering. Deliver us from this. We pray thee. And if we see the signs. Of slumber and sleep. Coming on. Help us to check them.

O God immediately. Lest they overcome us. And in our unwisdom. We are not. As ready as we ought to be. When he comes. We thank thee.

O Lord our God. For this great doctrine. Of the session of Christ. At thy right hand. This great truth. That speaks to us.

[ 36 : 17 ] Of the mercy of God. In giving us the opportunity. To prepare. And the mercy of God. In waiting. Until his church. Has been completed.

And his elect gathered in. And help us. O Lord. To value the fact. That thou art not calling us. To judgment now. That thou hast not.

Ended the day of grace. Today. And we pray. That as we recognize. Our privileges. In thy patience. In thy waiting.

To be gracious. Forbid that we should. Spurn. Such privileges. And treat lightly. Such blessings. And opportunities. That help us.

O Lord. To be awake. And to redeem the time. Because the days. Are evil. Now wilt thou watch over. Each one of us.

[ 37 : 13 ] And send us away. With a blessing in our hearts. Giving thanks to thee. For the truth of thy word. However deeply. It may cut us. May we thank thee.

That thy word is truth. And given to us. For a purpose. And may it be used. O God. To awaken every one of us. So that we might. Be.  
That we might serve thee. All the more faithfully. And run with greater zeal. And concern. The race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus.  
Who will one day come. In the clouds of heaven. In power. And in great glory. For his great name's sake. Amen.