

## Ready or Not, Here I Come!

### [Matthew 25:1-13](#)

I remember all the hype, concern, and downright panic surrounding Y2K. The predictions were rampant about the limitations with our computer systems. When computers were first invented, a specific year was depicted with the last two digits, hence the year 1992 was simply noted as 92. Everyone was thrown into turmoil about the year 2000 because in the computer world, the year 1900 and the year 2000 were considered the same date. Computers would not be able to recognize the difference between dates starting with 19 and dates starting with 20. Numerous agencies were mobilized in every area of industry to combat the problem. As a global entity, computers had become the intricate workings in every feasible area from banking to healthcare to national security. Should this system fail, worldwide panic would ensue.

So the experts jumped into high gear, planning on every level. Backup systems were dusted off and prepped for battle. Consultants were working double overtime to put security patches in place and correct this potentially devastating problem. No one took off on New Year's Eve. We knew the time of the arrival of Y2K but we did not know the impact. So we watched, and we waited, with tools in hand.

In the parable of the ten bridesmaids, we see some similarities and differences to our Y2K experience. We see ten bridesmaids preparing to meet the groom, but only half of them had the forethought to be prepared with extra oil for their lamps -a backup system. Each of the ten carried a lamp with them. We have seen the scripture refer to Christ's followers as the light of the world. The girls and I sang the song, 'This Little

Light of Mine, I'm gonna let it shine'. We each carry the light of God with us and in turn share that light with others.

So each of them carried a lamp, but only five carried extra fuel for their lamps. What does the lamp oil represent? Perhaps it is anything that helps us maintain our faith in Christ. Perhaps it is fellowship. Perhaps it is the word of God and the study and reflection of the scriptures. Perhaps it is prayer and meditation. Perhaps it is worship and Sabbath time. I would propose the lamp oil represents all of these things. Our prayer of confession contains the line, 'we have fed our bodies a rich diet while neglecting to feed our souls'. How true this can be. But our lamp oil will only last so long before we need to replenish it.

So five bridesmaids carried extra fuel for their lamps, similar to our Y2K consultants that worked diligently to patch computer systems yet maintained backup systems in parallel just

in case. They were prepared. Does anyone know the Boy Scout Motto? Yes, it is “Be prepared”. Does anyone know the Girl Scout Motto? It’s very similar – it says, “Always be prepared”. I’m leaning a little with the girls today – Always be prepared. The Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ will return and gather all his faithful followers with him. But we do not know when that will happen. We can look for signs, and some will say we are definitely in the last days. Only God knows when the return of Jesus will occur. Our lives are fragile and unpredictable. None of us knows when we may pass on from this life. While we are here we are challenged to keep our lamps full and be watchful and prepared to meet Jesus.

It is interesting that this parable had a central character as the groom which can be seen as Jesus. In today’s world, however, who is the main character of any wedding? THE

BRIDE! That is certainly true. Everything revolves around her. The groom is just another guy in a tux! If anyone here is a quilter, you know the purpose of a shadow block – it's a fairly plain block that is used as an accent to the fancy ones. It is meant to be plain so it intentionally fades into the background like a shadow. Sorry guys, but that appears to be the groom's function in today's wedding scene!

Have any of you watched the show 'Bridezillas'? I can only stand a few minutes of it because the show is happy to depict brides at their most stressful and trying times, making everyone in the audience wonder why in the world the groom would even consider marrying her! But it's all about the bride – she's the star of the show. She's the one who frets over every detail wanting the absolutely perfect day. Everyone else takes the back seat – especially the pastor! And from the show's

perspective, the more controversy there is the better. That's probably why I can only stand a few minutes.

Yet in this parable, Jesus is represented as the groom and the church as the bride/bridesmaid. Are we focused more on the church (the bride) than on Jesus Christ? Are we more concerned with the day-to-day operations of the church that we forget to acknowledge the reason we come together? It is all about worshipping God. It is all about sharing God's love with others. It is all about helping our community find a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

There is a story of a young couple and how they had met and had their first date set for a Friday night at 8:00pm. The girl didn't know the guy well enough to know that he was constantly late for everything, so when 9:00pm came around she figured that she had been stood up. So, she took off her makeup, put on

her pajamas and grabbed some junk food and plopped down on the couch for a night of TV. The doorbell rang and it was her date. He stared at her for a second, and said “I’m almost two hours late and you’re still not ready?”

So we watch and we wait. We prepare for the return of the groom. We make sure we continue to do God’s will in our lives and in our community. We keep our lamps filled with fellowship, prayer, study, meditation, and worship, and we keep our backup oil with us as well. We use trials and difficulties as ways to strengthen and focus our light. We invite others to join us as we praise God in this world and look forward to our eternal reward in heaven. We do not know the day of the wedding, but we do know that it will be a wondrous and beautiful occasion not to be missed. Let us not be caught trying to buy oil when the groom returns and invites us to the heavenly

wedding feast. As the Girl Scout Motto goes, let us 'Always Be Prepared'. Amen.