Kids – Fri morn – excited? Advent cal – 22d. 4 Sundays - today 1st Sun of Advent. Light candle.

* Advent (Latin) – “Coming”. Think about J coming to earth.
  + Scandal – God coming to earth as tiny - incontinent – human – poor family – questionable parentage - obscure town – occupied country. God takes v nature of a servant – obedient to death – even death on a cross[[1]](#endnote-1).
  + Most High God becomes the most low: dead servant. To save us.
  + This time of year: remember that.
    - Traditionally, this time of year – as we remember his first coming in humility – also think about his 2nd coming in glory.
* Today – church is waiting for him again. Always advent – waiting for his coming.
  + Qn: are you waiting for his coming today? Are you ready for Jesus to arrive? Promised many times: coming back.

Looking at a parable today – commonly known as p of 10 virgins. Problem: read too much into parables…

Parable of the wise and foolish shoppers[[2]](#endnote-2):

* 2 men - friends – looking fwd to iPhone 10 release. One: foolish, other: wise.
* Big day comes – foolish: took cc. Wise took cc + plenty of cash.
  + Queue from 5am – excitement building – doors – rumour trickles through queue – demand so high – cc terminals crashed – cash only.
* Foolish man: turns to his friend: lend me some cash – loads. Sorry mate: not enough for me and you- go to bank. Hurries off to find bank – RBS closed local branch.
  + Wise man – walks out with his new phone.
* Later – foolish man comes back – wadge of cash – queue gone – sold out. Bangs on manager’s door – surely you’ve got one left round the back somewhere – no, sorry, all gone.
  + Therefore, be ready – never know when the cc m/c might go down.
  + Msg: Something you really, really want – Be ready – be prepared - /leave it to the last minute b/c too late.
* In my parable: matter how many men? iPhone or Samsung? Phone? Bank symbolise something? Manager? That’s how parables work - 1 big message: in this case - be ready. /Read too much into details.
* B/c situation is familiar to us – easy to see details are not important – home in on big msg.

Just as my parable of the shoppers was set in a familiar scene to us – J’s parable was in a familiar scene then. Wedding festivities – everyone’s been to a wedding…

* Read Matthew 25:1-13
  + Wedding day - big late-night reception at Bridegroom’s house – celebrate with happy couple in their new home. Before get there – bridal party tour round the town – procession - receiving greetings – presents.
    - Everyone takes part, holding their lamps in the darkness – atmospheric. Exciting and enjoyable for everyone.
  + 10 girls waiting for the bridal party to arrive – near Bridegroom’s home – waiting for the procession to arrive. Got their lamps ready – chatting.
    - But it’s getting later and later – warm – late – taking forever to get round the town – quick snooze before they get here.
    - Middle of night: hear procession arriving – Come out to meet the bridegroom! Straightening hair – adjusting clothes – fumbling with lamps.
  + 5 wise girls refill their lamps with spare oil they’ve brought with them.
  + 5 foolish girls haven’t got any. Can we have some of yours? No – not enough. Go buy some – knock on some doors - /hard to find, everyone has oil.
    - 5 hurry off – but while they’re out trying to find oil – bridegroom arrives
    - 5 wise girls swept into the procession – into the house – party begins – and the door is shut.
  + 5 later come back – let us in – no, too late.
* Make of it? Tempting to ask: Virgins?
  + Title: 10 virgins. Start: /sexual – just way of describing age. Virgin = young unmarried woman. Married v young - 14-15 – so parable is about 10 young teens.
  + 10? 50-50 split? Lamps? Oil? Door? Opens door?
* **Story has big point #1**. Not too hard to work out - J spells it out for us: **v13** “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.
  + Keep watch – be aware – be ready – be aware – b/c /know when J is coming back.
  + Fits w context: All of ch24-25: end times.
    - **Matthew 24:36** About that day or hour no-one know, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
  + Rest of ch24 into 25 – several parables about being ready.
    - /ready at time of Noah – too late.
    - Homeowner /ready to stop someone breaking into his house.
    - Employee – boss goes away – does a bunch of bad things – abusing power – boss comes back - /ready – severe consequences for him.
    - This parable: be ready – make sure ready for when he comes.
    - Desc: scariest p. Some who are expecting to get into the wedding feast won’t get in. Ready for the bridegroom – part of Kingdom. Some think they’re ready, /ready - /prepared for his coming – will be excluded from Kingdom of G.
* Last Sunday PM – Come - least expect: doing everyday things – office – cooking – loading washing m/c – sleep – TV. Trumpet sound – J back in glory. In an instant - blink of eye – flash.
  + When he comes – door is closed – too late.
  + Friends, there is an urgency to the gospel message – /know the timing of your meeting w God - /in our hands. Could be 50 years – 5 years – 5 months – 5 minutes – heart attack in ch service.
  + Those who were not ready: bang on the door – ‘Lord, Lord, open the door for us!’- ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’ Door remained closed.
* When J returns – glory shines across the sky – there will be many /ready - who – with panicked look in eyes – scrabbling about – how do I get right w God again? Where did I put that Bible? What was it said in SS? Too late. Must be ready to meet w God.
* Many ppl – expect to be let in - /be. Died today – or he returned – right now – ready to face him?
  + Rope illustration[[3]](#endnote-3).
    - Rope: imagine infinite length. Timeline of your life. Ever.
    - End: Life here. Then eternity somewhere else.
    - Many ppl: consumed with this. Save – enjoy end bit.
    - Bible: what I do here – determines – ever. Why spend all effort on this tiny part?
    - Ppl look at your life: stupid – what you do here will affect that. No, what you’re doing will affect your eternity.
    - Read for end? Some: think about it later – loads of time – too busy now – other priorities – get GCSEs – A-levels – uni – job – married – family – retired. And the end will come: not ready.
    - That’s what this parable is about.
* I /see your heart – you /see my heart. Only you can examine yourself – am I in the faith – real faith – genuine faith – or is all this just a show? Truly repented of my sin – trusted J’s death on cross to save me – walking with him? Only you can answer that one.

Anything else we can glean from this parable? Careful not to read too much in. But…

**#2 Jesus will be a long time coming**

**v5** The bridegroom was a long time in coming[[4]](#endnote-4).

* Temptation for those who are not ready: carry on not being ready. He’s coming. Refer back to #1.
* Temptation for those who are looking forward to his coming:
  + Give up – despair – look around world – so terrible – let’s be honest: long time.
  + Why so long?
    - **2Peter 3:3,9** in the last days scoffers will come … They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? … The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
  + Wants everyone to be ready – more time. If waiting for him - frustrating – it’s out of his love.

**#3 Can’t borrow someone else’s preparation**

* Foolish girls ask if they can borrow some oil from the wise girls. You were prepared – we weren’t. At the crunch point – moment – help us out!
  + No – can’t.
  + Can’t rely on anyone else to help you when you die and face God – or when J returns
    - /borrow someone else’s preparation – s/o else’s faith. Either it’s your own faith or it’s no faith at all. Either trusting J or not.
    - Can’t say: my friend trusted J – and I trust them. My spouse is a Xn – does that get me a pass? My kids go to church.
  + **Ezekiel 18:30** I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign LORD.
* Often said, “God has no grandchildren”[[5]](#endnote-5)
* Just hoping for best this morning? Hoping someone else will get you off the hook? Hoping someone else’s goodness will be good enough for you too?
  + In fact, half-right, but if hoping spouse – friend – parents – wrong ppl.
  + Jesus
  + Come.

*Pr: Rdy: /give up – keep going - /sucked in.*

*/Rdy: come today – oil of Sp – life & hope in J.*

**Discussion questions:**

Harold Camping, broadcaster, author and evangelist, predicted that Jesus would return to earth on May 21st 2011. Watch this CNN news report, on the occasion of his death. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erTyXwYeVXk>

1. Do you remember Harold Camping? Did any of your friends comment on his predictions at the time? What did you say?
2. What did Harold Camping get right? Philippians 3:20; 2Corinthians 5:8; Hebrews 2:15; Eagar expectation of Jesus’ return; bold evangelism; not afraid of death.
3. What did he get wrong? Matthew 24:36 – the timing!
4. The parable of the wise and foolish girls (Matthew 25:1-13) has been described as the scariest of Jesus’ parables. Why do you think that might be? What’s the big point of the parable? That some who expect to get into the Kingdom of God, won’t – they are not as prepared as they assume.
5. Read Luke 12:42-40[[6]](#endnote-6) – this is a similar passage to Matthew 24-25. Jesus uses four word-pictures to explain what it means to be ready for his return. Can you identify them? What is the message of each?
   1. Be dressed and ready for service (v35): always be ready to serve Jesus – don’t have spiritual pyjama-days! (1Peter 1:13)
   2. Keep your lamps burning (v35): In a world with no electricity and no lampposts, someone expecting a night-time visitor would keep a lamp burning. Imagine faffing about with oil lamps and fire (no matches!) while the visitor is waiting outside. In other words, be expectant of his arrival.
   3. Servants who immediately open the door when the master returns (v36-37a): Be standing at the door, waiting.
      1. Don’t miss the amazing statement in v37b: if they are ready, Jesus will come and serve them! Even in glory, it seems that Jesus will serve his people, reminiscent of John 13:1-5
   4. An alert home-owner stopping a thief breaking in: Bad things are avoided by being alert. All 4 pictures are about being ready for Jesus to return.
6. In those 4 word-pictures, what is the relationship between the characters? What does that tell us about being ready for Jesus’ return? Master and servant. Being ready for him means being his servant and him being the Lord & master of our lives. What does it mean to be a servant of Christ?
   1. How we use our time
   2. How we treat our bodies (1Cor 6:19-20 – what’s the context?)
   3. Where we spend our money
   4. Having a ministry within the body where we serve others in his name. I’m sure there’s plenty of others…
7. How would you respond to someone who said, “Jesus is my saviour, but I haven’t yet made him my Lord”
   1. What are they really saying do you think? I want Jesus as my saviour but I don’t want to obey him. I want forgiveness without repentance.
   2. How confident would that person feel when Jesus comes back do you think?
8. Read Revelation 22: 12-13, 17, 20-21 and spend some time in prayer about these things.

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1. Philippians 2:7-8 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <https://escapeallthesethings.com/parable-of-the-ten-virgins/> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. This is from Francis Chan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jF_x8dsvb_4> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Feature of the other parables too: Matthew 24:48 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Often attributed to Billy Graham [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Some of these questions are from [https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-61-are-you-ready-christ’s-return-luke-1235-48](https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-61-are-you-ready-christ's-return-luke-1235-48) [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
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