

- I. **Matthew 25:13** –Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.
- II. **Are you ready?**
 - a. Growing up in Colorado we often drove long distances... way out in the country... if you broke down, the nearest ranch could be hours of walking
 - i. We always had an emergency kit in the trunk that included jumper cables, a tow strap, shovel, blankets, candles, and food and water.
 - b. I'm not sure what you need in your trunk in Portland, other than an umbrella
 - c. However, we are constantly reminded to be prepared for the possible earthquake or big natural disaster that could leave us without power, shelter, food or water for a time.
 - d. Are you ready? Do you have a ready bag?
 - i. Considering your time and place today, what would you put in an emergency bag so that you could survive for a few days or more?
 - ii. Some say, "Ah, that will never happen... at least in my lifetime."
 - 1. And then along comes 2020, the year that will live in infamy
 - 2. Who knows what we might face? Or when it will happen...
 - e. Let's just say you do some shopping for your ready bag...
 - i. You could fill it with all kinds of silly gadgets... things like a cheap plastic whistle with a compass embedded in it... or a snake poison kit that supposedly sucks the poison out of your snakebite wound
 - ii. You could buy a bargain emergency kit with 100's of junky little things filling every pocket... and in a real emergency situation, you might use 3% of the contents
 - f. What's really important?
 - i. Shelter to stay cool or warm, water and food.
 - ii. With these basic needs met, most of us could survive for a long time
- III. **As our Church year comes to a close**, Jesus reminds us to be ready.
 - a. He is helping His followers to consider what is most important
 - b. Leading up to our parable today, Jesus told several stories of what the Last Day will be like, and how people will not be ready
 - c. So He tells this Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids and says the kingdom of heaven will be like... (verse 1) meaning in this case, the end of time
 - i. Five of the women are prepared with extra oil and five of the women are not prepared – and with the long delay of the groom, they all fall asleep.
 - ii. The critical point comes in verse 6... "But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'"
 - 1. Startled out of a dead sleep... shocked into reality... looking around for the one thing they needed to do – light the way.
 - 2. For some it was as easy as a quick refill... but for others...
 - d. I'm not sure I can shed too much light on the deep meanings of this parable
 - i. What does the oil represent? Why wouldn't they share? Why couldn't they go in later?

e. The two things I can say with confidence is that Jesus is the bridegroom coming when we least expect it, and yet... we are expected to be ready...

IV. **What's in your spiritual "ready bag"?**

- a. If you were planning in your head a few minutes ago to head down to REI and get a tent, a cook stove, water purifiers and all kinds of emergency equipment... I want to bring you back to church for a minute...
- b. What's most important when it comes to your spiritual welfare?
- c. You could fill your ready bag with all kinds of gadgets and cheap junk
 - i. How many books about spirituality come out that are all the rage for a time... but fade into obscurity? For example, "The Prayer of Jabez"
 1. Authors are busily writing books right now on how we can do church in the midst of a pandemic... how long will we need those books?
 - ii. How many of us constantly read books about the Bible rather than the Bible itself?
 1. I know many people who claim to know a lot about Jesus and Christianity who have never read the Bible and studied the actual Scriptures
 - iii. Many people get their deepest spiritual truths from Facebook and platitudes that came from who knows where...
 - iv. Some of us watch television preachers that offer all kinds of cheap gadgets like God will never allow you to suffer in life... or struggle financially if you have enough faith (by the way, how's that going for all those people in 2020?)
 - v. Others decide to have nothing in their spiritual ready bag at all.
 1. They say, "I'm a Christian," but they never read their bible, they never go to church, pray, spend time with other believers...
- d. If could come up with a spiritual ready bag, what is in it? What are the most important things in your spiritual kit?
 - i. The Word of God, both written and proclaimed, is so important in supporting our faith
 - ii. The Lord's Supper – the strengthening of our faith
 - iii. Baptism – the anchor which holds and supports us in our faith
 - iv. Repenting and seeking forgiveness keeps us humble in our faith
 - v. Other believers who encourage and hold us up in our faith.
- e. All of these things give us a solid ready bag to welcome Jesus... whenever He comes back!

V. **Are you ready? By faith, you are ready!**

- a. Nothing is more important than the faith God poured into our hearts when we heard the Word... when we were Baptized...
- b. The trust we have that God's promises are true... that Jesus (God Himself) really did live in this world as a man, really did suffer and die for me... and really did rise up from the grave to forgive me of my sins.
- c. This faith is not a gadget and certainly not cheap

- i. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, "...You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ."
 - ii. We were bought with a price (1 Corinthians 7:23) that far exceeds any worldly payment – because it cost Jesus His life.
 - iii. What an amazing gift He has given us through our faith... and not only that, but a readiness for His return!
- d. No fear, no worries about a world that is passing away, no anxiety about what tomorrow holds... but a faith and trust in Jesus which sustains us until all this (all creation, including our bodies) is made new

VI. **Faith is like the bag... the ready bag.**

- a. As you go along with life, there are many things you can put in that bag.
 - i. Some things are worthless and cheap... some are very durable
 - ii. The Lord knows what you need for every emergency, for every challenge in your faith life
- b. A beautiful representation of what we all need as Christians is found in nearly every church...
 - i. First, you have the Word of God which is proclaimed from the pulpit
 - ii. Second, you have Baptism which happens in the font
 - iii. Third, you have the Lord's Supper which happens on the altar
 - iv. Finally, you have the people of God in pews (or on their couches)
- c. Our ready bag is filled with durable, long-lasting, and the most critical things to make it to the end... His Word and Sacraments – and the communion of saints.

VII. **In the midst of so much trial and suffering, turn to the good stuff.**

- a. I know our eyes are always seeking out the shiny gadget (thus our kitchen cabinets and garage shelves have many things headed for Goodwill)
 - i. I know we sometimes get caught up in the things that will fade and not really matter in the end...
- b. But the time-tested, long-lasting items in your faith kit are God's Word, your Baptism, the Lord's Supper and other believers
- c. By faith, no matter the day or the hour, you have a "spiritual ready bag"
- d. Praise God that He has given us such amazing, quality gear to keep us ready...until He comes again, Amen.