

# UNEXPECTED RETURN

## Lesson 11

### Matthew 25:1–13

#### RECAP

Take a moment to share about your experience with last week's "Spiritual Practice" and "On Mission" sections.

#### BIG IDEA

The resurrection of Jesus wasn't the end of the story. After He rose from the dead, Jesus appeared to more than 500 people, restored relationship with Peter, and commissioned His disciples to go into the world and share the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> Then He ascended into heaven with the promise that He would come back.<sup>2</sup> Now, we get to actively wait and anticipate Jesus' return.

#### CONTEXT

In this lesson, we will look back at some of Jesus' teachings before His death and resurrection. His eventual return to earth was something He alluded to frequently during His time on earth.<sup>3</sup> One of the most memorable times was recorded in **Matthew 24–25**. In these chapters, Jesus was in the middle of His last week on earth before His death. He was traveling daily into Jerusalem to teach and do miracles. One night as He and the disciples left Jerusalem, "one of the disciples pointed out to Jesus the temple buildings, remarking on their incredible beauty.<sup>4</sup> ... Jesus acknowledged the great buildings but then made a startling statement: This wonder of the world would be completely destroyed."<sup>5</sup> The disciples asked when it would happen and added "*and what will be the sign of your coming at the end of the age?*"<sup>6</sup> (**Matthew 24:3**). The teaching

<sup>1</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:5–9; John 21; Matthew 28:18–20**

<sup>2</sup> **Acts 1:6–11**

<sup>3</sup> **John 14:1–3; Luke 12:40; Matthew 16:27; Mark 13:1–37**

<sup>4</sup> **Mark 13:1; Matthew 24:1**

<sup>5</sup> Barton, Bruce B. *Life Application Bible Commentary: Matthew*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1996. 463–464

<sup>6</sup> "The second part of their question referred to the Messiah's reign in God's kingdom. In the disciples' minds, one event would occur immediately after the other. They expected the Messiah to inaugurate his kingdom soon, and they wanted to know the sign that it was about to arrive. Jesus gave them a prophetic picture of that time, including events leading up to it. He also talked about far future events connected with the last days and his second coming when he would return to earth to judge all people. As many of the Old Testament prophets had done, Jesus predicted both near and distant events without putting them in chronological order." Ibid. 465–466

Jesus gave in response was a prophetic picture of the events leading up to His second coming when He will return to judge the world. **Matthew 25** records parables that Jesus used to help further explain this teaching.

## **READ MATTHEW 25:1–13**

<sup>1</sup> *“Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> The five who were foolish didn’t take enough olive oil for their lamps, <sup>4</sup> but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil. <sup>5</sup> When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.*

<sup>6</sup> *“At midnight they were roused by the shout, ‘Look, the bridegroom is coming! Come out and meet him!’*

<sup>7</sup> *“All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. <sup>8</sup> Then the five foolish ones asked the others, ‘Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.’*

<sup>9</sup> *“But the others replied, ‘We don’t have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.’*

<sup>10</sup> *“But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. <sup>11</sup> Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, ‘Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!’*

<sup>12</sup> *“But he called back, ‘Believe me, I don’t know you!’*

<sup>13</sup> *“So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.*

## **QUESTIONS**

1. In the first parable of **Matthew 25**, Jesus described the Kingdom of Heaven like ten bridesmaids. In your own words, how would you describe the two types of bridesmaids? (**Matthew 25:1–4**)

2. What happened when the bridegroom was delayed? (25:5)

- a. “Their sleep was not condemned, because both the wise and the foolish slept.<sup>7</sup> ‘Sleep’ simply illustrated the long time they waited for the bridegroom.”<sup>8</sup> This parable helped Jesus explain that there would be a time of waiting before His return. What comes to mind when you think about waiting in general?
- b. What comes to mind when you think about waiting for Jesus to return?

3. The topic of Jesus’ second coming is an ongoing theme in the New Testament. Read through the following Scriptures and underline what you notice about how to wait for Jesus to return.

a. **Acts 1:6–11**

*<sup>6</sup> So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?” <sup>7</sup> He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about*

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<sup>7</sup> The foolish bridesmaids were condemned not for their sleep but for their lack of preparation.

<sup>8</sup> Barton, Bruce B. *Life Application Bible Commentary: Matthew*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1996. 488

*me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

*<sup>9</sup> After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him.*

*<sup>10</sup> As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them.*

*<sup>11</sup> “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”*

**b. 1 Thessalonians 5:1–6**

*<sup>5:1</sup> Now concerning how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters, we don’t really need to write you. <sup>2</sup> For you know quite well that the day of the Lord’s return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.*

*<sup>3</sup> When people are saying, “Everything is peaceful and secure,” then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman’s labor pains begin. And there will be no escape. <sup>4</sup> But you aren’t in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won’t be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief.*

*<sup>5</sup> For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don’t belong to darkness and night. <sup>6</sup> So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded.*

**c. 1 Peter 4:7–10**

*<sup>7</sup> The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. <sup>8</sup> Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.*

*<sup>10</sup> God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.*

**d. 2 Peter 3:3–4, 8–15**

*<sup>3</sup> Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. <sup>4</sup> They will say, “What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before*

*the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.”*

*<sup>8</sup> But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment. <sup>11</sup> Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, <sup>12</sup> looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. <sup>13</sup> But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness. <sup>14</sup> And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight. <sup>15</sup> And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved.*

- e. How would you summarize what it looks like to wait for Jesus' return?

4. What happened when the bridegroom was finally on his way? (**Matthew 25:6–10**)

a. When the five foolish bridesmaids returned, why weren't they allowed to enter the marriage feast? (**25:10–13**)

b. Why is this parable important for us today?

5. Traditionally, when the bridegroom arrived it kicked off a seven-day marriage festival, full of feasting and celebration.<sup>9</sup> When Jesus comes back, it will be a glorious return as He comes in power, glory, and majesty. His return will begin an eternal festival of worship, feasting, and celebration for those who follow Him (**Revelation 19:6–9**).

a. As you read over the following passages, what are you most looking forward to about Jesus' return?

i. **John 14:1–3**

<sup>1</sup> *"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and*

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<sup>9</sup> "It was customary for a couple's engagement to last about one year in Jewish tradition. After the engagement was complete, the groom would proceed to the house of his bride, escort her back to his home and begin a seven-day marriage festival. Preparation for the unexpected hour of the groom's arrival was part of the local customs." *NIV First-Century Study Bible: Explore Scripture in Its Jewish and Early Christian Context*. Zondervan, 2014. Bible Gateway Plus

*trust also in me. <sup>2</sup> There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.*

**ii. Revelation 21:1–7**

*<sup>1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." <sup>5</sup> And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." <sup>6</sup> And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. <sup>7</sup> All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.*

**iii. Revelation 22:1–6**

*<sup>1</sup> Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. <sup>2</sup> It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there,*

*and his servants will worship him. <sup>4</sup> And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever. <sup>6</sup> Then the angel said to me, “Everything you have heard and seen is trustworthy and true. The Lord God, who inspires his prophets, has sent his angel to tell his servants what will happen soon.”*

b. In what ways does the anticipation of Jesus’ return give you hope?

6. Each of these stories tells us more about Jesus, the unexpected King. What is one thing you have learned about Jesus from this lesson, and how will it impact how you live?

## SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

“Waiting is the ability to sustain a deep desire with patient hope or a shorter term frustration with [composure].”<sup>10</sup> ... Waiting is where we learn to let go of our control and expectations, and trust that God is good no matter what is happening. ... Waiting with God is where we learn how to be happy when we don’t get our own way. It’s where we get to practice learning how to forgive reality for being different than we want. Waiting is where we learn how to forgive people for being their less-than-perfect selves, and waiting is where we learn how to forgive God for not being like a magician, a conjurer or a wizard. Waiting with God teaches us to let go of our expectations so we can receive what is given. ... Waiting doesn’t mean you are doing something wrong. It doesn’t mean God hasn’t heard you. It doesn’t mean you are wasting time. Waiting is an invitation to wait with God for the God who comes ‘to us like the spring rain’ when it is time.”<sup>11</sup>

Active waiting is a spiritual practice—an act of worship.

Spend some time thinking and meditating on the above quote, which describes active waiting. What part stands out to you?

What does active waiting look like for you?

How can you actively wait this week?

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<sup>10</sup> Equanimity: “Mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper, especially in a difficult situation.” Google dictionary

<sup>11</sup> Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. IVP Books, 2015. 138-140

## ON MISSION

Going about our everyday lives it can be easy to not think about eternity. However, at Jesus' second coming there are eternal consequences for everyone. For those who know Christ, eternal life, and for those who don't know Christ, eternal suffering. This reality creates urgency for us to live on mission (**Matthew 28:18–20**). We don't want anyone to suffer the anguish of being separated from Him forever.

Transformation doesn't happen overnight, but it does happen. Talk to God about how you can have an active role in someone's transformation—in introducing them to our amazing God.

If this is overwhelming for you, ask God for courage. If you don't know any non-believers, find ways to meet them. If you experience rejection, remember who you are as a child of God and keep on trying.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

## SERMON NOTES