Matthew 25:1–13 ~10 minutes

CENTRAL THOUGHT: *God gives us faith; we nurture it together, but each of us must learn to live it.*

Sermon Opener

Good morning, Friends. **[Slide 1]**

This week, we set aside a day to honor our veterans and remember people whose service helped shape the lives we enjoy… Although we should not set aside just one day, we should keep their sacrifice in our ongoing memory. Their example deserves our gratitude. But their commitment also reminds us of something: we may be inspired by another person's faithfulness, yet we must still decide how we will live…

Many of us first encountered faith through someone else's example… Maybe it was a praying parent, a faithful grandparent, or a Sunday school teacher who loved us well. God used those relationships to help us grow. That is one of the church's gifts. Yet there is one response no community can make for us.

God gives us faith; we nurture it together, but each of us must learn to live it. **[Slide 2]**

Main Point and Scripture Intro

Jesus tells of ten bridesmaids waiting for a wedding. All ten have lamps. All ten expect the bridegroom. Then he is delayed, and something surprising happens: all ten bridesmaids fall asleep. **[Slide 3]**

Even the wise ones grew weary. The difference was not that five were perfect and five were weak. **Five had prepared for the wait**; five had not. When the bridegroom arrived, the unprepared women discovered they could not borrow enough oil from the others.

Jesus is not discouraging generosity. He is revealing a responsibility that cannot be handed off. The wise bridesmaids weren't wise because they had better companions. **They had taken responsibility for their own readiness.**

Our families can pray with us. Our meeting can teach, encourage, and support us. But no one else can answer Christ's invitation in our place. Readiness cannot be borrowed. **[Slide 4]**

I think of an old oil lamp on a farmhouse shelf. Perhaps it belonged to a grandparent. You can treasure its history and tell stories about the evenings it once brightened. But when the electricity fails, yesterday's memories cannot make it shine. Someone must tend the lamp and make sure it has oil. Because it was meant to give light. **[Slide 5]**

The faith of earlier generations is a wonderful inheritance. The early Friends treasured that inheritance… But insisted that Jesus Christ is living and present to teach his people today. They sought not merely to remember his work, but to be transformed by him.[1]

That is also the heart of holiness. Holiness is not a reputation we inherit or a prize we earn by trying harder. It is Christ forming his character in us through grace as we respond to the Holy Spirit.

Closing with an Invitation and Query

So we practice forgiveness when resentment would be easier. We practice honesty when truth is uncomfortable, and compassion when another person needs mercy. We practice repentance when Christ shows us a better way. **[Slide 6]**

> Prayer, Scripture, worship, and fellowship help us listen and respond. These practices do not purchase God's love; they help us live in the love he has already given.

Y'know… Some of us worry about children or grandchildren whose faith looks different from what we hoped. So, what do we do…? We can continue loving them…, praying for them…, and staying faithfully present. Amen? We cannot control their answer to Christ. And neither can they answer for us.

Jesus says, "*Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour*" (Matthew 25:13, NIV). **[Slide 7]**

Remember: even the wise bridesmaids slept. **Keeping watch is not frantic perfection or something we must do every moment;** it is a life of readiness shaped by a relationship with Jesus.

Perhaps forgiveness. Perhaps a difficult conversation. Perhaps simply trusting Jesus today: The lamp has been placed in our hands. **[Slide 8]**

By God's grace, may our lives shine with the holiness of Christ.

Amen.

OPEN WORSHIP

As we enter a time of open worship—waiting together before God, listening for the Holy Spirit.

Our query this morning is: What am I being invited to practice that no one else can practice for me?

If this is new to you, you don't have to find the right words or make anything happen.

You might begin with this simple prayer: "Jesus, here I am. Help me listen."

You may bring something from today's Scripture before God, offer him a concern, or simply rest in his presence. If you sense the Spirit prompting you to share a brief message with the congregation, take a moment to discern it before speaking.

You are also welcome to remain prayerfully silent. Let us wait together before the Lord.

RESEARCH NOTE

1. Paul N. Anderson, "Primitive Christianity Revived—The Original Quaker Vision," *Quaker Religious Thought* 131 (September 2018): 5–8.

Welcome Opening

Good morning, Friends, and welcome to Marion First Friends Church!

We're especially glad to have our guests with us today, including the Marion Gospel Choir from McCulloch Junior High and High School. What a joy to welcome these young people back to worship with us!

This morning, as we approach Veterans Day, we will also take a few moments to recognize and give thanks for the men and women who have served our country. Through a special reading of *American Cowboy Marine* and a slideshow honoring our veterans, we will remember their service and the sacrifices made by so many families.

Whether this is your first visit or you've worshiped here for many years, we're grateful you're here.

Our message today is *A Faith You Must Practice*, and it reminds us of something worth carrying into the week: **God gives us faith; we nurture it together, but each of us must learn to live it.**

As we begin, may we set aside the distractions of the week and turn our attention toward the living Christ, who has gathered us together.

Let us pray.

Opening Prayer

Gracious and loving Father,

Thank you for bringing us together this morning as a family of faith. We come with grateful hearts for those who have served our country, for the young voices who will lead us in song, and for the generations whose faithfulness has helped shape our lives.

Lord Jesus, meet us here today. Quiet the distractions we carry, open our hearts to your Word, and help us recognize the presence of your Holy Spirit among us. May our music, our prayers, our remembrance, and even our silence become offerings of worship that honor you.

And as we leave this place, may the faith you have given us become visible through lives of holiness, compassion, courage, and love.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.