

The Chair

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Many nights when I leave Redeemer, I take lots of material in my briefcase to work on when I get home. It seems that there is never enough time to get everything done. Most of us have good intentions of working at home. Then it happens -- I walk in the door and there is my red (mauve-Ginnie does not see it as red and I don't know what mauve is) chair. The chair is a soft and warm recliner. When I walk in the door it begs me to sit and relax, but my mind says "no, I have work to do." Back and forth in my mind I go until I

finally give in and sit down to relax just for a few minutes. But then the chair grabs me and holds me for the rest of the night! When I head for bed I feel guilty and a little panicky as I think of all that I did not get done.

I think all of us have struggled with the "chair" in our lives. There is a danger however, when that struggle is in our spiritual lives.

The lesson for Sunday is Matthew 25, verses 1 thru 13 -- the "Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids". Verse 13 seems to be the conclusion.

"Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour". The difficulty I have with this being the conclusion is that in verse 5 it says "that they all slept." However, the difference between the two groups was the preparation and willingness to trim their lamps and keep them burning. There is an old spiritual that sings, "Keep your lamps trimmed and burning." I think that song would make a good conclusion for this parable.

When the chair grabs us spiritually it stops us from keeping our faith strong and trimmed. Keeping our spiritual life trimmed and oiled is crucial for Christians. We keep spiritually strong by fixing our focus on what it means to be a disciple. Do we take time to worship regularly even when we are on vacation? Do we carve out time every day to pray and communicate with God? Do we take time to read the word daily? Too often the answer to these questions is no. We have good intentions but then the "chair" gets us and we become too busy to pray, worship or read the word. In that case we resemble the foolish bridesmaids, too occupied with the business of life to keep our spiritual life strong and growing.

We live in a busy world. We are busy with all our family commitments, job requirements, and personal pleasures that we simply fall asleep spiritually and put the nurturing of our faith on hold while we get everything else done. Our faith is never in question, it is just the nurturing that gets put on hold. Keep strong in your faith. Keep strengthening that faith by prayer,

worship and scripture. In other words, in spiritual matters, say Verse 13 is the conclusion that Matthew places on this parable concerning the return of Jesus. Jesus was to return in glory soon, but it had not happened yet. Get out of the "chair"!

Notes on the text:

Most of Jesus' parables are properly understood as timeless tales. This parable is focused on a time -- the future.

It is not a good ethical model for the present: The bridesmaids did not share their oil, so when the foolish bridesmaids arrive back they are excluded any way.

Verse 5 makes reference to both groups of bridesmaids sleeping . The key is that the wise bridesmaids were prepared with oil and trimmed wicks.

This parable is based on the actual events of a Jewish wedding. The bride would wait for the groom to come with a parade of people. It could happen at any time. Then they would dance through the streets until they came to the place for the wedding. Once the doors were shut they would remain shut until the celebration was over.

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