

Series: Key Moments

February 15, 2015

## **Title: Uh Oh!**

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**Text: Matthew 25:1-13**

### **Late for the Limo?**

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The Kingdom of Heaven is like a bride who planned an elaborate wedding at a fancy resort, to be followed by an elegant reception. She invited her six bridesmaids to spend the night before her wedding with her at a suite several miles from the wedding venue. A limo would come by in the morning to bring them to the wedding.

Needless to say, the night before the wedding was filled with laughter and food, old stories and dreamy predictions. One by one, the bridesmaids drifted off to sleep, hoping to catch a few winks before the big day. Three of them checked their iPhones before going to bed. They caught up on a few texts, and plugged the phones into their chargers so that they would have plenty of battery life for the wedding.

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The other three bridesmaids also checked their phones before going to bed. They, too, caught up on their messages, made a few final posts to their favorite social media sites, and went to bed.

The morning was a blur of intense preparation. Breakfast arrived on silver trays along with fresh coffee. The hair stylist and make up person arrived around 9:00 a.m. The bride's mother and other family members joined the party. At 11:30 a.m. the bride and her family left for the pre-ceremony photo shoot. Finally, by 12:00 p.m. the girls were in their gowns, makeup finished and hair styled. Now all they had to do was wait for the limo to pick them up at take them to the wedding venue.

As they sat waiting for the limo, they all hunched over their phones, thumbs flying across the little digital keyboards. And then it was that three of the bridesmaids realized they had a problem. In all of the excitement of the night before, they had forgotten to plug in their phones. Now they were staring at the smartphone user's worst nightmare: low battery! They looked over at the other bridesmaids whose phones were fully charged. But there was no way that those bridesmaids could share their batteries with the bridesmaids whose batteries were depleted.

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Panicked at the very idea of going to the wedding without their phones, they began a mad search for their chargers. They emptied their suitcases and purses onto the floor in a frantic effort to find the elusive chargers. When they finally did find them, they fought over the available outlets. In all of the commotion, they heard the limo driver knock on the door, announcing that it was time to leave

for the wedding! They dashed back into their rooms to retrieve their phones, but when they came back to get into the limo, it had already left.

Undeterred, they finished charging their phones, then called a cab to take them to the wedding. But when they arrived, they found that the ceremony was over, the pictures had been taken, the meal had been served. They tried to get the bride's attention when she walked by the doorway to the reception, but she was so mad at them for failing to show up that she scowled and pretended that she didn't even know who they were!

## The Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids

Jesus told a story something like this one to explain a very important thing about how God will one day bring His Kingdom to full reality. In His story, the bridesmaids had to wait for the bridegroom to come and escort them to the reception. The problem: you never knew when the groom would arrive. Sometimes the wedding was delayed for hours because the families were still negotiating financial arrangements. The wedding happened when it happened. You had to be ready.

And in Jesus' story *being ready* is what it was all about. All of the bridesmaids had lamps for the night procession to the banquet, but only 5 of them brought enough oil along to keep their lamps lit through the night. And of course, that is when the bridegroom finally arrived:

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*Matthew 25:6-13 The Message*

*"In the middle of the night someone yelled out, 'He's here! The bridegroom's here! Go out and greet him!'*

*"The ten virgins got up and got their lamps ready. The silly virgins said to the smart ones, 'Our lamps are going out; lend us some of your oil.'*

*"They answered, 'There might not be enough to go around; go buy your own.'*

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*"They did, but while they were out buying oil, the bridegroom arrived. When everyone who was there to greet him had gone into the wedding feast, the door was locked.*

*"Much later, the other virgins, the silly ones, showed up and knocked on the door, saying, 'Master, we're here. Let us in.'*

*"He answered, 'Do I know you? I don't think I know you.'*

*“So stay alert. You have no idea when he might arrive.*

## **Uh Oh!**

### **Ready...or not?**

What went so terribly wrong for half of the wedding party? It wasn't that they did not want to attend the wedding. They were invited and had dressed appropriately for the occasion. If you had asked any one of them whether or not they were “ready,” they would have certainly said, “Yes!” They were ready and waiting. But it turns out that they were only ready *for what they thought would happen.*

Jesus' story is a warning that we cannot risk thinking that we can be ready *on our terms* for the coming of God's Kingdom into our world. We are not writing the script or controlling the show. God is doing His own thing in His own way and His own time. Everything that He does in our world comes as a complete surprise.

### **The Wedding at Cana:**

Think about the one story we have in which Jesus went to a wedding. It turns out that somebody failed to order enough wine for the festivities and after a while it began to run out. No wine meant one ruined wedding party, you can be sure!

Jesus' mother took Him aside and explained the situation. At first He refused to get involved; then He told the servants to fill six large stone water pots with water. After the water pots were full, He told them to fill their pitchers and serve the host of the banquet.

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*John 2:9-10 The Message*

*When the host tasted the water that had become wine (he didn't know what had just happened but the servants, of course, knew), he called out to the bridegroom, “Everybody I know begins with their finest wines and after the guests have had their fill brings in the cheap stuff. But you've saved the best till now!”*

Nobody saw that coming: neither the servants who drew the water, nor the host who drank the newly made wine. As for Jesus, He just blended in with the crowd. The Kingdom of God had arrived when no one was looking.

## **Uh Oh!**

You will never predict the next thing that God is going to do in your life. All you can do is *be ready.* The wise bridesmaids in Jesus' story brought along extra oil...just in case. In other words, they weren't going to miss out on the wedding, no matter what.

We Vermonters are pros at being ready for just about anything Mother Nature throws at us. Just witness the lines at the supermarket the day before a winter storm. You're lucky if you can find a gallon of milk or a bag of chips!

So, what do you need to do to be ready for God's Kingdom? What do you need to do to make sure that you aren't saying, "Uh oh!" when you discover that God's limo came and left you behind?

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1. **Get on God's timetable, not yours:** His New Life *breaks in* to our lives. It is *disruptive and discontinuous*. It is not the logical extension of what we're doing. It is radically *new*. He will always catch us off guard.

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2. **Make God's priorities your priorities:** His Kingdom functions according to His rules, not ours. His priorities turn our priorities upside down. There is no middle ground.

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3. **Bring plenty of oil:** Invest yourself 100% in what God has put before you. No half measures. Did you ever see someone trying to stand with one foot in a boat and one foot on the dock. It doesn't work for very long. Sooner or later, they're not in the boat and they're not on the dock. They're in the water. Give yourself 100% to what God is doing. Get both feet in the boat and untie it from the dock.

This old world won't last forever. Like the wedding banquet that ran out of wine, this world will one day run out of steam. When it does, the same Lord who changed water to wine will stride into the room and make all things new.

In the meantime, He is here to do that very thing for you. He is here to change out the stale water of our broken world into the new wine of His New Creation. The only question is whether we will be ready and waiting for Him when He does. Will we be praying for a breakthrough in that parenting challenge, or will we have given up and moved on to some other plan? Will we be keeping our lamp lit in our marriage, daring to believe that Jesus Himself will come and bring reconciliation and new life, or will we bail out in frustration or despair?

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The Bridegroom is on His way. Are you ready for Him?

