

Depart from Me You Workers of Iniquity

By Jani Lynn Warner

“If you are wise, you are wise for yourself and if you scoff, you alone will bear it.”
(Proverbs 9:12)

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells the Parable of the ten Virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the Bridegroom as part of His wedding party. Did they all go out to meet the Bridegroom as followers of the Bridegroom, or were they only pretending for their own reasons, like Judas who met Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane with the kiss of friendship and with lamps (John 18:3)? We get some clues from Jesus, who describes them as five wise virgins who took oil with them and five foolish virgins who did not take an extra flask of oil to keep their lamps burning. This party consisted of the wise and the foolish, but they were all in a group going out to meet the Bridegroom. The foolish spend time with the wise in the context of “friendship,” but they do not live like the wise live where it matters (*“follow me as I follow Christ”* – 1 Corinthians 11:1). They may all sleep and slumber, but they do not all have the light when it matters. Judas spent time with the twelve disciples and pretended to be one of the twelve, but he had different motives. There seems to be a common theme of wolves lurking around sheep (unobserved or unsuspected), the foolish lurking around the wise, and individuals who have an agenda (“what’s in it for me?”) lurking around individuals who follow Jesus (“God is sovereign and I am nothing”). The pretenders want something, but it is not the righteous lifestyle that Christians are called to live. They may be like Simon, who thought he could purchase the gift of God (See Acts 8:9-22).

Proverbs gives us concise descriptions of the wise and the foolish. The wise fear (reverence) the Lord and seek wisdom and understanding from Him: *“For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding”* (Proverbs 2:6). Proverbs 1:7 states: *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.”* We learn in Proverbs 8:13 that *“the fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate.”*

Proverbs has much to say about the foolish (evil and harmful) individuals. Proverbs 1:7 says, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; **Fools** despise wisdom and instruction.”* Proverbs 1:22 expands on their foolishness: *“How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and **fools** hate knowledge?”* *“If someone wise **corrects the foolish**, he will get dishonor, insults, and hatred”* (Proverbs 9:7).

Returning to the Parable of the Ten Virgins, although the wise had extra oil for their lamps, the foolish did not. *“The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out’* (Matthew 25:8). The foolish are a hindrance to the wise. They want to take from the wise, but in this case, the prudent sent them away to buy oil for themselves. The Bridegroom came, and the prudent Virgins were faithfully ready to go with Him to the Wedding, whereas the foolish Virgins were busy buying more oil. The foolish are always busy doing “righteous acts.” Later, they came, saying, *“‘Lord, Lord, open up for us,’ but He answered, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour”* (Matthew 25:11-13). Even though they may have had light in their lamps, the Bridegroom did not recognize them – possibly the light was a strange light.

When Jesus declared that He was the Living Bread that came down from Heaven, He said that unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you (John

6:53). Many of His disciples left when they heard this, and Jesus asked the twelve, *“Will you also go away?”* Simon Peter answered, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God”* (John 6:68-69). Peter was saying that just like the wise Virgins, they (the disciples) would wait on Jesus. But Jesus knew their hearts and who of the twelve were sincere. He answered Peter, *“Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?”* Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him” (John 6:70-71). Those who are foolish virgins go out to meet the Bridegroom without extra oil for their lamps. They do not need extra oil because they are just pretenders “of being wise” and only want enough to deceive the wise and the bridegroom. They want to live the way they want to live and not come under the authority of the bridegroom. Since the bridegroom does not know them, they are unbelievers who will not be allowed into the presence of God, yet they pretend to belong to Him. The foolish are always trying to use God to get what they want, and they don’t walk in truth. Judas, for example, had an agenda for waiting on Jesus. Pretending to be a friend, Judas was only there to try to use Jesus to get money and power because he was a thief (John 12:6).

Jesus is a separator who knows our hearts. He knows which individuals are the sincere and wise spiritual virgins that follow Him and which ones are simply lurking around to see what they can get out of Him. The latter are just like the huge crowds of followers that claimed to be disciples but who only wanted to eat free food and experience miracles: *“Jesus answered them and said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.’”* (John 6:26-27)

Jesus is coming soon. May we be true to Him with oil in our lamps and extra oil stored up so that we will be found faithful followers of Christ. May we work for the food that does not perish but endures to eternal life.