

## **Divine Insurance**

November 8, 2020

Matthew 25:1-13

Katie and I have Allstate for both car insurance and home insurance. As customers of Allstate, we participate in their “Drivewise” safe drivers’ program, where we get a certain discount for safe driving habits. That means not driving over 80 mph, limiting night time driving, limiting phone use while driving, and not braking hard. On the whole, Katie and I are very good about this. My last offense was almost two years ago with going five over, and Katie’s was longer ago than that. We are safe drivers, as I assume most, if not everyone else, here today are. So, why then do we have car insurance and home insurance?

We have these insurances for the same reason we go to the gym or own a gun: to be prepared. We have car insurance not because we want to get in an accident or intend to wreck the car, but because we recognize there are some pretty crazy drivers out there with whom we don’t want to cross paths. So, just in case we do, we have car insurance. In the same fashion, we have home insurance not because we intend on setting the house on fire, but if something in the wiring or the gas line goes horribly wrong and the house goes up, we have it just in case. Along those same lines, no one wants to be sick. That’s why we take our vitamins, go to the gym, have regular appointments with various doctors, etc. Also, a 2016 study on US gun ownership found that the primary reason people buy guns and have guns isn’t to collect them or because violent crimes on the whole are on the rise. In all truth, they’ve been gently declining over the last few decades. The primary motive behind gun sales and ownership is fear of other people and what they could do if they’re pushed too far at work, at home, or in school. In short, it is fear that drives our buying insurances, owning guns, and making certain decisions. We are afraid of what might happen to us, and therefore, we take steps to ensure that, if those unfavorable situations arise, we are ready.

What about our greatest fear of all as Christians, though, our salvation? How do we insure our salvation? This is the question asked by the story for today, “the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids,” a parable attributed to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In it, we have ten bridesmaids, at the title suggests, five of whom are wise, and five of whom are not. The five wise bridesmaids bring enough oil to make it through the night, and in the end, they are admitted to the party. The other five though, they are unprepared, and they are not admitted when the bridegroom comes. Granted, they are able to go out and buy oil to then go find the bridegroom, but still, they are too late. They missed their chance simply because they didn’t have enough oil on hand from the start. As readers, we are left to wonder why the story plays out as it does. Oil was readily available and could have been shared among them. The light from five lamps would have been enough to guide at least ten bridesmaids to the bridegroom. The bridesmaids were able to obtain more oil when sent to buy more. So, why are they not admitted?

The first reason they are not admitted is because of the fact that they are unwise. Their lamps burned out, and they did not have oil on hand to relight their lamps. This seems to be a quick fix, but as it turns out, it is not. This story is about more than just “wise v. unwise.” It is also a parable about “righteousness v. wickedness.” If we look back to the book of Proverbs, 13:9 reads “The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked goes out.” In other

words, there is a distinct possibility that, given the elevation of wisdom as a virtue in Jesus' time, Jesus was here speaking to not just wisdom, but righteousness as well. The five wise bridesmaids represent the righteous among us while the unwise bridesmaids represent the wicked among us. However, this equating of "wisdom" to "righteousness" creates a bit of a conflicting message.

The wise bridesmaids have oil to spare as well as lamps that stay lit. In our eyes, if they are wise, and therein righteous, they would do the righteous thing. They would share their oil with those who ran out if not simply share the light from their lamps, both of which they have plenty to share. However, they do not do what we would view as the righteous thing. They share neither their oil nor the light from their lamps. The other bridesmaids were in need, and the five wise ones essentially kick them when they're down, it seems, and we as readers are left to wonder why. The Bible teaches us that we must love our neighbors and help those who are in need. We must do our part in caring for each other. So, the fact that the five righteous bridesmaids don't act righteously strikes us and leaves us looking for a reason. As it turns out, the reason they do this is because of their wisdom and their preparedness. All ten bridesmaids are prepared for the arrival of the bridegroom and the wedding. However, only the five wise ones are prepared also for the wait. Therein lies the message for us as readers: to be prepared not just for what is to come but for the wait for that grand ending.

In the end, we need to be ready not just for the Second Coming of Christ, but also for the wait. Before you ask, yes, there is a difference. In preparing for the Second Coming, we atone for our sins. We do so by confessing our sins, attending church, studying the Bible, and prayer. However, we need to not just atone for our sins by the Second Coming, but we need to be doing good deeds in the here and now. Right here, right now, we are in that waiting period before the arrival of the bridegroom, Jesus. We are presently in a state of anxiously anticipating when Christ will come again, not knowing the day or the hour when Jesus will finally arrive, and therefore, we need to be prepared not just for the arrival. We need to also be prepared to await his glorious arrival at that unknown time, too. So, how do we do that? We do so by living a life full of humble service to others, by helping those neighbors who are in need. We show we are prepared to wait by being merciful and compassionate to friend and foe alike, just as Jesus calls us to do in his name. We prepare to await Christ's arrival by making peace and letting justice roll down like an ever-flowing stream. In these things, through these actions and mindsets, we have a divine insurance that ensures our admittance to the party. So, I ask you all, how is your insurance policy holding up?