

The Preparation of the Bride (Video)

by Aaron Hurst

This sermon emphasizes the importance of preparing spiritually for the return of Jesus Christ, using the current global pandemic as a call to seek God's face, examine our hearts, and be ready to meet the bridegroom. It urges believers to trim their lamps, repent of sin, and be filled with the Holy Spirit, highlighting the need to be vigilant, watchful, and prayerful in these last days.

Scripture: Matthew 25:1, Revelation 2:4, Revelation 3:15, Matthew 24:6, Revelation 19:6

Topics: "Spiritual Preparedness", "Vigilance in Faith"

Description

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Transcript

Good morning and welcome in the precious name of Jesus. As I was pondering what I would share this morning and asking the Lord for his direction, I felt like to ask myself this question. What is the spirit of God speaking to the churches in this hour, April of 2020? As you're well aware, we are in a global pandemic at this time of the coronavirus and it's affecting people all over the globe.

It's not isolated to just one specific country or specific area. So I was thinking about that. What is the spirit of God speaking to the churches globally, the church at large, to the churches in America, to the Anabaptist churches? But more importantly for myself, what is God speaking to charity Christian fellowship as it relates to us as a body? What is God speaking to me as a dad? What is God speaking to me as a husband? What is God speaking to me as a young person, a youth? This pandemic is forcing us to slow down.

It's forcing us in some areas to shut down. Schools are closed, shopping malls, restaurants, movie theaters, amusement parks, bars, country clubs of the elite and rich and famous are closed. The resorts where they go to play are closed.

Factories, businesses, major food processing plants, quite a few are closed or operating on a scaled down level and we are facing stay at home orders. What is the spirit of God saying to the world? I believe one of the things he's saying is, I am God and there is none beside me. I am the sovereign king of the universe

and in control of all things.

But this morning in our time that we have together, I want to focus on what is the spirit of God saying to the churches? Our heavenly father knows what lies ahead. I don't. You don't know what lies ahead.

But our heavenly father, he knows what we will face in the coming days. I thought of this, is this virus pandemic, this slowdown an act of love and mercy from our heavenly father to the churches, to the Christians? Is this a calm before the storm? Is God getting our attention? Is the Lord giving us as his children a time for preparation because God knows our hearts. He knows where we're at.

He knows our weaknesses. He knows our tendencies to get caught up in the materialism and the entertainment and sports and whatever it might be that you're tempted to get caught up with and distract you from the Lord. I thought of this.

I thought, you know, it may be that God in his wisdom and sovereign love and mercy toward his children is giving us a time to seek his face because God doesn't want to see us be led astray with the error of the wicked and be condemned with the wicked. God is allowing those things that can be shaken to be shaken. He's getting us out of our normal routine.

I believe God is wanting to wake us up as his children to draw us out of complacency and into his fullness of his presence, to draw us out of our sleepiness into an awakening with him to prepare. You know, I thought it's an act of love, I believe, an act of mercy of our heavenly father, slowing us down so that we would seek his face, giving us an opportunity to examine our hearts and our values and what we are living for, giving us a time to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith and rooted and grounded in Christ. He's giving us a time to prepare, a time to buy oil, to fill our vessels that our lamps may be burning brightly.

God giving us a time to prepare, to suffer, a time to prepare to love our enemies, a time to prepare our hearts to testify before rulers and kings, a time to prepare to pray for those who persecute us, a time to prepare that we might endure unto the end. Turn your Bibles with me to Matthew chapter 25 for a scripture here this morning. Matthew 25 and beginning in verse one, very familiar scripture, but I believe very pertinent to our day.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto 10 virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them.

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight, there was a cry made, behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.

Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered saying, not so, lest there be not enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage. And the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

But he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the son of man cometh. Father, we come in the name of Jesus this morning.

We thank you for the word of the Lord. The words of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Father, I ask today in Jesus Christ's name that you would anoint your word to our hearts, that you would quicken your word unto us.

I ask Father in heaven that you would speak to our hearts, that we could hear what the spirit of the Lord is saying to the churches in this hour, in this hour day. Father, I ask in the name of Jesus that you would have mercy upon us and awaken us and quicken us and cause us, O Lord, to prepare. Father, that we would hear your voice and we would prepare.

We wouldn't allow this time to just slip away in idleness, in laziness, in other things, but O God, awaken us, cause there to be urgency upon our hearts to seek the Lord while he may be found, to prepare that our vessels may be filled with oil and we're prepared to meet the bridegroom. We ask this in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

As I thought of these 10 virgins, we see that there was five that were wise and five that were foolish. I think you would agree with me the basic difference was in their preparation, in their preparation to go forth and to meet the bridegroom. The foolish were not very diligent.

They were not very serious about their preparation. They might have thought we have plenty of time and they were distracted by other things, but they had a desire to meet the bridegroom and they were, after all, virgins, so I believe they were professors of Christianity. They were professors of being followers of Jesus, of believers, and they were looking also for the bridegroom to come.

Now, the Bible tells us very clearly that while they were waiting for the bridegroom to come, all of them, the wise and the foolish, they did drift off. They slumbered and they slept, and then, at midnight, there was a cry made. Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.

And while they slumbered and slept, the foolish, their lamps went out. I have here this morning with me an oil lamp. Now, surely the oil lamp that I have, you know, it's not the same, but it's a good illustration for us as to having our lamps filled with oil and having them burning brightly so that when the cry is made, behold, the bridegroom cometh, our lamps are burning and we are prepared to meet the bridegroom.

You know, as we think about this, in preparation to meet the bridegroom, it tells us that when the cry was made, behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. It tells us that they arose and they trimmed their lamps. You know, I look at this time and I ask myself the question, what is the Spirit of God saying to the churches in this moment? And I believe God is giving us an opportunity.

You might say a calm before the storm where we have opportunity to draw nigh to God and to redeem this time that God is giving us. How many times have you said, oh, if I just had more time? Well, some of you now have more time. Your work is reduced and the children are not going to school.

There's no need to go shopping. Everything's closed except for the necessary things. And so many of the normal distractions of our daily lives have been reduced and cut back.

And so brother, sister, I urge us this morning that we take this time to prepare. We take this time to trim our lamps. And when I think of trimming the lamps, you know, a lamp, the wick, after burning for a time, it develops a hardness of sort of a brittle burnt hardness on the top of the wick that needs to be trimmed if you want to keep the lamp burning brightly.

The oil from the lamp, from the vessel, no longer flows freely up into the top of that wick to burn brightly. And so I say to us this morning, let us trim the lamps. Let us trim the wicks of that hardness.

Is there a hardness in our hearts, a hardness toward the Lord, a resisting and a quenching of His Holy Spirit of what He's doing and speaking in our lives, or are our hearts open? Is there the hardness of bitterness and unforgiveness? Is there a hardness in your wick that is dimming your lamp of a love for the world and the pleasures of this world? Is there a hardness in the heart of unforgiveness, a hardness in the heart of self-righteousness, like our brother was sharing, of being hypocritical and demanding toward others and demanding more of them than of ourselves? I urge us today, it is time to prepare to meet the bridegroom. It's time to fill the vessel with oil through obedient love to our Lord Jesus Christ. It's time to fill the vessel with oil by repentance of prideful attitudes, repentance of sinful things.

It's time to fill our vessels with oil after we have our hearts cleansed in repentance by drawing near to God, bathing ourselves in the word of the Lord, watching and praying. It's time to fill our vessels with oil by loving the unlovely, by reaching out to the poor. It's time to fill our vessels with oil by being filled with the Holy Spirit, asking our Heavenly Father for the Holy Spirit and remembering that our Heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to them that obey Him.

It's time to trim our lamps. It's time to repent where we need to repent. It's time to prepare to meet the bridegroom.

What sayeth the Spirit to the churches? Revelation chapter two, the Apostle John saw the Lord on the Isle of Patmos on the Lord's day. And the Lord gave him a message to the churches. To Ephesus he said, I have somewhat against you because thou has left thy first love.

You have lost that depth of love that you had for me. You no longer love me with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your soul and with all your strength. Remember from whence you are fallen and repent.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches. To the church in Samaria he told them, fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison that you may be tried and you shall have tribulation 10 days, but be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit sayeth to the churches. The church in Pergamos, I have a few things against thee because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication. You see, Balaam failed to curse Israel and thereby he forfeited the prestige and the payment that he was expecting.

However, he won them back by advising Balak to corrupt the morals of Israel so that they would break in union with Jehovah. They would break in union with Jehovah. Today, brother, sister, I urge us that we do not give any area of room in our hearts to a compromising doctrine.

As our brother Jim was mentioning, a license to sin. The Nicolaitans were prepared to admit orthodoxy of doctrine so long as it combined with a laxity of morals. So long as we can have our doctrine and have our things looking right on the outside, that's okay as long as we can practice sin on the inside, a false liberty, a license to sin.

And brother, sister, I believe that we face that in our day and we need to be aware and we need to be educated in scripture and have our minds renewed in scripture so that we know what is true and what is false because Christ cannot for a moment tolerate a divided heart of sin. He calls them to repent or he will come quickly and smite them with the sword of his mouth. To the church in Smyrna, he says, I have a few things against thee because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel which call herself a prophetess and she will soon be a prophetess.

I have many things to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. False teaching, false doctrine, teaching a people that you can be born again, you can have salvation and yet you can commit sin and live in sin. This is false teaching and false doctrine.

I'd like us to now look at Revelation 3.14, the church of Laodicea. These things saith the Amen and the faithful and the true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.

I would that thou were cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Brother sister, how is my heart toward the Lord? What is the spirit of God saying to me as an individual, to me as a daddy in the home, to me as an elder in this church? He says, I know thy works, thou art neither cold nor hot, but you're lukewarm.

And therefore it's so repulsive to our Lord that he says, I will spew thee out of my mouth. But there's a blindness of heart. They say, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.

And are unaware. It says they don't know. And knowest not that thou art wretched, miserable, poor and blind and naked.

Brother sister here this morning, it is time to prepare. It's time to get serious with God. It's time to respond to the invitation of God.

I counsel thee to buy gold, tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. And to anoint thine eyes with eye salve that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Be zealous therefore and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. Is God standing at the door of your heart and knocking? This is not written to the heathen and the unbelieving.

This is written unto the church of Laodicea. This is written to those who profess to know Christ. Christ is standing at the door and knocking.

And he's saying, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and I will sup with him and he with me. What a beautiful invitation, brother, sister. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

I believe, brother, sister, it is time to prepare. As I was praying about what to share today, I just felt such a clear sense that God is giving us this moment of calm and relative peace, a time to prepare because our Heavenly Father loves us and he wants us to be prepared to go forth and to meet the bridegroom, having our lamps burning brightly, having oil in our vessels. And brother, sister, that is not going to happen by watching funny movies, by reading novels and entertaining things.

That's going to happen by being serious and earnestly seeking the face of God. That's going to happen by being genuinely open and clear before the Lord and repenting of our hardness of heart and our sin. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

For in the last days there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes. All these are the beginning of sorrows and then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then many shall be offended and shall betray one another and shall hate one another and many false prophets shall rise and deceive many.

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that endureth unto the end shall be saved, as it was in the days of Noah, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark and they knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

Watch therefore for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Be ye also ready for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh. These will be awful days.

The brother shall betray the brother to death and the father the son and the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But he that shall endure unto the end shall be saved.

Take heed my brother, my sister, watch and pray for ye know not when the time is. Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping and what I say unto you I say unto all, watch. Watch and be sober.

Take heed my brother, my sister. Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life. So that day come upon you unawares for it shall come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch ye therefore and pray always. Brother sister, we need to prepare to meet the bridegroom and we prepare by being in prayer and watching always, lest it be with you like those foolish virgins. That while the bridegroom tarried, they slumbered and they slept.

And as they were slumbering and sleeping, their lamps became dimmer and dimmer and dimmer. And when the cry was made at midnight, behold the bridegroom cometh. They awakened to the horror that their lamps were gone out.

Brother sister, it is time to prepare. The title of this little message, the preparation of the bride. I want to close with Revelation chapter 19.

Revelation chapter 19 verses 6 to 9. And I heard as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thundering saying, Alleluia for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to him for the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.

And he said unto me, Right, blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. Brother sister, Jesus is coming back for a bride without spot or wrinkle.

And Jesus has paid the bride price so that we could be washed from our sins. But brother sister, we need to repent of our sins in order to be washed. And we need to by faith believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

So my prayer and my appeal to all of us in this hour is that we do not waste this time, but that we redeem this time to lift up our heads and look unto Jesus for our redemption draweth nigh. God bless you, amen.

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