

The Foolish Virgins

by Earl R. Clark

Earl R. Clark's sermon on 'The Foolish Virgins' warns of the necessity of spiritual readiness for the return of Christ, using the parable to illustrate the importance of faith and preparedness.

Duration: 48:34

Scripture: Matthew 25:1-13, Matthew 28:20, John 1:1, John 7:17, John 17:17, Romans 3:23, Hebrews 13:5

Topics: "Foolish Virgins"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the parable of the Ten Virgins from Matthew chapter 25. He emphasizes the importance of being prepared for the coming of the Lord. The parable illustrates the contrast between the wise and foolish virgins, with the wise ones being prepared with oil for their lamps and the foolish ones neglecting to bring oil. The preacher urges the audience to examine their own spiritual readiness and to accept Jesus as their savior in order to be cleansed from sin and presented before God.

Transcript

Well, first of all, let me assure Brother Willie and all our Christian friends here, all of those that we've come to know in this brief visit, that we indeed do go home with some very, very happy memories, and nothing but happy memories of our day spent here with you. We've had a very, very wonderful time, and in the will of the Lord, we hope to be back this way this fall, possibly in September or October, because we have a special reason for coming at that time. We hope to see for the first time our second grandchild at that time, who probably, as the way things look, naturally speaking, at this time, would expect to have a Floridian for a grandchild.

So we will be looking forward to another visit with you at that time, and if the Lord carries and things permit, we will probably be back from time to time to see our daughter and their husband during their stay of some three or four years at the University of Florida. Secondly, I thought that perhaps this evening, before we open the scriptures, that perhaps I should tell you a little bit of my spiritual history. I don't want to go into great detail, and the purpose of this is not at all to talk about myself, because I think that that would be a very dull subject indeed to bring before you this evening, but rather to say a little bit about what Christ has done for me.

Because like David, he took me up out of the miry clay and he set my feet upon a rock, and I'm most happy to tell about that from time to time when I have opportunities. I have a letter here in my Bible that

was written to my grandfather when he was just out of school and teaching second grade in a rural school in western New York. From that letter, I realized for certain for the first time that my grandfather knew the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior.

It's a very wonderful letter from a friend of his in the state of Massachusetts, I think it was, to whom my grandfather apparently wrote to say that he had taken Christ as his Savior. And it is as nice a piece of literature to give to a new convert as anything that I have ever read anywhere, a personal letter. I don't know who wrote it, but my father professed to be a Christian.

I have no real reason to doubt what he was sincere in what he said, yet as far as his life was concerned, there was very little to be seen in it to bring glory to the Lord, I'm sorry to say. He died some several years ago. And so I was brought up in my grandfather's church and my father's church, which was the Presbyterian church, and at the age of about 12 I took instruction from the minister and subsequently became a member of the Presbyterian church, but I was not a member of the church of which Christ is the risen and living head.

And so at the age of 16 I decided that this social institution of which I was a member really didn't interest me very much, and I wasn't doing anything for it, and I felt it wasn't doing anything for me. So I said, I think this is a waste of time, and I stopped going to church altogether at that time. My parents didn't object in the least, they only occasionally went to church anyhow.

Mostly it was us children who went. And so having finished college and beginning to work in the Kodak Research Laboratory, my boss at that time, who is now retired, came around to me one day and he said, Earl, how would you like to take some photographs, some pictures of a church play? He said, I'm going to be in this play, and I sort of thought it would be nice to have some flash pictures of it. Those were back in the days, believe it or not, when flash cameras were very rare, and I had one.

I wasn't the only person around in his department who had one, but I did have one, and it worked, and so I said, yes, I'll be glad to if you'll get me some film pack, I'll take the pictures. So he said, that's no problem, and then he said, you know, afterwards, or just before this play, rather, there's going to be a church supper. Now, he went to the Methodist church, and I knew very well that the Methodist women, at least up in our part of the country, are excellent cooks.

So I said, yes, we'd be delighted to come to the supper with you and your wife. And so he sat around and picked up Lee and myself, and we went up to this Methodist church, and we had a delightful meal, and we witnessed the play, and I took some pictures of it, and fortunately they came out, so I didn't disappoint my boss. And on the way home, he said, well, did you have a good time, and we said, yes, a very fine time.

He said, how did you like the people? I said, well, I like the people here very much. He said, as a matter of fact, he never knew this, but I used to belong to the Boy Scout troop in this church, because my best high school pal, or grammar school, late grammar school pal, his father was the scoutmaster of this troop, so I used to come up here and I knew some of these people. Well, he said, now, as long as you feel so much at home and you like everything here, why don't you come out to church sometime? Well, of course, I knew this was a hard sell, but that was all right, I didn't mind it a bit.

And so I said, well, sure, we'll do that sometime. He says, all right, I'll be around for you at quarter after nine next Sunday morning. The man should have been a salesman instead of a scientist, I think.

Well, we laughed, and we said, well, okay, we'll be ready. So he did, and he took us into the Sunday school class, of which he and his wife were members. An adult Sunday school class, but not the young adults, it was the older married folks, you know.

We didn't really belong in that class, but he thought we'd be a little more comfortable with them the first Sunday, and he said, if you want to go into the young married couples class, next Sunday and see what that's like, that will be fine, too. Well, you know, this was the Lord's doing, because if he had taken us into that young married couples class where they had, at that time, a student minister from a very liberal school, Colgate Rochester Theological School, if we had gone in that class we never would have come back, because it was the same thing that both my wife and I had been accustomed to in modernist churches before, and we would have said, well, it's the same old stuff and it's of no use to us, no interest. But he took us into a class that was taught by a man at that time in his fifties whose father was a minister, but the important thing is that that man knew the Son of God personally, and in his Sunday school lessons this came through to the class, to those of us who listened to him.

It wasn't so much what Mr. Bessie taught, he was actually teaching the paradoxes in the Gospels, but it was the way he taught it that impressed me, and we came back. We went up to the church service afterwards and were not too impressed by that either, but we came back to hear the Sunday school teacher. The first Sunday that I was there he followed me out of class, good technique, and he said, Earl, how is it with you? And I said, Mr. Bessie, it's great, we're enjoying your messages and that's why we're coming back.

He said, I know you wouldn't come back if you weren't enjoying it, that's not what I'm asking. What I want to know is, how is it with you and Christ? And I said, well, that is a different question. I said, all I can say is that it's different with me than it is with you.

And he said, yes, I expect that's true, but he said, why is it different with you? And I said, well, I haven't really thought too much about it, but I said, I guess it's because you believe that the Bible is the word of God and I don't. And he said, well, why don't you? Now, that's kind of a hard question to answer right off on the spot if you haven't thought about it, but I said, well, I guess it's probably because to me if the Bible is to be the word of God, it would have to be absolutely perfect, because I believe that God is perfect and anything he does must be perfect. And I said, I don't believe the Bible is perfect.

From what, you know, I was 25 years old and a physics graduate, and I didn't realize that there were a great many things that I didn't know. I thought I knew pretty nearly everything, and I thought that I knew that there were scientific inaccuracies in this book, and I found out since that there are none. But I told him that I thought that there were, and because of that, that it couldn't be God's word.

Well, he said, all right. But he said, you believe that the Bible is not the word of God, and I believe that it is. And he said, I expect one of us is wrong.

And I said, well, I'm not insisting that you're the one that's wrong. You asked me why, and I'm telling you this is the way I believe. He said, well, I'm not criticizing what you said in the leaf, nor trying to intimidate you into thinking that you're the one that's wrong without proof.

But he said, now tell me something. He said, you're in the testing business, and I said yes. By the way, he worked at Kodak Park, too, so that he knew where I worked and what I did and what it was all about.

Well, he says, do you like your work? And I said, yes, I do very much. He says, well, if you like testing, he says, how would you like to put the Bible to a test? You ever heard anybody ask someone that? I thought that was rather challenging. And I said, well, it sounds interesting, but I don't really know how to do it.

He says, well, I can tell you. I said, well, please do. He says, well, he says he had previously persuaded me to buy a Schofield Bible, by the way.

So he referred me to the marginal translation of John 7.17, which says, if any man is willing to do God's will, he will know of the doctrine, whether it is of God or whether I speak of myself. That is, John speaking as a man. I said, yes, I remember the verse, but I don't get the application.

Well, he says, I'll tell you what I want you to do. He says, I want you to go home, and I want you to start reading the Bible, but I want you to read it differently from any way that you've ever read it before. He says, I want you to start reading the Bible tentatively, for the moment, believing or accepting it as the word of God.

He says, I don't want you to read just anywhere. I want you to read the Gospel of John and the Book of Romans, and as you read it, accept it as the word of God until you have finished reading those two books. Now, he says, by the time you finish reading those two books, either something will have happened to you or it won't.

If something does happen to you, you will know on the authority of John 7.17 that the Bible is the word of God, and if nothing happens to you, then you've proved your point and forget the whole thing. Now, I ask you, who know the Lord and who know the word of God, if I did what he asked me to do, how could he miss? You see, if you will receive this book, if you will receive what is written here as the word of God, God will speak to you, will he not? And that's exactly what he predicted would happen, that something, he didn't say what would happen to me, namely that God would speak to me through his word, and as I heard the voice of God, I would know that this is God's book, and that is what he planned. And so I went home and I began reading in John's Gospel, and I began reading in the Book of Romans, a chapter in one and a chapter in the other, a second chapter in one, a second chapter in the other, the third chapter in one and the third chapter in the other, and you know what I found out by that fact, three chapters of Romans, and you know that you're a lost and guilty sinner, and God said, Earl, I'm speaking to you about this.

You're the one that's written about in this book, you're the lost, guilty sinner. But then, of course, in the third chapter of John, there's the remedy for it, isn't there? There's the Son of God who came down from heaven in three chapters of John's Gospel, the one that God gave because he so loved the world, the one whom if you receive, you receive everlasting life. And so three chapters of Romans convinced me that I needed to be saved, and three chapters of John showed me the Savior, and as I was reading I just locked my head down, all by myself in the living room, and Lee was working out in the kitchen, and I thanked God for sending the Savior to die for me.

Well, would you believe it? It was three weeks later before I knew that at that very moment that I received the gift of eternal life from the hand of God, because I had done what God asked the person to do in order to be saved. I had confessed that I was a sinner, I had received Christ and his work on the cross as fully sufficient to cleanse me of all my sins, and God gave me eternal life. That was at the age of 25, and I have been most happy with all that God has given me in Christ every day of my life since then.

I praise him for it. How wonderful it is to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and as your Savior, and to walk with him and to know that one who is a friend that's sickest, closer than a brother. He says, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

He means what he says, doesn't he? You know it and I know it, who know the Lord and walk with him. I will never leave you nor forsake you. I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world, the age, or whatever you want to use for that word.

I thought that tonight we might spend a few minutes, and we do have a few minutes left, in Matthew 25. If you would turn there, we'll read 13 verses. Matthew 25, the parable of the ten virgins, is our portion for this evening.

Beginning with verse 1, Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten 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 carried, 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 going 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 wherein the Son of Man cometh. One day, a few months ago, down at Cape Kennedy, and if you believe this, you believe anything, because what I'm going to tell you is fiction, not fact. But we'll imagine that down at Cape Kennedy some months ago, there were three men who climbed into a spaceship, and with the aid of those mighty rockets they were thrust up out into space.

They were separated from their principal rocket, and in their little spaceship they sailed on, out, out, and out until they reached the vicinity of the moon. Then at that particular time it was necessary for them to fire a small rocket engine in their spacecraft in order to bring them around the curve of the moon and into the proper orbit and so at the proper moment they pressed the button and nothing happened. One astronaut says to the other, what do you know, Frank, we forgot to put rocket fuel in the engine.

Now, you know that would never happen, don't you? But is it any more ridiculous than what we read about here of these five foolish virgins who had their lamps, but they had no oil in them. Well, foolish things do happen. I remember when I was about 19, I had spent a fairly successful summer, although I didn't make much money, I had a lot of fun at the Rochester Centennial Exposition where we had a little booth in which another chap about the same age and I took tin types.

Well, they weren't really daguerreotypes, but we sort of, we didn't misrepresent them, but we sort of pretended that we were taking the old-fashioned daguerreotypes. We dressed people up in old, dirty hats and the women with big bonnets and things like that, and we sat them down in an old-fashioned

photographer's chair with a headrest on the back, and we got back of our camera with a big dark cloth and we said, watch the birdie, and we took their pictures. And these were on metal plates, you know, the real tin type type of thing, and instantly finished and slapped and still wet into a little paper frame and sold for 50 cents.

Well, we had a lot of fun. Then came along the county fair, and my uncle lived out near the place where the county fair was, so I went out to his place and got a license to take the tin types at the county fair. And I bought some new plates, and I bought some new developer, and I got out my camera and traveled 30 miles out to my uncle's farm and stayed with him overnight.

The next morning, bright and early, we started out for the county fair, and they showed me where I could set up and all the rest, and I was all ready to go. And then I discovered that I didn't have the bolt that held the developing tank onto the camera. Without that bolt, you can't finish any pictures, and if you can't finish them and hand them to the customer, you can't collect any money.

So I was out of business because I had been so foolish as to overlook one thing that was absolutely necessary for that job. Well, we could say of these five foolish virgins that they were imprudent, and I suppose you might apply that word to me in relation to that incomplete camera object, too. But you could use perhaps a better word for it and say it's stupid.

And that was what my uncle said, and he was right. I was stupid. And so are these people who go out to meet the bridegroom without oil in their lamps.

Well, I think that as I read through the first part of this passage, that I see in it something of the attitude of the early Christians soon after Christ's ascension toward his coming again. In the first place, they are called virgins, and that reminds us that they are separated from this world and faithful to Christ. And then we find that they have lamps.

The lamp, of course, speaks of a profession of belonging to the author of light, and the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 5 calls them the children of light, and he says, He are not of the night, he are the children of the day. And farther down in verse 9 he says, You are appointed not to last, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. And of course, their purpose on earth is to bear witness to the light, to witness to his coming again, and that is what the lamp stands for.

And then we read about their going forth. It's that attitude of mind and outgoing of heart toward the coming Savior that characterized those early Christians. They waited for the sun from heaven, they had a loose hold on the things of earth.

Isn't that delightful? Isn't that wonderful? They took care of today's concerns in the sense of attending to what had to be done for the moment, but they did so in an excitement of expectation, looking for the coming Savior very much as we do when we are about to start a very interesting major vacation trip. You know, we get things done around the house and get the grass cut and everything that needs to be attended to. Maybe the gas bill paid in advance and all that sort of thing, and we're attending to all of these things, but our mind is on that trip, you know.

We're waiting for that moment, and that's the way we should be in relation to the coming of the Lord, to have a loose hold on the things of this world and of this age, and to look for the Savior who's coming. And I think we all believe it's coming very soon, do you not? And then in verse 5 we read, "...while the

bridegroom carried, they all slumbered and slept." And this makes me think of a historical loss of a testimony to his coming during the period from perhaps 300 A.D. on up until the mid-1800s, because you know, during all of that period of time there was no testimony, I shouldn't say that, there was almost no testimony to the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ in the church upon earth. Very, very little.

Yes, in the 7th century and again in the 10th century, there was a bit of a hue and cry raised about the coming of the Lord, but only in the sense of the scary part of it. He's coming in judgment, they thought, their people at that time, and the purpose of it was to persuade people to turn their property over to the church. And except for those two occasions, there was almost nothing said about the coming of Christ until the awakening in the mid-1800s, going out to meet him, said many of those who were preaching Christ in the mid-1800s.

And from that time until today, the church has had restored to it that wonderful truth that the Lord Jesus is coming for his sins. But of course, we read of both wise and foolish virgins, there is this mixed character there. And that, of course, is what the Lord himself also taught in other parables concerning the kingdom of heaven.

He said there would be the wheat and there would be the tares. He said there would be the good fish and there would be the bad fish. There is the true and the false, there is the genuine and the counterfeit, there is the real and the hollow, and the tares are not rooted out nor the foolish cut out until the Lord comes.

In the meantime, the enemy works. And when the Lord comes, there are as many foolish as there are wise among those who profess to belong to Christ. Now, I'm not attempting to suggest that this numerical ratio of one to one has significance in itself, but it certainly tells us that if there are many who are truly born again, there are many who are not.

When the Lord comes again, but who have the same profession, the same outward appearance, the same character of virgins and the same lamp in their hands. And yet there are those who are his and there are those to whom he says, I know you not. And this is a very, very sound thing indeed.

As we look at the professing church today at nominal Christianity, we see many, many churches that are nothing but social institutions. As I told you earlier, my first experiences were in churches of that sort. They are churches in which the aim of the ministry is to give the people a good feeling while they're there, so that they will desire to come back again in order that they might have that good feeling once again.

And I saw a cartoon in the New Yorker magazine one time that I thought beautifully expressed the character of all too many churches in New York City and in New York State, and I think in many other places as well. There was this couple all dressed up in very fine clothes who were shaking hands with the minister at the door as they went out, and the woman of the party says to the minister, that was a very fine sermon. It must have been because it is very difficult not to offend people like us.

Now, that was supposed to be funny, and I suppose it is funny in a sense, but in another sense it has all too solemn an application of people who expect of their minister that he will preach a sermon that will tickle their ears. Now, you've heard that phrase before, haven't you? Itchy ears. And preaching to itchy ears, it's characteristic of our day.

And Paul, in his epistle to Timothy, says that will be the character of the end times shortly before the Lord Jesus comes. I don't know whether any of you here have read Tom Skinner's book, Black and Free. If you

haven't, I recommend it to you.

It's excellent, and in that book you can learn something in just a part of it, a small part of it, about the character of the ministry of the word of God, supposedly, in the Harlem section of New York among the Negro people. His father was just such a minister, Tom Skinner's own father, and Tom, as you may know, preaches the word of God in crusades that have won thousands to Christ. But he wasn't brought up to preach Christ that way.

One day in his father's home he heard a fellow minister say to his father, I really preached up a storm this morning, and he said, you know it when they put \$300 in the collection plate for me. And after Tom was saved, and the story of his conversion is one of the most interesting that I have ever known, and I've heard Tom tell it in person and it's wonderful to hear him, after Tom was saved, at the age of 16 he began preaching the gospel from the pulpit in the churches of Harlem. And one day he was taken aside by a well-to-do minister and he took him up into his living quarters, and part of the curtain in the window and down there was a beautiful Cadillac.

He showed him all the rich robes that hung in his closet, showed him the fine furnishings he had, and all the rest. He says, now Tom, you've got to change your style of preaching or you'll never have all this. And Tom wouldn't change his style of preaching for any amount of money, but there are those like that.

But it's not only in Harlem. I went into one of the big churches in Park Avenue, probably 25 years ago now, I guess, maybe more, and there one of the great ministers of one of our great denominational churches was holding forth, and as far as I can see, the only thing that he really accomplished was to carry out Bertrand Russell's maxim as far as helping his congregation was concerned, and that maxim is happiness is pandering to one's own self-esteem, and he was trying to help his people to be happy that way. Well, I know something about Russell's smug institutions and the institution building pastors, because I was a member of a church of that type and a member of the board of deacons and the chairman of the committee on evangelism before I was 28 years old, and that's the church that I left, because I found out that they don't believe that the Bible is the word of God, and as I told you earlier, I had come to know Christ because God showed me that it is, and when I found out that they, since 1888, had in print declared that the Bible contains the word of God, I said to my wife, what do we do here? We do not well, because when you say the Bible contains the word of God, instead of saying that it is the word of God, then that makes man the judge of the book that God gave to judge us.

Well, I'm not here to lay out the rest of the churches as far as that's concerned, or any church, and we thank God for every Bible believing gospel preaching church in our city and throughout this land, and there are many of them, but I call attention to this one fact, that there is a mixture of those churches where Christ is honored and preached as the Savior and the Son of God, and those where the deity of Christ is denied by those who call themselves Christian ministers. There is that mixture, and that's what we read about here. But what does that mean to us? Well, we criticize, and it's easy to do that, very easy to do that.

We criticize these other people, these modernists, because they don't really have a deep concern for the souls of the people in their congregations and to whom they minister. But when we make that statement, dear fellow believers, let's look at ourselves for a minute, too. Do we have a deep concern of heart and soul and mind for the lost, as we should? We who know the truth and know the outcome of dying in your sins, do we do as much better than they as we ought? Are we really interested in the needs of other human beings with problems? Because that's the way we reach the soul for Christ, is to get personally

mixed up in their problems in the way of helping them, and then we can help them to find Christ.

It's not easy to do. It takes time and it takes effort, but it's a wonderful work for God. The foolish religions took their lamps of their empty profession.

How desperately tragic that was. No oil, no light, just a smoking, dying witch. Possibly they had a most orthodox creed, if we want to put it in today's terminology.

Perhaps they were the equivalent of baptized, perhaps they had the equivalent of communion, perhaps they were the equivalent of enrolled in a church, perhaps they were teaching Sunday school, and yet without one spark of divine life. Their lamps, it is said in the margin, are going out because they were not fed from a divine source, and they would last only long enough to deceive. And they were going out at the very moment when they were most needed.

A smoking, dying witch, just enough religion to deceive the heart and deaden the conscience and ruin the soul. A false confidence and a false peace without Christ, without God, without hope. But then there were the two versions of the wine.

They had the oil, which of course speaks to the spirit of life in Christ, the Holy Ghost. But we read that they all slumbered and slept. Not just the foolish ones, but all.

But, dear friends, now the midnight cry has been heard. Go ye out to meet him. That cry has gone throughout the world, arousing the whole church to the ends of the earth to wait for him, and yet some have not taken off the thunder of worldly ease.

Some as yet do not hear the challenge of the Holy Spirit. Awake thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee life. Why? Why are there those who are yet asleep? Because they are deep in the sleep of self-indulgence.

The dark stream of evil is flowing apace. Awake and be doing, ye children of grace. Let's speak with compassion to souls that are lost while knowing the price their redemption has cost, while singing with rapture the Savior's great love and waiting for him to translate it about.

It may be tomorrow or even tonight. Let our loins be well girded and our lamps burning bright. Well, that's for those who know the Lord, and I think the poet gives us good advice in that respect.

But do you suppose there might be someone here tonight that's in that other category? Someone that has a lamp and no oil in it? Someone who thinks he's on right ground? Someone who follows Christ as the great teacher, who sees in him something of divinity, but somehow or another falls just short of having a living connection with the living Savior? To such the word is go ye and by. And many people say, by the gospel? How can that apply? What can that mean? The gospel is free. Christ has done it all, very true.

And yet in Isaiah 55 we read, Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye by and eat. Yea, come by wine and milk without money and without current. No, you can't earn it.

The gospel supper is ready, and there's no help needed with the cooking. To be sure. Nevertheless, this salvation that's so precious, the most precious thing that a man or woman can ever experience or ever have, you cannot get it from the wise, you cannot get it from those who already have it.

There's only one place you can get it, and that's from God. And that's why the wise virgins couldn't share what they had with the food. They had none to give.

They had only what God had given them, and it was just enough for self. And the source of supply is not the other Christian. It's God.

It is still available. You need not despair. God has plenty of it, and he's willing to give it if only you will accept it.

And you need it. If you don't have it, you need it. You know, when the Lord comes, it's no use saying, Lord, look at my lamp.

The Lord isn't interested in the lamp. Your Christian activities and your clean and honest life are not what he's looking for. You show him your lamp and he'll say, I know you're not.

He knows his sheep. He knows his own, and so there's this danger of being shut out. Yes, that's what it says.

That's exactly what it says. The door was shut. I wonder when the Lord comes.

Is there anyone here who will be shut out because they were invited to enter and would not? What if he comes today? Do you know him? Have you accepted him? Have you said to God, I'm the guilty sinner for whom Christ shed his precious blood on the cross of Calvary and received him and his work as the all-sufficient answer to your deep, deep need of heart and soul and spirit to be cleansed from the guilt of your sins and presented before a holy God, perfect in the perfection and glory of Christ himself. Now would you sing with me, please, number 145, just two verses. Let's sing just one and four, verses one and four of number 145, please.

Thou hast given that gift, our Father, without which we would have no hope. And that gift, our Father, that was the most precious to thy heart of all that thou couldst give us. We thank thee that thou didst so love us that thou didst send thine only begotten Son that one of whom thou couldst say, he is my delight.

We thank thee thou didst send him, blessed Father, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. And oh, blessed Father, how wonderful it is to have that life that is Christ, that life, our Father, that has no beginning and no ending. And now let's give it to mortal man, the most precious gift that we can receive.

We thank thee, blessed Father, tonight for the free offer of this gift to all who will come. For did not the Savior say, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, rest unto your souls? Know our Father should be any here tonight, but have never yet come to the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge their guilt and receive forgiveness from those nailed to his hands. We pray that thou lead them tonight to the cross, that there they might find relief from the burden of their sins and find that deep abiding peace and everlasting joy that comes from knowing Christ as Savior and as Lord.

Now, Father, for those of us who have gone on a few years or many years in this joy and in this knowledge, we pray that thou wilt keep us alert, our blessed Father, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Keep our ears tuned for that blessed chance. Keep our hearts in tune, our Father, so that we are not only waiting but watching for his coming day by day in that keen expectancy, our Father, of waiting for one that we love and whom we've not seen to come before us.

Our Father, we ask that thou keep us in his love and help us day by day to enjoy the full warmth of him until that day when he shall come and we shall be with him, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Grant us thy blessing now as we partly pray and receive our thanks, blessed Father, for thy Son and his own precious and wonderful name we ask of thee, amen.

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