

Focus on Matthew 25:1–13

WHAT is important to know? — From “*Exegetical Perspective*,” Thomas D. Stegman, SJ
Matthew’s parable of the Wise and Foolish Maidens thus sets forth the assurance that Jesus, the Son of Man, will return in glory to usher in the full coming of God’s reign. It also exhorts Christians to the appropriate stance they should take in the present. Two extremes are to be avoided. On the one hand, we ought not to be lulled into thinking that there is no sense of urgency in preparing for the Lord’s coming. On the other hand, the prospect of the end should not produce panic and anxiety. Christians can have the peace of mind that results from being faithful to putting Jesus’ teaching, as set forth throughout the Gospel, into action.

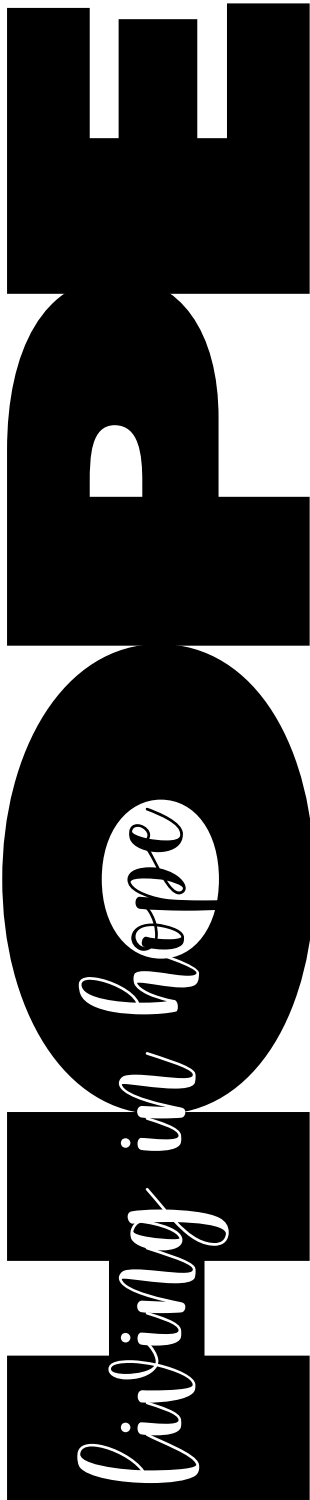
WHERE is God in these words? — From “*Theological Perspective*,” Mark Douglas
This text, at least, remains theologically silent about the attitudes we should inhabit or the viewpoints we should inculcate while we await the coming of the kingdom of God. So how are we prepared to wait? Though answers vary from tradition to tradition within the faith, the text at least hints at some of the following: Gather with others who also wait—and stick with them. Avoid communities that are caught up in prognosticating about God’s timing. While it is wise to fill our lamps with good things, we should remember that those things are for use this side of eternity. There is already more than enough light at the banquet.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives? — From “*Pastoral Perspective*,” John M. Buchanan
Christian hope is as big as the whole sweep of human history, but also as small as each individual. Ultimate issues have been resolved for the human race, but also for each of us individually. In every congregation are faithful people genuinely frightened about where human history seems to be headed. Freedom, justice, and compassion seem fragile in the face of the forces of oppression, injustice, violence, and torture. Living in hope does not mean immunity to the harsh realities of history. On the contrary, it means living confidently and expectantly, trusting that the Lord of history continues to come into life with compassion and redemption and hope.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do? — From “*Homiletical Perspective*,”
Lindsay P. Armstrong

As with so many things in life, the essence is in the timing. There is a timeliness of faith and love. There are people who wait for timely attention, who need us to live our faith without procrastination. In Matthew, the wise are those who know and tend this. With good works and acts of faith in God, they prepare for an unknown but secure future. The foolish assume a bright future but do little to prepare for it.

Living in Hope: Where the Rubber Meets the Road



Years ago, a tire company used the slogan “Where the rubber meets the road” to extol the practical virtues of its product. Consumers didn’t need to know the chemical composition of the material, the function of the tread designs. All they (we) needed to know was that the tire would function properly in whatever conditions it encountered.

Hope functions in a similar way. Hope does not require knowing the day and time of Jesus’ return. Hope does not stand or fall on whether one is a pre- or post-tribulation millennialist (or doesn’t have a clue about what that means). Hope simply yet profoundly means “living confidently and expectantly, trusting that the Lord of history continues to come into life with compassion and redemption and hope.”

And, one might add, hope means a willingness to embody such qualities in our own lives by the grace of God.

In the worksheet below, identify situations that long for the embodiment of hope in the arenas in which you live—and what you can and will do to live in hope in the coming days.

LIVING IN HOPE: Toward your family and circle of friends

LIVING IN HOPE: Within your congregation

LIVING IN HOPE: In the midst of the wider community around your church

LIVING IN HOPE: As a citizen of this nation and a member of the world community
