

Sermon 03: The Midnight Cry: Preparing for the Bridegroom

By Pastor Ed Anderson

Opening Hymn #604: We Know Not the Hour

Closing Hymn #214: We Have This Hope

Scripture Reading: "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'" (Matthew 25:6)

Introduction: A Midnight Awakening (True Story of the Titanic)

On the frigid night of April 14, 1912, the RMS Titanic, the largest and most luxurious ship of its time, was crossing the North Atlantic. Built with the confidence of being "unsinkable," the ship carried over 2,200 passengers, most of whom were unprepared for what would happen next. At 11:40 PM, disaster struck. An iceberg tore through the ship's hull, and water began flooding its compartments.

As panic swept through the ship, the crew sounded the alarms: "Women and children to the lifeboats!" But many passengers hesitated. Some were paralyzed by disbelief, unwilling to leave the warmth and comfort of the grand ship. Others underestimated the severity of the situation, convinced there was plenty of time to escape. Tragically, many lifeboats left half-empty, even as the ship began to sink.

In the end, more than 1,500 lives were lost, many because they ignored the warnings or delayed their response. For those who were prepared, who heeded the call and got to the lifeboats in time, there was salvation. But for others, hesitation cost them everything.

The story of the Titanic is a chilling reminder of how ignoring warnings can lead to disaster. Similarly, the midnight cry in Jesus' parable of the Ten Virgins is a spiritual alarm, calling us to prepare for Christ's return. It's not enough to hear the cry; we must act on it. The question is: will you be ready when the Bridegroom comes?

In many ways, the midnight cry in Jesus' parable of the Ten Virgins is just like that alarm. It's a call to action, a call to be ready, a call that tests whether we've prepared for what's coming. Half the people in the parable—the wise virgins—were ready to meet the bridegroom. The other half—the foolish virgins—were not, and they faced devastating consequences. Today, the midnight cry is sounding. The question is: will you be ready when the Bridegroom comes?

Why Is the Midnight Cry Important Today?

We live in a time of spiritual midnight, where darkness—the absence of truth and readiness—covers the earth. The signs of Christ’s return are all around us: wars, disasters, moral decay, and spiritual complacency. The midnight cry represents a final wake-up call before Jesus returns. It’s important because it calls us to:

- Recognize the signs of the times.
- Respond to God’s call for spiritual preparation.
- Reaffirm our commitment to be ready.

Three Main Points: Using the Acronym “OIL”

The acronym OIL—based on the parable’s essential element—helps us remember how to prepare for the midnight cry:

1. O - Observe the Signs

Jesus gave clear signs in Matthew 24 to show when His coming is near.

- Wars and Rumors of Wars: Ongoing global conflicts remind us of His warnings.
- Natural Disasters: Increasing hurricanes, wildfires, and earthquakes signal the “birth pains” Jesus mentioned.
- Moral Decay: The rejection of God’s truth and rising wickedness highlight our spiritual midnight.

Application: Be alert. Watch the signs in the world and align them with Scripture.

2. I - Invest in a Relationship with Christ

The oil in the parable represents the Holy Spirit, which fuels a personal connection with God.

- Daily Prayer and Study: A vibrant relationship with God is essential.
- Holy Spirit’s Guidance: Seek the Spirit to transform your character and priorities.
- Faithful Obedience: Living in obedience strengthens your readiness.

Application: Spend time each day in prayer and study to fill your lamp with spiritual oil.

3. L - Live with Urgency and Hope

The midnight cry warns us that time is short, but it also reminds us of the hope of Jesus’ return.

- Urgency: Share the gospel and live as if Jesus could return today.
- Hope: Trust in God’s promises and look forward to the joy of eternity with Him.

Application: Act now. Remove distractions, share the truth, and live in anticipation of His return.

Closing Story: The Prepared Man: A Story from the Pacific Palisades Fire, 2025

In January 2025, Los Angeles faced unprecedented wildfires, notably the Palisades and Eaton Fires, exacerbated by extreme Santa Ana winds and prolonged drought conditions. The Palisades Fire ignited on January 7, rapidly consuming over 23,713 acres, destroying approximately 5,300 structures, and resulting in at least nine fatalities. Concurrently, the Eaton Fire began on January 7 in Eaton Canyon, spreading swiftly to 14,117 acres, destroying around 7,500 structures, and causing 17 deaths.

These fires led to the evacuation of over 150,000 residents and caused widespread power outages affecting nearly one million people. The economic impact is estimated at \$275 billion, marking it as one of the most costly natural disasters in U.S. history. Firefighting efforts were bolstered by personnel from multiple states and countries, including Canada and Mexico. The causes of both fires remain under investigation, with lawsuits filed against Southern California Edison alleging negligence in handling power safety shut-offs.

In the devastating Pacific Palisades Fire of 2025, when winds whipped flames across the hills with terrifying speed, one home stood as a beacon of hope amid the ashes. It belonged to a man named James Carter, a retired firefighter. Unlike many of his neighbors, James had spent years preparing for a fire he prayed would never come.

James took fire prevention seriously. He cleared brush 100 feet from his home, installed fire-resistant materials on his roof and walls, and created a defensible space around his property. He had backup water tanks, fire-resistant windows, and even an independent sprinkler system designed to activate in case of a firestorm. Many in the neighborhood thought his precautions were unnecessary. "It'll never happen here," they'd say. But James wasn't willing to take the chance.

When the fire came, it came fast. The emergency alerts sounded, and people scrambled to evacuate. Flames raced through the hills, consuming homes, cars, and anything in their path. James had already evacuated his family, but he stayed back to activate his sprinkler system and monitor the situation. He had a clear plan and remained calm while chaos surrounded him.

When the fire finally passed, the destruction was staggering. Entire streets were reduced to smoldering rubble, with homes turned to ash. But James's house stood unscathed. The fire-resistant materials and preparation had done their job. His home was the only one left standing, a testament to the power of being prepared.

The Lesson: Spiritual Preparation Matters

James's story is more than a tale of physical preparedness—it's a parable for our spiritual lives. Just as James prepared for the fire he hoped would never come, we must prepare for the spiritual crises and ultimate return of Christ. Jesus warns us in Matthew 25:13, "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

James didn't wait until the fire was at his doorstep to start preparing. He took action long before the flames arrived. Many of his neighbors didn't take the warnings seriously, and when the fire came, it was too late for them. Spiritually, many people delay their preparation, assuming there's plenty of time. But the midnight cry—the announcement of Christ's return—will come suddenly, leaving no time for last-minute preparations.

Spiritual Lessons from James's Story

1. Clear the Brush (Remove Spiritual Distractions)

James cleared brush from around his home to prevent the fire from spreading. Similarly, we must remove anything in our lives that distracts us from God—whether it's sin, bad habits, or misplaced priorities.

2. Build with Fire-Resistant Materials (Strengthen Your Faith)

James used fire-resistant materials to protect his home. We build spiritual resilience by immersing ourselves in God's Word, spending time in prayer, and walking daily with Christ.

3. Activate Your Sprinkler System (Rely on the Holy Spirit)

James had a sprinkler system that doused his property with water when the fire came. For us, the Holy Spirit is our divine helper, equipping us to withstand the trials and challenges of life.

A Strong Appeal: Will You Be Prepared?

The fire is coming—both literally and spiritually. The midnight cry will sound, and only those who are prepared will be ready to meet the Bridegroom. James didn't prepare because he enjoyed the work or because it was easy. He prepared because he knew what was at stake.

What about you? Are you preparing your heart, your mind, and your soul for Christ's return? Are you clearing the distractions, building a strong foundation of faith, and inviting the Holy Spirit to guide and protect you? Or are you waiting, hoping to have time later?

When the midnight cry comes, it will be too late to prepare. But today is the day of salvation. Just as James's home stood as a witness to the power of preparation, your life can be a testimony to God's grace and faithfulness when you trust Him completely.

Let us pray together:

"Lord, help us to prepare now, not tomorrow. Teach us to clear the distractions, strengthen our faith, and rely on Your Spirit so that we may stand firm when the storms of life come. Amen."