

Maintaining our Lamps

Matt 25:7-8

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

2 Tim 1:6-7

6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

I. Two-week Review

1. It seems that in the last two weeks, life has completely turned around in the United States.
2. I want to review the messages the Lord impressed me with since then because I feel that it is all lined up in a straight line to give us a clear vision of the times and where we are, and what we must be doing.

- A. Lessons from the Korah Virus
 - 1. Two weeks ago, Sunday March 15, was our last service where we were all together. Stop complaining and intercede. This will take a miracle.

- B. Take Care, Take Heart
 - 1. Wednesday, March 18 was our first time of having to conduct our services online. Take Care to the Lord and leave it there.
 - 2. Take heart. Be not afraid of sudden fear. Call 911, that is Psalm 91:1 find a secret place with God who is our refuge and deliverance from pestilence.

- C. This is My Day, I Was Made for This
 - 1. Last Sunday, March 22 we studied how the Jews who went into Babylonian exile asked “how shall we sing the LORD’s song in a strange land?”
 - 2. Now more than ever, we need to realize it is time to sing, and as Queen Esther discovered, God called you to serve at such a time as this.

- D. The Importance of Being Full
1. Wednesday night, March 25. I began with some images that had a more or less obvious answer to this question: What is missing?
 - a. **Picture number 1.** What is missing?
That's easy. A tire is missing.
 - b. **Picture number 2.** Less obvious because there is more to look at. The boy flying a kite is missing his left arm.
 - c. Look at **picture number 3** and study it for a while. What is missing? By looking at the patterns of numbers, you want to say the answer is 6, but there is this statement below that says the answer is not 6.
 2. The longer you study, the more convinced you are that the answer has to be 6. There is no other logical answer. The answer is obviously 6.
 3. That led us to the discussion about the answer for our most obvious need in this life. Looking at us, ask the question: What is missing?

4. Jesus is the answer for the world today. Above Him there's no other, Jesus is the way.
 5. In the parable of the 10 virgins, all 10 had lamps to light the path, but 5 were wise and also brought extra oil to prepare for the long wait. 5 were foolish and took no oil.
 6. By the time the groom arrived at midnight, the foolish had no oil and were left behind as a result.
 7. Being filled with oil is comparable to being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18.) Being full of the Spirit is what it will take to face our day, and the coming of the Lord.
- II. Introduction—Maintaining our Lamps
1. I gave that long review of recent messages to point to the most obvious need for today, the greatest need for our emptiness:, being full of the Holy Ghost.
 2. I don't know how anyone makes it through dark days without the Spirit of God to carry them through.

3. Friends help, family helps, but they cannot be with you always and cannot fill the emptiness of your soul.
4. But that is our message of hope for today—God wants to be your everyday companion who lives inside your heart. You can literally carry the treasure of His Spirit inside of you:
2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.
5. So instead of feeling trapped by bars or chains of despair, I can declare with joy, “I found a treasure!”
6. Being full of the Spirit means the fruit of the Spirit can begin to show up in us. Things we need today like:
Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

7. Since all this comes from having our lamps burning brightly, today I want to preach on this thought: **Maintaining our Lamps.**

III. Starting and continuing

A. Starting well

1. It is midnight and the need for the oil is the greatest. We must make it a priority to be refilled.
2. When we were saved, we got into the church by being baptized by the Spirit:
1 Cor 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body [the body of Christ, the church], whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.
3. So like the parable of the 10 virgins, they all started off with a lamp full of oil—they all started off the same, because we are all baptized into one body by the Spirit.

B. Continuing well—getting stirred up

1. But what shall we do as the journey goes on?

2. Jesus didn't save us so that He could immediately catch us up into heaven to be with Him. He saved us to be a light in the darkness of this world.
3. He saved us to go out into the fields of this world to represent Him and find treasures—other people just like us, who were broken and empty, those whom He wants to transform by filling with His Spirit.
4. So as this journey lingers, and as the darkness of the night seems to be encroaching us, it is essential that we keep a supply of oil flowing.
5. We were filled when we first got in, and now it is important that we remain filled by “stirring up” that gift:
2 Tim 1:6-7
6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.
6. Don't allow the Holy Ghost that came into you when you were first saved, to become a low-priority and neglected experience.

7. Paul encouraged the young Timothy to stir up the gift of God. Why? Obviously Timothy had allowed other things or events in life to influence him to the point that he was assaulted by a spirit of fear:
7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.
8. Did you catch the connection between those two verses? Stir up that Holy Ghost gift in you because God didn't give you the spirit of fear.
9. The stirred up Holy Ghost is **power** over that. Power removes all those unclean devils that want to overcome our spirit.
10. The Holy Ghost also bathes us in God's **love**. Love pushes out the impatience, short temper, and misunderstanding.
11. The Holy Ghost also gives us a **sound mind!** A sound mind removes the feelings that I'm not good enough, that people are against me, or God won't forgive me.

12. If you are being assaulted by the spirit of fear, stir up the gift of God. Get a fresh baptism of the Spirit. Give priority to keeping your vessel full of oil.

IV. Maintaining our Lamps

A. Trim your lamp

1. There are two elements seen in the parable of the 10 virgins that caused the lamps to continue to burn brightly. See if you can identify them from these verses:

Matt 25:7-8

*7 Then all those virgins arose, and **trimmed** their **lamps**.*

*8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your **oil**; for our lamps are gone out.*

2. Trimming the lamp and keeping an oil supply.
3. Oil lamps are similar to candles in that they both need their wicks trimmed.
4. As a candle burns, the process of combustion at the end of the wick will sometimes result in soot deposits at the end

of the wick. But whether soot builds up or not is a result of the quality of the wick.

5. Listen to how Yankee Candle describes that problem:
 - a. “Keeping the wick trimmed to 1/8 of an inch at all times helps control the amount of “fuel” or wax that is present. By keeping the amount of fuel limited, the flame will create ideal **complete combustion** where carbon particles are absorbed by the flame. This means less soot is formed while the candle is burning. ... It all has to do with the quality of the wick and the proper care of the candle!”¹
6. The **goal for a candle is complete combustion**. As the fuel gets used up, the end of the wick gets further from the fuel source. And as the distance between the fuel and the fire grows, it results in **incomplete combustion** and carbon deposits will develop.

¹ <https://learning-scenter.yankeecandle.com/wick-trimming>

7. But if the fire is kept near the flame, **complete combustion** will happen where the fire consumes the carbon particles that develop.
8. That is why it is necessary to trim the wick. And Yankee Candle recommends trimming the wick every four hours of burn time to retain the state of “complete combustion.”
9. Let me interpret that for you. The longer we burn, the further from the fuel source we become. And if we don’t keep up with proper wick maintenance, we will begin to develop soot which limits the brightness of the burn and can cause the flame to extinguish, even with a fuel supply available.
10. So every so often, and Yankee Candle says it needs to be every four hours, we must cut off the soot and get the end of the wick closer to the source of fuel.
11. I see repentance in that candle parable. The longer we burn and the further we drift from

the fuel station, the more the gunk of the world starts building up on us.

12. Cares of this world, worry, negative attitudes, sinful thoughts, anger, impatience, wrath, all of these begin to show up as soot deposits because we have not been back to the fuel station for a while.
 13. Stir up the gift of God. Trim the lamp. Repent of the trash that has built up in your mind.
 14. So if you want to keep your lamp burning bright in this darkness, first, keep that lamp trimmed. Make a priority of keeping as close to the fuel source as possible.
 15. Don't allow a day to go by without coming clean with God. That will keep you from drifting further from your fuel source.
- B. Keeping a fuel source
1. Not only is a clean wick necessary, but it is also necessary to have a fuel source readily available.
 2. The foolish virgins didn't take extra oil to prepare for the long night, because they

simply failed to see the need. You could say their vision was failing and it led to their lamps going out.

3. This brings to mind the story of when the Lord called the young child Samuel:

1 Sam 3:1-3

3 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli [the high priest]. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days [a word from the Lord was rare]; there was no open vision [revelatory visions were infrequent].

4. There had been a long length of time and space since the last baptizing encounter with God. They had gotten far from the fuel source.

2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; [like the foolish virgins]

3 And ere [before] the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of

God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;

5. The wording is odd here. It says “before the lamp went out”, instead of, “while the lamp was burning brightly.”
 6. In other words, they were approaching burnout.
 7. Getting close to burnout is a condition that we want to prevent.
 8. But in this case, what seemed to lead to near burnout was, **no Word of God, no clear vision from God, blindness, and slumber.**
 9. This sounds a lot like the attitude of the 5 foolish virgins. Someone had nearly let the oil run out because they were not making the things of God a priority.
- v. Become an oil supply
- A. Wake up; get fresh oil
1. It is time to wake up to the situation before us today. I want to conclude by looking at Zechariah 4 to address the solution to our second need. First, keep the wick trimmed—

remove the filth, repent, be reconciled with God.

2. But second, wake up and get connected with fresh oil!

Zech 4:1-6

1 And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep,

3. First things first, WAKE UP! It is not time for slumbering.

4. Next, it is time to get a vision from God:

*2 And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a **candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof:***

3 And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.

4 So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord?

*5 Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.
6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, **Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.***

5. **[img:Zechariah's vision]**
6. The vision of Zechariah explains a way to keep the oil source flowing to the lamps.
7. It will not be human might or power that will carry us through the night. Yes, we are grateful to the many in medical professions and first responders who are literally sacrificing their lives to help others. They are making a great effort and meeting the needs of untold thousands of virus victims.
8. Their efforts and their sacrifices must be commended.
9. But ultimately, medical science has not found a cure for COVID-19.

10. Maybe they will one day, but as with any plague, while we keep praying for these who are giving so much to aid this situation, we need to be praying for the Spirit of the LORD to come through to bring the solution.

B. Be a source of oil

1. And if we can gain an understanding of this vision, it can be a life-changing revelation of what our lives are supposed to be. There is an image of ourselves seen in this vision of the Lord to Zechariah.

2. The first time Zechariah asked the meaning, the angel answered by saying, not by might, power but by my Spirit.

3. So Zechariah asks a second time for clarification of the vision:

Zech 4:12 And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?

4. Notice by his question, he recognizes that the olive branches are emptying out of

themselves, and it is that emptying out of themselves that keeps the lamps burning.

5. The olive trees appear to be the important players in this vision because they are the source of the continuous flow of oil.
6. Then the angel finally answers Zechariah's question:

Zech 4:14 Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the LORD of the whole earth.

7. The phrase "anointed ones" literally means, "sons of fresh oil," and refers to men and women, even children or youths, who have "pressed out" the oil.

VI. Conclusion

1. So how will we make it through the darkness of midnight that we are facing? I believe the Lord is calling us to become His chosen last day anointed ones, sons and daughters who will be a continuous source of oil.

2. If we grasp this calling, we will never have to worry about being the foolish virgin who ran out of oil.
3. The anointed ones are those who continue to “press out” the oil. How do we do that? First, look how Jesus described the picture:
John 15:5-7
5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.
7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.
4. In other words, the Spirit will flow through us as long as we abide in Him.
5. This is the closing thought to take with you.
6. In Revelation 1, Jesus revealed that the candlestick is the church.

7. Zechariah 4 reveals that the source of oil to the candle stick are these anointed ones, those who continue—day in and day out—continue to press out fresh oil.
8. So how will the church make it through this midnight hour?
9. How will we as individuals survive through this plague, the quarantine, the isolation, the fears and disruptions of our age?
10. Keep pressing the oil. Stir up the gift of God. But How?
11. Keep on with your prayers of intercession.
12. Keep up with spiritual warfare prayers.
13. Keep hearing the Word of the Lord.
14. Keep pursuing a vision from the Lord.
15. Keep connected to Jesus and keep pressing the fruit to keep the oil flowing.
16. By making a priority of maintaining our lamps, there shall be light in the evening time.
17. When the foolish ask, “Give us of your oil” you can be a source to pour oil unto others because you continue to produce it.