

**Sunday November 8, 2020 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church**

**Bible Study – Matthew 25:1-13  
“The Shout at Midnight”**

Open with a word of prayer

**Gathering Time** (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, discuss the following: “How prepared are you for the next emergency? What preparedness kits do you have ready, if needed?” (For lack of electricity, winter storms, quarantine kit, car kit, first-aid kit, etc.)

**Matthew 25:1-13 Context:** As Jesus’ earthly ministry comes to a close, Matthew’s account ends as it had begun. Just as Jesus’ teaching had been initiated in Matthew with the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7), so too Matthew has gathered a number of Jesus’ sayings into a final “Judgment Discourse” (chapters 23-25). Chapter 25 begins with this week’s reading and continues with two further parable/allegories that spell out what Matthew felt was important for followers of Jesus to be doing as they looked forward to that glorious and terrible day when the Son of Man would return, the world would be judged, and God would establish a new kingdom of love and justice on earth. With the story of the ten bridesmaids, the symbolism is straightforward: the bridegroom is Jesus; the bridesmaids are his followers; the oil is good deeds. Jesus counsels his followers not so much to be anxiously watching for the signs of the end, but simply to be ready to meet their Lord by preparing themselves with deeds of kindness, justice and mercy. Although the concluding verse advises us to “keep awake,” in fact, the main point is to “be prepared.”

**Read Matthew 25:1-13**

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

**Read Matthew 25:1-13 again**

**Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.**

- In this parable, Jesus is using a common scene from a wedding ceremony. Bridesmaids would leave the bride at night, to meet the groom. They would then accompany the groom, whenever he decided (perhaps shouting his intentions at midnight), back to the bride’s house. They would then travel back to the groom’s father’s house for a ceremony, and festivities that could last up to a week with many in the village in attendance. With those considerations, do you understand the response of the bridesmaids in verse 9? [Besides just missing the wedding ceremonies, these

bridesmaids are also risking public shaming. It would be very risky not to have the oil needed for the lamps.]

- Have you ever had friends or family members do something so embarrassing that you didn't want to identify with them? How do you think that same dynamic is in the words of the reply in verse 12? [It is not that the speaker didn't actually know them by name; their actions were so foolish that he did not recognize why they had acted so foolishly. This added to their shame. In addition, they missed out on all the festivities.]
- As Christians, we are taught to be generous. In [Acts 2:44-45](#), we see a model of the church where believers share with one another. Why don't you think the bridesmaids were chided for not being more generous? Why do you think the bridesmaids were wise for not sharing?
- How does the last verse help us interpret the parable?
- A "shout at midnight" is a surprise announcement. What does it look like to be prepared spiritually?
- What habits might help you be more prepared spiritually? How can this group help you be more prepared?

**Read Matthew 25:1-13 again**

### **Closing Reflection Question**

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

**Prayer** (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

**Sending Forth** (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

Gracious God, we trust that you are at work reconciling the world to yourself even now and even when we may not see it. Give us the eyes of faith to see and continue empowering us to be prepared to be your witnesses to all we may encounter this coming week. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power  
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.