

## Watch with Wisdom

✧ Prepared with joy (vv.1-6)

✧ Focused on reality (vv.7-13)

*It's one of those family memories passed down over all these years. I remember my father saying it, and his father before him. "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked." (Psalm 84:10 NIV84) That's what we are, doorkeepers. And that's why when I heard Jesus in the temple that day, I could really relate to His parable. My own master had gotten married recently. And the way Jesus spun that story into a lesson for eternity, was so much better than the priests and rabbis ever taught. Their lessons went on forever and never came to the point. Jesus could tell a simple story and you could not miss the meaning. Everything He said tied into real life, right where you live. Our family job was to **Watch**. Jesus made it a lesson for everyone to **Watch with Wisdom**.*

✧ Prepared with joy (vv.1-6)

*My master's wedding was a happy time. You can imagine everyone waiting at the house for him to come. The bridesmaids in their beautiful dresses. I'm not married yet, so I have to admit. I was checking them out. My grandfather always said a good doorman can size up a person's character in a couple minutes. It's true. Some have a real common sense. We call it, "Camel sense." Others just flit here and there with no sense of purpose, more like a moth than a butterfly.*

*Bridesmaids are like that. Waiting for my master to come for his bride, they were no exception. Some came all ready with everything they needed. And some seemed like they'd never be ready if he waited another month or two. That's how it is in our Jewish weddings. Everyone has to be ready when the groom shows up to take his bride into the wedding hall.*

*My master's wedding was so fresh in my memory that day I went up to the temple. It was Tuesday about noon. All our religious leaders, scribes and Pharisees, even the priests and the Roman collaborators, the Sadducees, all of them were ganging up on Jesus. I felt sorry for Him at first. But after a while I could see He was holding His own. He demolished every argument they had without being on the defensive. If anything, He went on the offensive time after time until they had nothing left to say. They finally had to just shut up. We were all totally amazed at Jesus' wisdom.*

*As Jesus and His disciples were about to leave the temple that Tuesday, He blasted the religious leaders seven times for their unbelief and rebellion against God. I never heard anyone get away with that before. But everything Jesus said was true, right from the heart, especially that last part when He was nearly in tears: "**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'**" (Matthew 23:37-39 NIV84)*

*His disciples were all excited about our beautiful temple, but Jesus told them how it would be destroyed. Then He talked about the Last Day and said, "**No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**" (Matthew 24:36) He said the end would come suddenly like the Flood in Noah's day. He talked about a master leaving, then coming back unexpectedly, and the servants all getting in big trouble. This caught my attention for sure when Jesus said, "**He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping***

**and gnashing of teeth.”** (Matthew 24:51 NIV84) *I was just about to part company with them when Jesus told His Parable of the Ten Virgins. That sounded like a happy story. So I stayed a little longer.*

*We use lamps that are very simple. It's more like a bowl of oil with a wick hanging over the edge. You have to have enough oil or else the lamp will just burn out and leave you in the dark. Usually at our weddings the Bridegroom gets there in plenty of time. So it's no big deal. I know my master came quick and on time, so everyone was all set for the big party. People **Prepared with joy** and had a great time.*

*But Jesus was using a wedding to teach a lesson. I have to admit, it got to me because my job as a doorman. I could imagine five bridesmaids, the really classy kind, always have everything together. And then there's their ditsy friends who never are ready for anything but always looking pretty. But it's like, "All the lights are on, but nobody's home"? – that sort of thing. And Jesus told how the Bridegroom was late. It happens. Like smart girls everywhere, the wise ones took it all in stride. Extra oil in jars, so no problem no matter how long the Groom took. The foolish virgins didn't even notice their lamps flickering. They could have paid closer attention and run to the store. But they were too busy having fun. You know that song, "Girls just wanna have fun..."? Finally everyone just fell asleep.*

### ☆ Focused on reality (vv.7-13)

*The last thing you'd expect is for the bridegroom to show up at midnight. All those hours of waiting, waiting, waiting – yet darkness fell and he still wasn't there. Twilight past and the "sleepies" set in. You could hear the gentle whisper of the wind in the treetops like night music for the sleepers. And the steady lapping of the waves on the shore carried them to dreamland. So late, the bridegroom could have waited until tomorrow; delay the wedding? Yes, tomorrow.... Maybe he'll come tomorrow....*

*And then at midnight, just when everyone is really sound asleep, the cry rings out: "Behold the bridegroom!" All the lights go on and hearts are pounding. The virgins are shaking their heads to clear the cobwebs. Time to go. Ready or not, the Groom is here!*

*This is where it got kinda personal for me. I could just imagine standing there at the door tall and straight like my dad taught me. You can't flinch or smile, but you can sure see a lot. All the girls are trimming their lamps, pulling the wick out a little longer so the flame is brighter. But the five foolish virgins are running on empty after all those hours. And they want a quick gift from the others like people who always want something for nothing. "Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out." Can't you see the faces of the wise ones? "No way! There would never be enough oil for our lamps then. Hurry! Go buy some for yourselves." It was time those girls grew up and took care of business.*

*But by then it was too late. When my master comes inside and tells me to shut the door, that's exactly what I do. That's my job. No one gets in after that. But I would be shaking if I heard those five foolish virgins come running back, pounding on the door, "Let us in! Let us in!" I might even be tempted to open it. But my Master would give me that look like, "I've got this." And I'd have to stop. It just chills me to the bone for Jesus to say this bridegroom said, **"I tell you the truth, I don't know you."***

*I've spent my whole life just going along to get along. I've never really taken anything seriously. I have my friends and we party, as long as I don't lose my job. But I've never really listened to God's Word in the temple. Now I will. I get the story. Jesus' could cut right through all my teenage foolishness. I need to be ready – not tomorrow or the next day. I need to be ready today, tonight. Some day this will come true and the doorman in heaven will say, **"And the door was shut."** I don't want to be out there with the foolish pounding to get in. Because the wedding feast in heaven once it's started, won't have time for the ones who wasted their days away from God on earth. I saw Jesus die on the cross. I heard how He rose from the dead. I trust Him as my Master and my Savior. I'm ready. Thank God!*

Amen.