

BH Porter
16 Feb 2019
John 15:1-17

Our Contribution to the Atonement
Developing the Pure Love of Christ

We're here in John 15, but back in John 13, the Lord gives His apostles a new commandment:

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to one another. (John 13:34-35)

By this one can tell if you are following Christ; whether you are one of His disciples. This is the requirement and character of being a Christian. As mentioned, Christ's last instructions to His Apostles began in Chapter 13, and chapter 13 through 17 is one sermon. This sermon began in the upper room and ended at the Garden of Gethsemane where He is arrested. In Chapter 14, Jesus emphasizes again:

15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

So, the disciples of Jesus will love one another and will keep all His commandments. You will remember He told the Pharisees on one occasion that upon two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. What are those two commandments? Loving God and loving your fellowman. All the commandments and everything a prophet teaches is to help us develop the character that loves God and loves our fellowman. It all comes down to His statement: "If ye love me, then keep my commandments". On the other hand — based upon what Jesus has instructed — sin would be anything that distracts one from loving God and loving one's fellowman.

Moving into John 15 — this chapter is dealing with our individual contribution to the atonement. At the end of John 14, Jesus tells His apostles:

30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

Jesus and His apostles have been in the upper room for quite some time, and He lets them know it's time to move on, "to arise and go hence". The meal is over. It was not the Passover meal; that meal takes place *after* Jesus is taken prisoner. (During the actual Passover, no one could be out at night. It was a night unlike all other nights, as the Children of Israel placed lamb's blood on their door posts in Egypt, the night when the destroying angel came. The angel would pass over the homes whereon the blood had been placed.) On this night, after their 'last supper', the Sanhedrin is out and about; the High Priest's guards are out, as are Jesus and the apostles. We'll continue with John 15 below. Br Nibley's commentary is included.

Anciently in Israel, grapes were not raised in the same way we raise them today. They allowed the vines to grow along the ground within olive orchards / gardens. Christ is using the vine as a metaphor. He uses common everyday items to teach or emphasize a point.

I call it the M I A form of teaching. (**Motivation — Involvement — Application**) He would often use parables to create the questions from His audiences or hearers. In this case He is using the grape vine as they're walking down from the upper room towards the Garden of Gethsemane. As He is talking about these vines, it makes me wonder where He might have been walking at that time. The **Motivation** is always something that creates the question. The **Involvement** is always in scripture. You create the question in the minds of your students, and then you use scriptures to answer the questions. People won't learn until they want to learn or desire to learn. You create a question in your student's minds, then you answer with scripture, and then comes the **Application** of what you have been talking about. What are you going to do with this information? How are you going to use what you just learned? How will it change your life?

Questions are important. Any question a student asks is important to the one asking the question. A revelation comes to a prophet only because he is asking questions. Nearly every section we have in our D&C is in answer to questions Joseph Smith had as he went to the Lord. Something motivated Joseph to ask the questions.

~~These words read off seem reaptitious and redundant. They are anything but that taken in their context.~~

John 15 1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.
2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.
3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.
4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

Look what Jesus is saying here: I am the true vine. I am the one with the true Gospel. In John 1 (JST) he writes: "*And the gospel was the word*", and in v 14, he writes: "the *same* word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

The Father is the husbandman — the keeper of it all. If you bear fruit, there will be some hard times; if not...the fire has already been started. Some of you may remember the talk long ago by Hugh B. Brown, called, "The Gardener". In it he talked about the currant bush that was pruned (purged).

Jesus taught, "Now ye are clean through the word"...the word, in this context, is the scriptures. "Abide in me. (Abide in the scriptures!) His word can cleanse us IF we "Abide in Him". Remember, in the previous chapters He counseled, "If ye Love me, keep my commandments". This is how we abide in Him. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me". Nibley adds his thoughts:

John 15:1ff (the parable of the vine, the commonest of all. No danger of being taken literally or flasely, because everyone knew of it (Dura, Nabath, Jacob, etc.)
He is the VINE & they the branches: if they are bare they will be removed, the good one will be trimmed to bear more fruit. My teaching has already trimmed (cleaned) you. The Father is the landsman in charge of us both. 4. You stay with me and I will stay with you: you can't bear fruit without me

[The Lord is about to leave them. Tells them that they must remain firm and not remove themselves in the least from what he has taught:

We can abide in Christ if we abide by His teachings, and His teachings are the standard, i.e, His Word = the scriptures.

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.

The “vine” is actually talked clear back in Isaiah. Jesus is giving a clear exegesis of what Isaiah had to say about the vine. See **Isaiah 5:1-7** below:

1 Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

(He is talking about Israel being planted in Canaan)

2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

(The greatest suffering Christ participated in was NOT on the cross, nor in the House of Caiaphas or with Pilate at the Antonia Fortress. The greatest suffering Christ endured was in the Garden of Gethsemane.)

Keep in mind that olive groves were also vineyards. Gethsemane means, ‘the place of the press.’ You can see the play on words in this verse; not only is it talking about a press, but also about Christ’s life at this period of time. This vineyard was planted with the choicest vine; it was protected and had a watch tower erected, and the press was made for either the grapes or the olives, yet the vineyard brought forth wild grapes, (indicative of Jacob’s allegory in Jacob 5.)

3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

During the last week of His life, Christ is walking up and over a hill from Bethany overlooking Jerusalem, and He laments:

34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not! (Luke 13:34)

This is direct reference to what Isaiah is talking about.

5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; *and* break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts *is* the house of Israel, and the men of Judah **(the leadership)** his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

The Lord is saying he had provided a place of safety; He had protected Israel, but He and His teachings were rejected. He would have gathered them, but because they rejected Him, they will be broken up and trodden down and laid waste. He is talking about all those who know and can understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ— not just the Jews in Israel. He is talking to US...”How oft I would have gathered you”, He said.

In Matthew 21, we see almost the same thing echoing the words of Isaiah. Let’s compare them side by side:

Isaiah 5	Matthew 21
<p>1 Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: 2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. 3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? 5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; <i>and</i> break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: 6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts <i>is</i> the house of Israel, and the men of Judah (the leadership) his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. (The Romans are coming!)</p>	<p>33 ¶ Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: 34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. 35 And the husbandmen took his servants (The prophets), and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again, he sent other servants (More Prophets) more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. 37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38 But when the husbandmen (the leadership) saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. 39 And they caught him, and cast <i>him</i> out of the vineyard, and slew <i>him</i>.</p>

1 Peter 2:3-8

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

4 To whom coming, *as unto a living stone*, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and precious*,

5 Ye also, **as lively stones**, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion **a chief corner stone**, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

7 Unto you therefore which believe *he is precious*: but unto them which be disobedient, **the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner**,

8 And **a stone of stumbling**, and **a rock of offence**, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen (**The Gentiles**), which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, **The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner**: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

44 And whosoever shall fall on **this stone** shall be broken: but on whomsoever **it** shall fall, **it** will grind him to powder.

45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

I hope you are beginning to see the importance of striving to abide in Christ. We can do nothing of ourselves. Nibley comments on John 15:5-6:

5. "I am the vine & you are my branches: IF we stick together we can bring a great yield. But without me you cannot do a thing; who does not stay with me will be thrown away like a withered branch and burned.

We cannot force the fruit. Sometimes we can be pushed into all kinds of activities without being directed by the Spirit. If you think about it, our programs are designed for the unconverted — they are designed to create the good fruit that would not normally be created if one was already converted. God does not like busy-work! Unless we abide in Christ, we cannot bear good fruit of ourselves. If we are not accepting Christ as that true vine, we will not be able to bring forth that good fruit. If you abide in Christ, the fruit will come forth naturally. It will not be 'forced fruit'. I cannot say it enough — we have to come unto Christ.

Question: What is an example of busy-work that you talked about?

Class member: Just go to Relief Society. You have to have a table cloth, and flowers, and little things to hand out, etc.

My uncle Stan Porter, (a former stake president) said one time that "a meeting ought to be a really good meeting than to have no meeting at all." I don't know how many meetings I have been to that have nothing to do with me and or my calling. I learned a long time ago that if I don't take with me something to read at a meeting I am going to regret it.

I cannot remember who said it: “Good is man’s worst enemy if it robs him of doing something Better.”

I can spend all my discretionary time doing something good, and it could be robbing me of doing something better. It comes back to that talk by Elder Oaks in the October Conference in Oct, 2007, “[Good, Better, and Best](#)”. When it comes right down to it, our priorities ought to lead to exaltation. We ought to want exaltation more than anything else. You’ll be pitting your choices against each other until you discover what is most important. This is why doing something good can be your worst enemy if it robs you of doing something better, or if the better is going to exalt you. Those outside the celestial kingdom are those who were not valiant in the testimony of Christ (D&C 76:79).

Getting back to our text:

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.

We cannot be spiritually productive without Christ. We can be totally committed and faithful to all the programs of the Church, but we cannot fulfill them without abiding in Christ. Jesus desires that we create and maintain a relationship with Him.

If we abide in Him, and He in us, then we have a relationship. This is why our sacrament meetings are so very important. Brigham Young and others have said that the sacrament is the most important ordinance in the Church, more so than those we participate in the Temple. Participating in the sacrament begins that process of abiding in Him and Him in us. If we continue to keep His commandments, and always remember Him, then we can have His Spirit to be with us. That establishes that relationship. As Christ explained in v 6 above, “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. [See D&C 50:29]

7. But if you remain with me and my word stays with you, ANYTHING you ask for will be granted.

If we abide in Christ, and His words abide in us, then we are remembering Him. His words are light and they are Spirit (See D&C 84:43-45).

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. [‘herein’ refers to all things Jesus has told them in this discourse.]

Comment: *I seem to remember that one’s heart and treasure go hand in hand.*

That’s true. Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matthew 6:21) and He also said, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” at the same time. (Matthew 6:24)

Question: *Is the scripture, “If he have desires to serve God ye are called to the work” related to all this? (D&C 4:3).*

Yes, it is because *desire* is a character trait. The Lord has said, “For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts.”(D&C 137:9) One’s desires indicate one’s commitment and character.

Comment: *In our Quorum discussions, it seems like they are trying to build that desire within the Quorum and have people go out and actually do their work. And you are saying that if Christ abides in us, we would automatically go out and do what we need to do.*

That’s right. That’s why I said programs are for the unconverted. Programs are trying to convert people to the actions that show that you love Christ. If you love Christ, you will not need a program. If you actually loved Christ, you would not need a missionary program, or a ministering program. If you actually loved Christ, and He abides in you, you are already going to do those things without anyone asking you. Nibley comments about v 8:

8. because your bearing fruit and becoming my disciples is exactly what glorifies my Father.

The Father receives His glory as we become one with Christ. Remember what Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you”, (or ye are not one of my disciples). Commandments are recipes for our happiness. They help us love God and love our fellowman. Programs can help stimulate one’s activity, but one’s ultimate character change occurs because of one’s agency, not a checkmark on a roll or a secretary’s report.

Christ has made salvation and exaltation available. Our contribution is to create a character that can take advantage of these gifts Jesus has made possible because of His atonement.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.
9. and exactly as the Father has loved me, so I love you.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.
10. Hold to his love of mine! You will if you just keep my commandments I had to keep his commandments, too, and hold to him in love.

Developing that pure love of Christ is part of our contribution to the atonement. Notice the numerous times Jesus is using the word, love. He had to do the same thing; He had to abide in His Father’s love! Here’s that connection between us, Christ, and the Father. The word, atonement, means becoming one-with-God (at-one-ment).

11 These things (in John 13-14) have I spoken unto you, **that my joy** might remain in you, and **that your joy might be full.**

Nearly every time when someone comes to an understanding of the Gospel, the word, joy, is used. Eve said, “Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, **and the joy of our redemption.**” (Moses 5:11) Father Lehi taught, “...men are, **that they might have joy.**” (2 Ne 2:25)

There's a distinction between fun and joy. It's a lot of fun to ride one of the super-rides at Disney Land, but the fun ceases when the ride is over. When fully comprehended, joy does not end. The "joy" Christ is talking about in v 11 is the kind that is everlasting and is continual.

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, **as** I have loved you.

Christ is going right back to where the sermon began in that upper room.

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Nibley comments:

11. I am telling you these things to make you happy--perfectly happy!

12. And this is what I am asking you to do now: To love each other just as I have loved you.

**13. AND the greatest possible love is to lay down one's life for one's friends.
(The Apostles were going to be asked to do that.)**

14. YOU are my friends, if you do as I instructed you

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is **fulness of joy**;" (Psalms 16:11)

If we strive to abide in Christ, we will, in His presence, receive that **fulness of Joy!**

D&C 93:33 also speaks about receiving that fullness of joy.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; **who for the joy** that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

Christ endured the pain of Gethsemane and the cross so that **we** might have the **joy of our redemption!** That is what this verse in Hebrews is talking about.

Remember, Christ said that "upon these two commandments [loving God and loving our fellowman] hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40). We cannot produce the type of fruit Christ is talking about unless we abide in Him. The fruit He is talking about is loving other people.

Here's a scriptural priority of this topic: Remember **J**esus, love **O**thers, and work on **Y**ourself.

One of the great talks in conference I ever heard was by Elder Theodore Tuttle, in October Conference 1972. He gave a wonderful talk entitled, "Altar, Tent, Well". [Here's the link](#). It's about Abraham. When Abraham left his ancestral homeland, the first thing he did was build an altar. The second thing he did was erect a tent for his family. The third thing he did was dig a well, because that was his business. This was a talk about priorities: an altar for God, a tent for his family, and then a well to support his family and those around him.

15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

15. I don't call you servants (slaves--but-friends); because a servant does not know what his master is up to.
So I have called you friends instead, because I let you in on everything I have heard from my Father.

16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that your fruit should remain*: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

16. You haven't picked me out (to be your friend), but I have picked you out, so you could go forth and bring in a lot of lasting fruit and have the Father give you anything at all that you asked for in my name.

Studies among the “born again” believers who remain active in their faith after 5 years of accepting Christ is only about 15 % if what they originally heard was based on an emotional appeal. Whereas in another group about 85% remained active because they were taught from the scriptures and their conversion was based on knowledge rather than emotion. Jesus was speaking to His apostles that they should bring forth fruit that would “remain”, and not fall away. Emotion goes by the wayside, whereas knowledge remains.

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

17. This, then is what I am asking you to do--TO love one another.

This statement is the crux of the matter. He has been hammering this point throughout this part of the conversation with His apostles. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.

The exalting power of the atonement is in our contribution to that atonement. Our contribution is abiding in Christ, in His words and in His teachings and in our love for one another. It's not in how many ordinances we participated in or how many times we went to church or how many people we visited in our ministering — it is in the character we are developing in loving God and loving our fellowman. That's the fruit Jesus is talking about.

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have no monopoly on love or charity. We have no monopoly on faith or kindness. The only things we have a monopoly on are priesthood and ordinances — that's it. We have no monopoly on the character traits required for exaltation. As a matter of fact, where much is given, much is required. He that sins against the greater light receives the greater condemnation. (D&C 82:3) We Latter-day Saints have the ability to sin *more* than any other faith or religion in the world. Love is the greatest and most important requirement for exaltation; more than *anything* else. If we possess the pure love of Christ, no one will slip or fall through the cracks (Moroni 7:47). No one! No one! We tend to say we need this ordinance, or this ordinance, or that ordinance in order to get there, and yes — you do. Those ordinances will be received whether in life or in death, but those ordinances will mean nothing if you have not produced or possess that fruit of love that Christ taught His apostles in these verses. Those ordinances will mean nothing if you have not developed the character that loves God and loves your fellowman. We have no monopoly on love.

Any questions?

Comment: *Before this class today, I was under the impression that all we had to do was get our sons on missions, or have our children qualify for a temple marriage. They were goals rather than focusing on the love Christ wants us to develop for others.*

Ordinances or missions or marriages are just commencements — a beginning, not an end. When we have a new member get baptized, we all rally round and say, “Just wait until next year and you can go to the temple.” We create that goal as end result, but that is not what it is — it is a commencement. Joining the Church is a commencement of developing your character; getting sealed is a commencement in learning to get along with someone who is different from you. All these things we talk about are not ends — they are beginnings. Think about this, ordinances give us more responsibility with the added potential to be damned greater than anyone else! (*scattered laughs and murmurs*) It’s a scary thing, but we don’t think about it. They also give us a hope for a future reality that is beyond our wildest dreams. That’s what ordinances are for — to give us a hope that we will be washed and pronounced clean; a hope to come forth in that first resurrection; a hope to be sealed to our spouses. This hope initiates that character development so that all these things can come to pass.

These chapters we are studying are among the most important in scripture. Christ is explaining how we can become exalted, what the atonement means and our participation in that atonement. Just think, these words in these chapters provide us with a knowledge gained at the Thursday meeting with Christ and His apostles. He is teaching them how to return to Him and receive a fulness of Joy.

Know that I know the Gospel is true. The Church is true. To me, the scriptures are exciting. No matter what I say the Church is true. You should not believe a word I say, and you should go straight to the scriptures. The quality of your scholarship is dependent on your sources, and if you depend on me, none of you are scholars! Go to your scriptures and use the prophets. Jesus is the Christ. Know that I know that. This discussion is unparalleled in our scriptures from God Himself. I say these things in the name of that God, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Below Br. Porter explains further about the parables in Matthew 25, and how they relate to our topic today.

Matthew 23-25

Matthew 25 is a parable. To understand it we have to see the discussion in the previous two chapters. Just like John 13-17 is one sermon, so is Matthew 23-25. In Matthew 23 Jesus is talking about the Church in His day. He is talking about the Pharisaic Leaders of the Church in His day. He told them they were like whited sepulchers, but inside they were full of dead men’s bones. They were hypocritical. The Apostles ask how long these things are going to last, and in Matthew 24, He goes through the events of the last days. They wanted to know when all this terrible wickedness would come to an end, so He ends Matthew 24 with 2 men in the field and one is taken; there are two grinding at a mill — one is taken, and the other is left behind. And when the Lord returns, it will be well with those found so doing. The question becomes, what causes one to be left and the other taken? What is separating the two different people? Why is one taken and why the other one remains behind? After all the wickedness

that is going on, what is it that saves one but doesn't save the other? It all starts out with the question of why are the people so rotten?

Jesus begins in Matthew 25 by explaining why one is left and the other is taken. He says, "The kingdom of heaven is like ten virgins; some are wise, and some are foolish. Some have their lamps trimmed, and the others don't. Some are playing around, and the others are preparing.

Then He says the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto the faithful and the unfaithful servant. Some were given a certain amount of talents and that they were to improve the talents they were given. One of the servants went and buried the talent he was given. He was the guy who graduated from high school, and when he is 60 years old is still only thinking about high school. He had not changed at all. The best days of his life were in high school. There were others who progressed and moved forward, wanting to change. They received more talents.

Then He says the kingdom of heaven is like sheep and goats. The sheep are on the right hand of God having joy, and the goats are on the left hand. In each case, with the 10 virgins or with the servants, the bridegroom tarried, or delayed his coming. When he eventually arrived he found 5 of the 10 virgins were not prepared to enter into the wedding feast, and closed the door upon them and said unto them, "I know ye not"; the unprofitable servant was cast into outer darkness and his talent was given to someone else.

Still the question remains: why one was taken and the other left behind? This comes back to the sheep and the goats; the sheep on the right hand and the goats on the left hand. In Matthew 25:35-45, Jesus explains the reasons for the separation; why one was taken and the other left; why those who were prepared were given entrance into the wedding feast, and the door closed on the others; why the unprofitable servant was cast out.

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: **(things that happen *inside* your own home)**

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. **(things that are *outside* of your home)**

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink?

(this is their character — they naturally did these things.)

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

That is the fruit. That is what separated the wise from the foolish virgins. This is the oil, this is what separated them. If you go to this chapter, and break each of these examples down, you will see the pattern emerge. Christ explains what separates the faithful from the unfaithful, and exactly what separates the sheep from the goats. It is not just one's testimony; it is action and love. This what separates; it's why one is taken and the other left behind.

Toward the end of Matthew 24 Christ tells his Apostles:

42 ¶ Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

46 **Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.**

What they were doing were loving one another, seeking the welfare of their neighbor. The exalting power of the atonement is in our contribution to that atonement, in our love for one another. It's not how many ordinances we participated in, how many times we went to church and sat on the front row, or how many people we visited in our ministering — it's the character we develop by loving God and loving our fellowman. It is what Christ talked about. That's the fruit. That's the oil. It's the difference between the faithful and the unfaithful. It's what separates the sheep from the goats.