

There's something about this parable that reminds me of the budget mess congress found itself in. News commentators now characterize the '80's as a decade of excessive spending. And barely into the '90's there's talk of taxes and worries about recession. It's as if our whole country followed the example of five foolish virgins, burning our oil when we could have been saving it.

We often act like children. Left on their own, kids would spend their childhood eating desserts, watching television, and playing games. They usually don't recognize the benefits of vegetables, homework, and prayer.

When we grow up we are still tempted to squander. We use up the free time we could spend with family, friends, and God. We use up our inner peace and become angry and irritable. We use up our closet space and fill it with clutter.

The solution, of course, is to budget. That's what the five wise virgins did, and that's what congress finally did. (I never thought I'd see the day when I compared congress to five wise virgins, but here it is.) We can budget time and space as well as money. By creating regular time for family, space for friends, and a place for God we'll be prepared for the troubles of midnight. We will have built our relationships strong for the moment of crisis when we need them.

The foolish virgins learned a hard lesson here. They learned there are some things you cannot buy. This lesson is equally hard for Americans after the 1980's. That decade taught us if you want something you buy it. And what's important in life is getting a position where you can buy what you want. What the foolish virgins learned is you can't always do that. You can't buy happiness. You can't buy relationships. You can't buy back someone you've lost. And you can't buy oil after midnight in a small town.

The Gospel urges us to know what is most important in life and to seek it every day. If we put in life regularly what we most treasure, it will be there when we need it.