

MATTHEW 25:1-13

BE PREPARED

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Scripture Passage

Matthew 25:1-13

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.



Sermon

Be Prepared

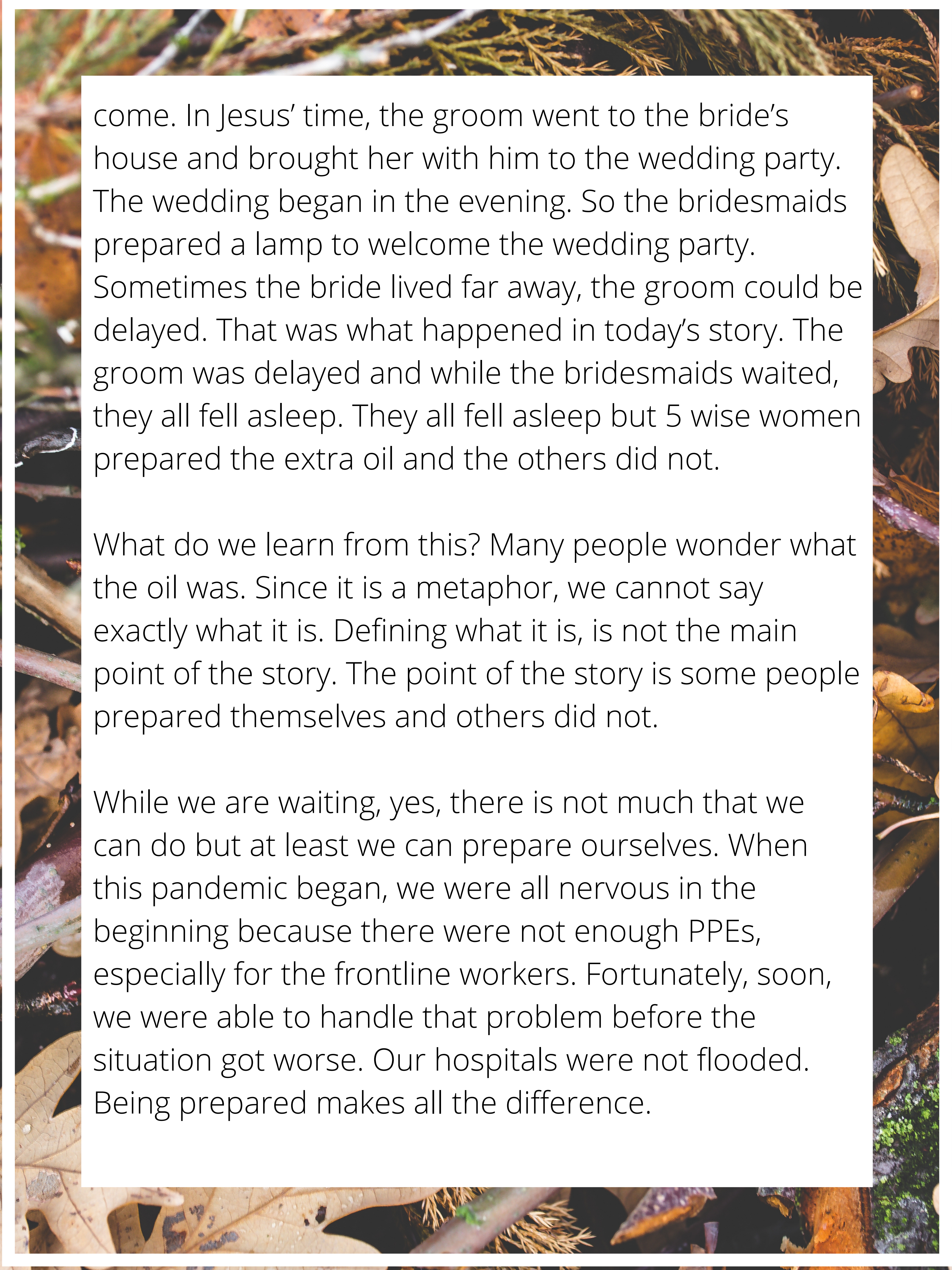
Waiting – that is our reality. That is what we do all the time. We cannot get rid of it in our lives. We all live our lives, waiting. Waiting for the baby, waiting for the children to grow up, waiting for the sun to rise.

The Difficulties of Waiting

Waiting can be simply boring; but waiting can be also quite difficult. There are times when we wait with great anxiety. We experienced that last week from Tuesday. We all waited with great anxiety for the result of the US election. Think about people who are waiting for the result of their lab test because their doctor suspected that there was something wrong with their body. For them, waiting will not be easy.

One of the difficulties of waiting is that there is nothing that we can do. We feel helpless. A lot of times that is what waiting is like. There is nothing that we can do.

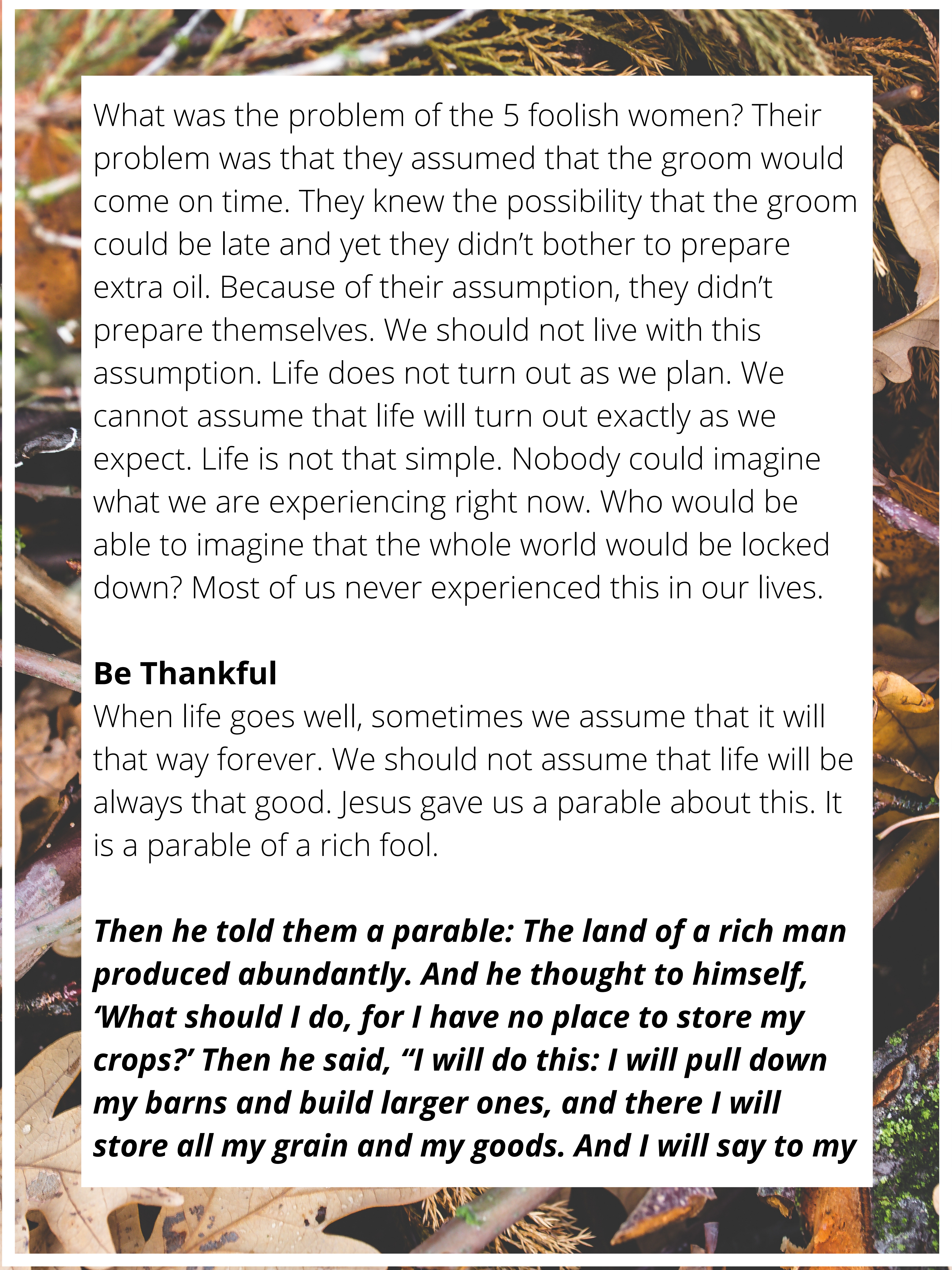
We read the parable of 10 bridesmaids of Matthew today. 10 bridesmaids all waited for the bridegroom to



come. In Jesus' time, the groom went to the bride's house and brought her with him to the wedding party. The wedding began in the evening. So the bridesmaids prepared a lamp to welcome the wedding party. Sometimes the bride lived far away, the groom could be delayed. That was what happened in today's story. The groom was delayed and while the bridesmaids waited, they all fell asleep. They all fell asleep but 5 wise women prepared the extra oil and the others did not.

What do we learn from this? Many people wonder what the oil was. Since it is a metaphor, we cannot say exactly what it is. Defining what it is, is not the main point of the story. The point of the story is some people prepared themselves and others did not.

While we are waiting, yes, there is not much that we can do but at least we can prepare ourselves. When this pandemic began, we were all nervous in the beginning because there were not enough PPEs, especially for the frontline workers. Fortunately, soon, we were able to handle that problem before the situation got worse. Our hospitals were not flooded. Being prepared makes all the difference.

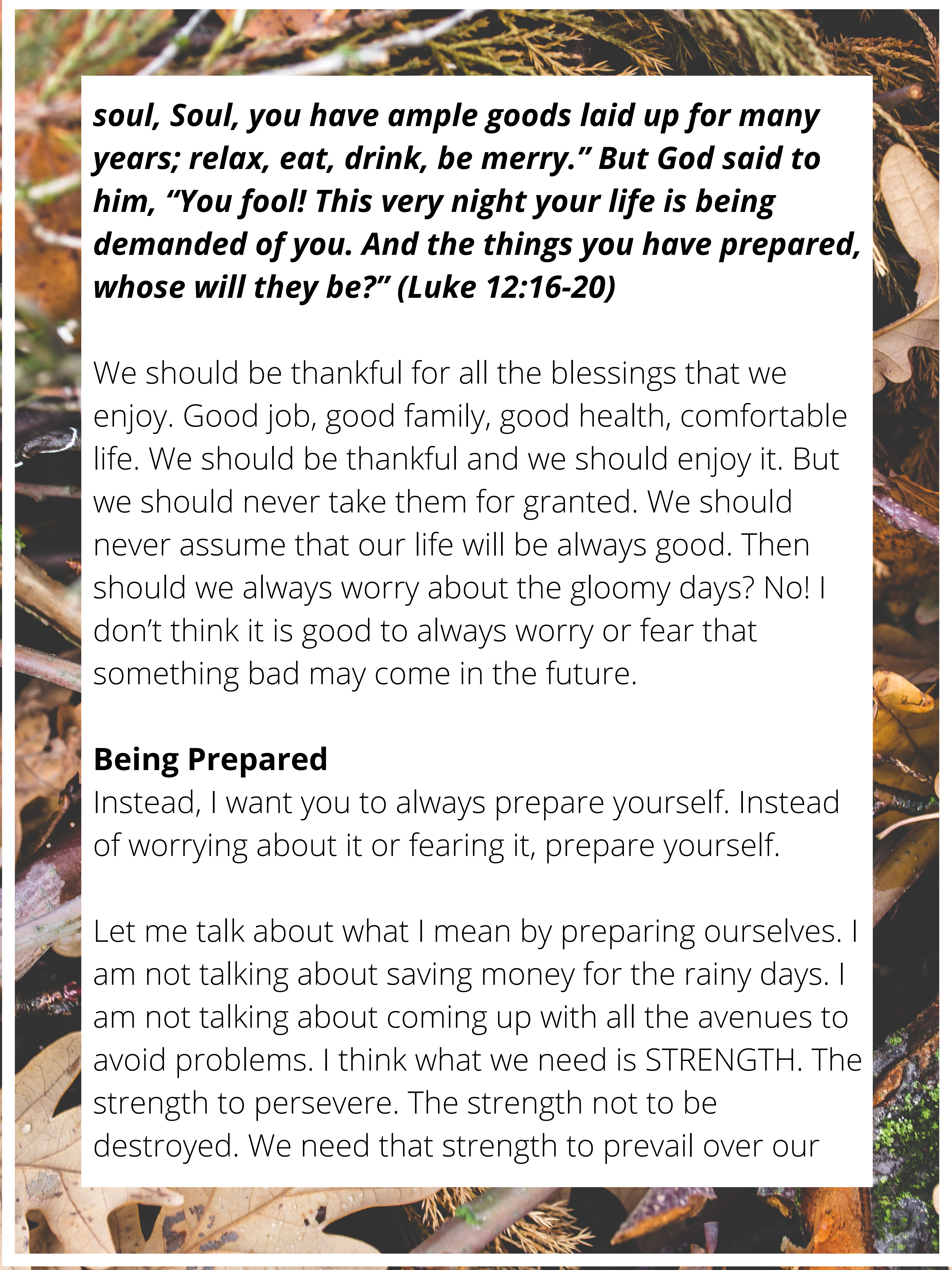


What was the problem of the 5 foolish women? Their problem was that they assumed that the groom would come on time. They knew the possibility that the groom could be late and yet they didn't bother to prepare extra oil. Because of their assumption, they didn't prepare themselves. We should not live with this assumption. Life does not turn out as we plan. We cannot assume that life will turn out exactly as we expect. Life is not that simple. Nobody could imagine what we are experiencing right now. Who would be able to imagine that the whole world would be locked down? Most of us never experienced this in our lives.

Be Thankful

When life goes well, sometimes we assume that it will that way forever. We should not assume that life will be always that good. Jesus gave us a parable about this. It is a parable of a rich fool.

Then he told them a parable: The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my



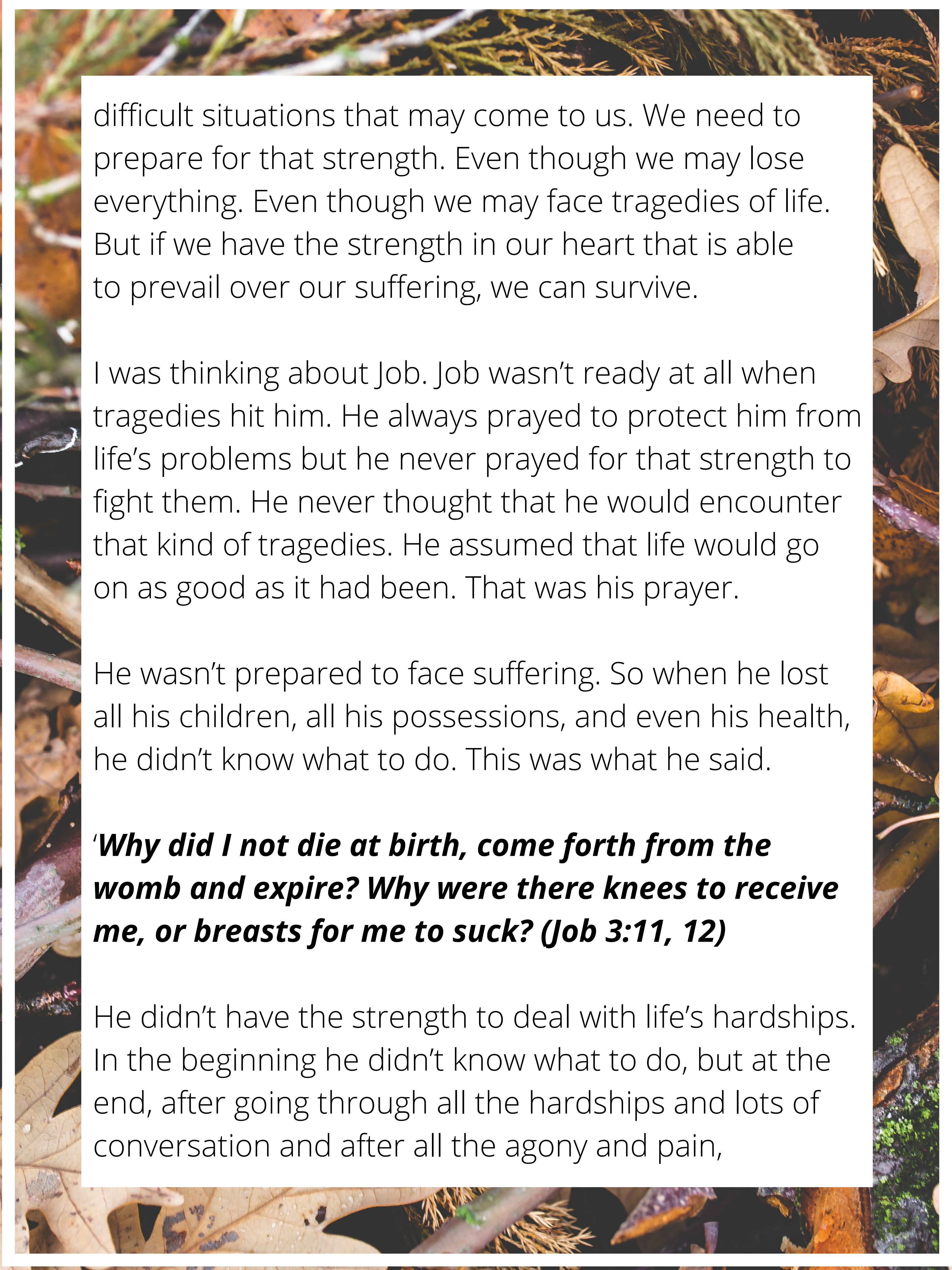
soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (Luke 12:16-20)

We should be thankful for all the blessings that we enjoy. Good job, good family, good health, comfortable life. We should be thankful and we should enjoy it. But we should never take them for granted. We should never assume that our life will be always good. Then should we always worry about the gloomy days? No! I don't think it is good to always worry or fear that something bad may come in the future.

Being Prepared

Instead, I want you to always prepare yourself. Instead of worrying about it or fearing it, prepare yourself.

Let me talk about what I mean by preparing ourselves. I am not talking about saving money for the rainy days. I am not talking about coming up with all the avenues to avoid problems. I think what we need is STRENGTH. The strength to persevere. The strength not to be destroyed. We need that strength to prevail over our



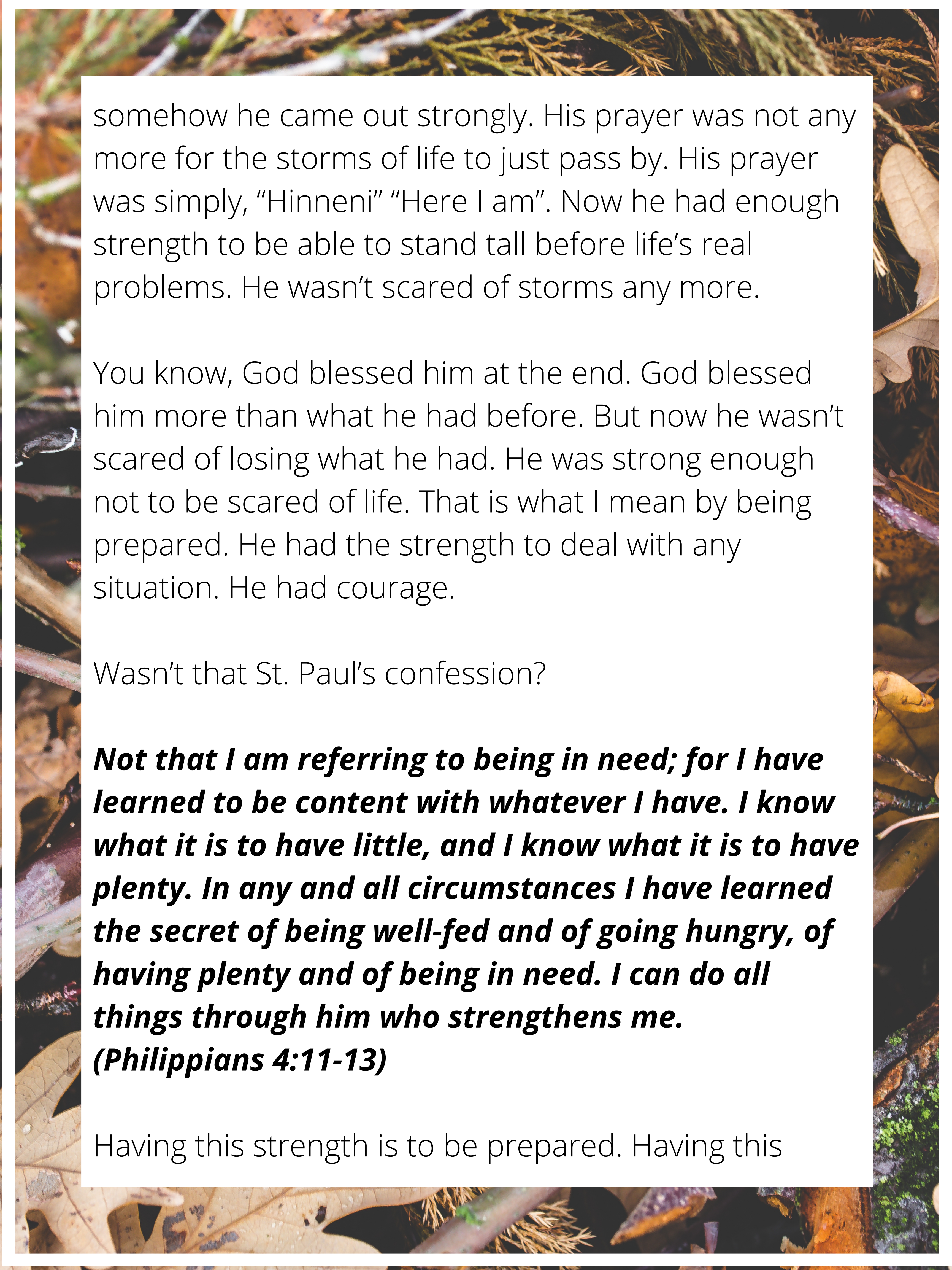
difficult situations that may come to us. We need to prepare for that strength. Even though we may lose everything. Even though we may face tragedies of life. But if we have the strength in our heart that is able to prevail over our suffering, we can survive.

I was thinking about Job. Job wasn't ready at all when tragedies hit him. He always prayed to protect him from life's problems but he never prayed for that strength to fight them. He never thought that he would encounter that kind of tragedies. He assumed that life would go on as good as it had been. That was his prayer.

He wasn't prepared to face suffering. So when he lost all his children, all his possessions, and even his health, he didn't know what to do. This was what he said.

'Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire? Why were there knees to receive me, or breasts for me to suck? (Job 3:11, 12)

He didn't have the strength to deal with life's hardships. In the beginning he didn't know what to do, but at the end, after going through all the hardships and lots of conversation and after all the agony and pain,



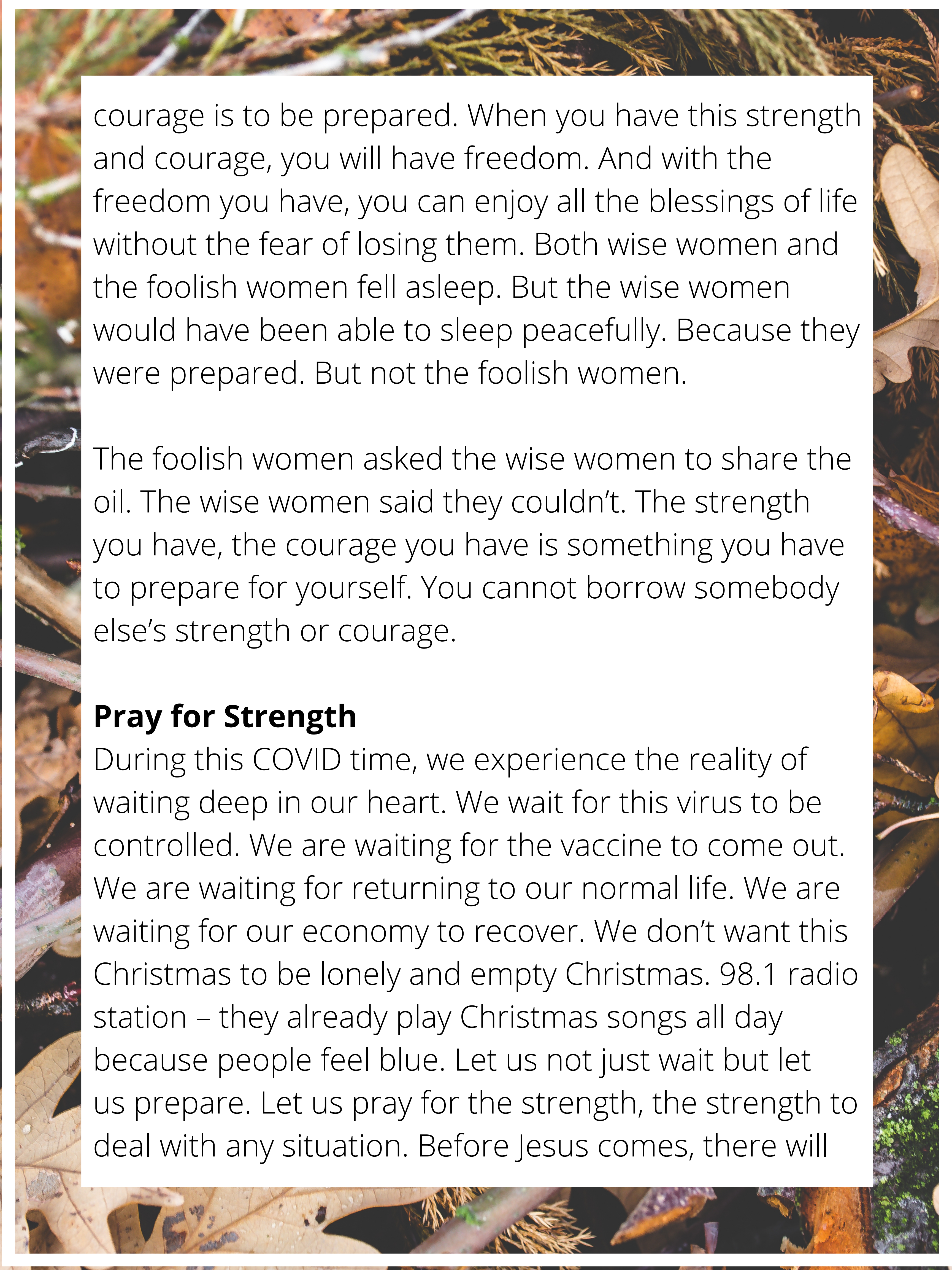
somehow he came out strongly. His prayer was not any more for the storms of life to just pass by. His prayer was simply, "Hinneni" "Here I am". Now he had enough strength to be able to stand tall before life's real problems. He wasn't scared of storms any more.

You know, God blessed him at the end. God blessed him more than what he had before. But now he wasn't scared of losing what he had. He was strong enough not to be scared of life. That is what I mean by being prepared. He had the strength to deal with any situation. He had courage.

Wasn't that St. Paul's confession?

***Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:11-13)***

Having this strength is to be prepared. Having this



courage is to be prepared. When you have this strength and courage, you will have freedom. And with the freedom you have, you can enjoy all the blessings of life without the fear of losing them. Both wise women and the foolish women fell asleep. But the wise women would have been able to sleep peacefully. Because they were prepared. But not the foolish women.

The foolish women asked the wise women to share the oil. The wise women said they couldn't. The strength you have, the courage you have is something you have to prepare for yourself. You cannot borrow somebody else's strength or courage.

Pray for Strength

During this COVID time, we experience the reality of waiting deep in our heart. We wait for this virus to be controlled. We are waiting for the vaccine to come out. We are waiting for returning to our normal life. We are waiting for our economy to recover. We don't want this Christmas to be lonely and empty Christmas. 98.1 radio station – they already play Christmas songs all day because people feel blue. Let us not just wait but let us prepare. Let us pray for the strength, the strength to deal with any situation. Before Jesus comes, there will



be tribulation. People who persevere this tribulation will be able to enter the eternal life with Jesus.

Let us build this strength. When you face problems, it doesn't matter how small the problems may be. When you face problems, ask God to give you the strength and with the strength, persevere your life's problems. Don't get so easily annoyed. Don't fall into despair. Don't give up. Persevere with the strength God gives you. Don't ever lose hope. Trust that God will help you. Slowly you will be able to build strength within you.

So when you face problems, pray. Don't just pray for the problems to go away. Pray for the strength.