

The Last Sunday after Trinity Sunday

St. Matthew 25:1-13

November 24th, 2019

Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC

Augusta, GA

Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Bridegroom Came

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

We thank Thee, Lord God, heavenly Father, that in the past Church year Thou hast preserved Thy Word among us in purity, and by it sensibly quickened our souls; and we beseech Thee, Thou wouldst graciously forgive us all our neglect, unbelief, and disobedience of Thy Word, and continue unto us this precious treasure with Thy blessing forevermore; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

We have come to the end of another Church year. And like always, we hear the parable of the Ten Virgins. This parable has both a stark warning for us, and also a blessed promise of eternal life with our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ—the Bridegroom. This parable brings us to the Last Day, the day of Judgment. The virgins represent the Church on Earth as we wait for the blessed eternal wedding feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom. There are ten virgins the number of complete perfection, it represents the whole Church. All ten virgins go to meet the Bridegroom. All ten virgins have lamps with them—the lamp that illumines through the Word of God.

His Word is a light to our feet and a light to our path. But only five virgins bring extra oil with them when they go to meet the Bridegroom. This parable is similar in meaning to the parable that follows this one in the Gospel of the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew—the parable of the talents. In that parable there was one servant who hid the talent that was entrusted to him by the Master, and when the Master returned, he had not accomplished anything with it. He did not even think to put it the bank so that it could draw interest. Therefore, that talent was taken from him and given to the one who had ten talents.

This is the warning that we receive at the end of every Church's year. We have the Word of God. We are members of the one, holy, apostolic and catholic Church where we hear the Word of God and the promises that our Lord and Savior would have us hear about what He did for us in His life and on the tree of the holy cross. We also have the Blessed Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper and we have His Absolution given to us by His ministers. In these sacraments He imparts to us faith and life through His Holy Ghost. We have all these gifts. We have these lamps that illumine for us the Light of Christ—our salvation found in Him alone. And yet, we have a tendency to squander them, as did the five foolish virgins.

There are so many things in this life that draw us away from the Word of God; that draw us away from our daily remembrance of who and Whose we are. We neglect to pray often. We neglect to study

His Word. We neglect to teach our children to love and appreciate these things; teaching them to pray and to read, hear, learn, mark and inwardly digest the Word of God. If we cannot do it for ourselves, knowing how great a danger we are in on all sides from the devil, the world and our own flesh, how can we expect our children to listen to us and grow to love these things as we desire to do? The foolish virgin does not take extra oil in her lamp. She only lives for the present, never thinking of the future. She is not looking ahead at the day of her judgment. She is not looking forward to the day of her death when she will be judged.

Therefore, my dear friends, do not neglect the use of God's Word in your daily life. Pray often. Come to this house of worship often and hear the promises of what our Lord and Savior has done for us. Rejoice that even though you are a poor, miserable sinner, your sins are forgiven to you by the minister upon hearing your confession. Receive the Lord's Body and Blood given in bread and wine and remember His sacrifice for you that won for you forgiveness, life and salvation. Live daily in your Holy Baptism, in which the Old Adam full of sin was drowned and killed so that you may live before the Lord God as a new creation, full of faith and life. Do not neglect these things. Do not be foolish virgins. Look to the end of all things and be prepared as were the five wise virgins.

The five wise virgins are prepared. They know that they are only sojourners in this life, and they look to the life of the world to come. It is ever their focus. But they do not trust in themselves or their abilities to please the Lord God. Instead they carry with them the Light of the Christ. Their salvation is found in His works and merits; what the Lord + Jesus has done for them in both His passive and active obedience to the Law and will of God.

One of the themes of today's parable is that the Bridegroom delays in coming. It is in the waiting that we all slumber and sleep. The five foolish virgins were not prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom. They lived their lives as if they had all the time in the world. "I'll get around to these things someday." There is no better day than this day. For as St. Paul said in the Epistle reading, "The Lord so comes as a thief in the night." The day of our death, even the day of our Lord's return, is not known. It comes at midnight, when we are asleep and not paying attention. It comes as a thief in the night. If we knew the thief was going to come, we would take precautions, so that the thief could not break in. But we know not neither the day nor the hour. This is the stark warning that this parable has for us today and at the end of every Church's year.

We are also given a blessed promise in this parable. The Bridegroom is coming. He is preparing His wedding feast for His Bride, the Church—for us. Some day He will call us out of this vale of tears, to His eternal home in Heaven. There we will enjoy the eternal wedding feast. We get a foretaste of this feast when we come to this holy altar and receive our Lord's Body and Blood in bread and wine. When we gather around this altar and kneel before our Lord we are joined by the angels, and archangels, and all the host of Heaven, just as we hear in the Proper Preface. This meal is a foretaste of the throng of heavenly hosts—the angels and saints and the whole company—gathering around the Lamb of God Who suffered and died on our behalf on the tree of the holy cross. He did this for us so that our sins might be forgiven; that He might buy us back from sin, death and the power of the devil.

We now have an inheritance in Heaven. We are co-heirs with the Christ. Our citizenship is in Heaven. This is why we should not live our lives as if this life is the one that truly matters. Rather we should live our lives looking forward to that life that is promised to us in Heaven. Trim your lamps with the Word of God and the Sacraments. Prepare yourselves by using and trusting in the means of grace. Rely on the works and merits of the Lord and Savior of us all. Believe on Him. For one day the shout will go up, "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming; go out to meet Him!" And when He comes we will go into the wedding hall and enjoy for all eternity the wedding feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom. The doors will be shut, and all the bad that exists in this life for us now, will not be able to enter. We will have our eternal reward which our Lord + Jesus won for us through His works and merits in His earthly life.

This is the promise to us. The Lord + Jesus is coming to take us from this vale of tears to our eternal home in Heaven. With gladness and rejoicing we will be brought into the King's palace. We will enter into the holy city, New Jerusalem. This city will be adorned as a bride is adorned for her husband on the day of their wedding. This is what our Lord and Savior desires for us. For He does not desire to have thoughts of evil toward us, but He has thoughts of our eternal peace for at all times. The Bridegroom truly desires for us to enter into the eternal reward that He has prepared for us. He will gather all the wise virgins and bring them out of their captivity to sin and death, and the power of the devil, and will bring them into His abode to dwell with Him for all eternity. May the Lord + Jesus grant this unto us all. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, we beseech Thee, grant us grace that we may wait with vigilance for the advent of Thy Son, our Lord, that, when He shall arise from Thy right hand to visit the Earth in righteousness and Thy people with salvation, He may find us, not sleeping in sin, but diligent in His service and rejoicing in His praise, that so we may enter in with Him unto the Marriage Supper of the Lamb; through His merits, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!