

The Last Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Matthew 25:1-13  
November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Augusta, GA  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Ten Virgins

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

### **Prayer in Pulpit before 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.

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

Today we are once again taken to the Last Day; to the day of the judgment of mankind. Last Sunday we heard about the judgment of the whole world. The righteous sheep were separated out from the evil goats. The sheep on the right hand of the Lord + Jesus were given an eternal Kingdom in Heaven. The goats were cursed to the eternal fires of Hell prepared for the devil and his angels. The judgment that we hear about in the Gospel of the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew today involves all those in the Church on Earth; all those who profess to be Christians. This is symbolized by our Lord's parable about ten virgins.

The ten virgins, signified by the number ten, shows that the number of virgins is complete. This is all of the virgins, that is, Christians; those who through Holy Baptism are given the lamps—the hearts—containing the Light of the Christ. They have been removed from the darkness of sin and shame. They are filled with the Light of the Christ. They have been illumined with His works and merits; with His righteousness. All ten virgins—all the baptized—have been given lamps filled with oil. They have all been filled with the Holy Ghost, and given all the gifts that the Holy Ghost bestows. But our Lord + Jesus gives us a warning in this Gospel reading—in His parable of the ten virgins—for we are told that five of the virgins were wise, and five of the virgins were foolish.

If these ten virgins are the Church; if they are the ones who are baptized and have the light of the Christ in them—in their lamps, that is, their hearts—why are half wise and half foolish? How could the oil in the lamps of the five foolish virgins be running low? It is our warning from the Lord to remain diligent in our use of the means of grace.

The Holy Ghost, through our diligent use of the means of grace, continues to produce “oil” in us. Through the preaching of the Gospel, and the reception of the Blessed Sacraments He continues to create and sustain faith and life in us. The five wise virgins remained faithful and diligent in their use of the means of grace until they slumbered and slept. They continued to trim their lamps throughout their

lives so that when the cry comes at midnight, "Behold the Bridegroom is coming, go out to meet Him!" they have an abundance of oil to meet the Bridegroom and enter into the eternal wedding hall of Heaven.

The five foolish virgins, however, did not remain diligent in their use of the means of grace. They neglected their lamps. They spent their lives buying from those who sell; spent their days in earning the praise of their fellowman, for men love the praise of other men. This is an especially vile temptation for Christians, for we are encouraged to do good works. Good works are a sign of faith living in us. But we are often tempted to let our good works become a vehicle for praise from other men. Scripture tells us that we should not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. In other words, do good works, but do not do them to earn praise from mankind.

The five foolish virgins did not heed this warning. They allowed those who sell praise puff them up in their good works. How many people do we know in this world who do good works solely to be seen doing them? We all want to be considered "good Christians." We all want our good works praised, and our sins ignored. But, my dear wise virgins, this is just another temptation to place our works on the level of Christ's. It is our attempt to trust in our status as Christian; to trust in our name and reputation; to trust in our good works by being seen by man as doing them. This is why the five foolish virgins are told by the five wise virgins when the Bridegroom comes, and the five foolish virgins realize they do not have enough works to meet the Bridegroom, to go to the ones who sell.

This is not because they are able to do so. No mention is made in the parable about them finding someone who actually sells oil. The praises of mankind for their good works are no longer available. Their own praise of their good works is no longer available. For those who would trust in their good works on the day of judgment, on the Last Day, will find themselves with the goats on the left-hand side. For there is no salvation to be found in our works; no matter how many we may end up doing. The five foolish virgins neglected their lamps by not being diligent in their use of the means of grace. They let the cares and concerns of this world draw them away from their continual use of the means of grace. For this reason, they allowed themselves to be tempted away from the gifts of the Lord, to trust in the praises afforded by the world. They did not "keep watch" as the Lord commanded them.

They therefore found themselves outside the wedding hall in the dark. The Bridegroom proclaiming to them that He never knew them. They were left to the punishment that trusting in one's own good works earned them. They had forgotten the gift that was bestowed upon them in Holy Baptism; they had forgotten that forgiveness, and life and salvation were found only in the works and merits of the Bridegroom. Salvation is found only in the works of the Christ.

The five wise virgins, who remained diligent in their use of the means of grace, continually trimmed their lamps with oil. They daily remembered their Holy Baptism. They daily remembered that the Old Adam needed to be drowned and killed; that sin dwelt in them; that their sins were too great for any amount of good works to pay for them. Daily living in their Holy Baptisms they were daily buried in Christ's death. The five wise virgins daily lived under the cross of the Lord + Jesus Christ. They clung in faith to Him and His works. Their diligence in the means of grace produced this longing in them.

They trimmed their lamps by not trusting in their good works, although they continued to do them. They trimmed their lamps by remembering their Holy Baptism, and through daily contrition and faith drowned the sin of the Old Adam so that they could rise again each new day as a new creation. They trimmed their lamps by remembering that they are covered by the righteousness of the Christ; they are robed in His righteousness. They trimmed their lamps by continuing to come to the house of the Lord God and hearing the promise of salvation, apart from works, through the preaching of the Gospel. They trimmed their lamps by coming to the house of the Lord God to gather together with other wise virgins to comfort one another in their sin and shame with the hope of forgiveness through the Lord + Jesus

alone.

The five wise virgins, all of us hear today, continued to trim their lamps throughout their lives by remaining diligent in their use of the means of grace. They trimmed their lamps by coming to this altar and receiving the Lord's Body and Blood given in bread and wine for the remission of their sins. They remained watchful of the coming of the Bridegroom in their earthly lives by remaining steadfast in their use of the means of grace. For by these means, the Holy Ghost continues to create and sustain faith and life in us. The Holy Ghost through the Word and Sacraments gives us oil for our lamps, so that when we all slumber and sleep, we may awake on the Last Day and enter into the eternal wedding hall of Heaven.

For the Holy Ghost continues the work He began in us at our Holy Baptisms. He continues to fill us with the Light of the Christ. He illumines our dark souls with life and salvation, dispelling the darkness of sin and shame. He fills us with the Light of the Christ by giving us the works of the Christ, so that we do not have to trust in our own good works, or seek the praise of man for "living like good Christians." He works in us to place our trust solely in our Lord + Jesus. We look to our Bridegroom and no other savior. This is how we remain "watchful" in this life. For we know neither the day nor the hour when the Bridegroom will call us.

My dear wise virgins, the Bridegroom soon will call us to come to the wedding feast. Let us live in the Light of the Christ; let us live in the light that shines in us through the work of the Holy Ghost begun in us at our Holy Baptisms. That light is the works and merits of the Christ. The light that fills us is the works that He credits to us; the works with which He covers us. Through our diligent use of the means of grace, we continue to trim our lamps, and keep oil in our vessels; we continue to clothe ourselves with His righteousness, so that when we all slumber and sleep the sleep of death, we will awake at midnight to the cry of the archangel, and the blast of the trumpet, to enter into the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb to His Bride, the Church. May the Lord God Almighty grant this unto us all. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the 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!*