

The Last Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Matthew 25:1-13  
November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Watch!

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

**Sermon Text:**

“Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.”

**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.

My dear friends, our Lord tells us today to “watch.” What does it mean to watch; to be watchful? When our Lord + Jesus tells His Apostles, and us, to “watch” He is referring to steadfast faithfulness. What does it mean to remain steadfast? What does it mean to remain faithful? That is shown us in the parable that our Lord tells prior to His summation at the end of today’s Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew: “Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.”

This exhortation to “watch” is exemplified in the wise virgins. They remained steadfast and faithful until the Bridegroom—our Lord + Jesus—called them at midnight to enter into the eternal wedding feast of Heaven. They were ready and prepared to go to meet the Bridegroom when He called. They understood the concept that “Soon the Bridegroom would call them.” They understood that throughout their lives the time of the Lord’s return was quickly approaching. They anticipated that arrival. They waited for that arrival. They lived their lives in expectation of that arrival. They dedicated themselves to doing everything in their power to not miss that arrival. This is what it means when our Lord tells us that they carried extra oil for their lamps. They were steadfast and faithful. They did not turn away to the temptations that the world constantly threw at them.

And do be sure, my dear friends, that the world, who is acting as the devil’s agent, is constantly trying to draw us away from being steadfast and faithful to our Lord + Jesus. The devil and the world, and even our own flesh at times, does not want us enjoying the eternal gifts of Heaven. They want to see us with them outside of the shut wedding doors in the dark where there is the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, begging for the Lord to let us in. And so, they present before us all sorts of worldly temptations to draw us away from being steadfast and faithful. They want us to be watching the world and its delights instead of waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus on the Last Day.

This represented in the parable by the foolish virgins. When the Bridegroom comes and

everyone is invited to enter into the wedding feast, they realize that they do not have enough oil for their lamps. Their lives have been wasted on worldly pursuits. They have not spent time daily in study of God's Word and prayer. They have neglected the use of the Sacraments. They do not remember daily their Holy Baptisms, nor daily drown the Old Adam in contrition and sorrow over their sins. They do not cling daily in faith to the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus. They found other things to do on Sunday mornings than come and receive the gifts of the Lord + Jesus in the Divine Liturgy, whether that was sleeping in, or participating in sports activities, or a thousand other pursuits. Because they kept telling themselves the lie that there will always be time later. There was, until there was not any more time, and they were left outside the doors of the wedding hall.

This is what the devil and the world, and even our own flesh, try to do to us constantly. They pull our attention away from the things that serve to our eternal life. They draw us away from steadfast faithfulness by enticing us with the temporal and transient things of this life that appear for the time to be of great importance to us and our lives, but in the end will pass away like the flowers of the field in winter. The things of this life are fleeting and will not last forever. But we are drawn to them, because they are the things that are always before us in this life. We are especially drawn to them when we neglect to consider the eternal things of the life to come. The eternal things that we will enjoy in Heaven are not before us all the time, therefore we are often tempted to place those things on the back burner, and deal with the things before us.

But, my dear friends, this is why our Lord + Jesus calls us to "Watch." This is why we are reminded constantly in the Scriptures of these last few Sundays of the Church's year, and especially on this Last Sunday, to remain steadfast and faithful; to not neglect the eternal things. For no one knows the day nor the hour. It could be this day, this hour, or it could be many years down the road. But because we do not know the day nor the hour, just like it was in the days of Noah and the flood came upon the world, while men were eating and drinking, and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark. So too are our lives. We get caught up in the daily rigmarole of our lives. And the things of this world tend to take precedent over the things which we cannot see, and which are not ever before our eyes: the things of the life of the world to come—the eternal things.

There is a part in the parable when the five foolish virgins realize their mistake and try to borrow oil from the wise virgins. The wise virgins—wisely—point out that they cannot give them any oil, because their works are their own. They cannot give their works to the foolish virgins. What they did in this life is on them. The five wise virgins even taunt the foolish virgins by telling them to "go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." In other words, the wise virgins tell the foolish virgins to go and do what they had been doing their whole lives: they had been focusing on the glittery but temporal things of this life, and neglected the things of the life to come. As the saying goes, "Not all that glitters is gold." Many things glitter and shine as being important and salutary, but in the end they are nothing but dross and lead to damnation.

Part of our Lord's exhortation to "watch" is remaining steadfast to the Word of God. Certainly, we should remain faithful to study of God's Word and prayer, and remain faithful to participating in the Sacraments of Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. But we must also be watchful that the preaching that we hear is pure preaching. That the Sacraments we receive are administered according to Christ's institution. This is also remaining steadfast, being faithful; this is also part of keeping watch. For if the devil and the world cannot entice us away from being faithful through the shiny baubles of this world and life, then they will try to draw us away by filling our ears with false and misleading doctrine.

The foolish virgins had also listened to the false preachers, who told them to live their lives however they wanted to; that the Law of God does not matter. Afterall, your sins have been forgiven, and we are all sinners, therefore, God will love and forgive you no matter what you do. This lie is a particularly insidious one, for it mixes truth in with a deadly lie. Yes, we are all sinners, yes God loves

us, yes God is a forgiving God, but this statement denies, or at best, neglects to mention, the part about repentance. God loves a broken and contrite heart, one that is sorry for its sins and wishes to do better. God does not love—in fact He abhors—a prideful heart; one that clings to its sinful behavior. But this is not the only lie that the false preachers preach to the foolish virgins, for they also preached and taught them to trust in their good works, instead of the works and merits of the Christ.

This is ultimately what makes the foolish virgins, foolish. For they were undiscerning concerning what our Lord + Jesus would actually have them hear. Our Lord does not want us looking at ourselves, either our sins or our good works. He wants us to “watch”—to be steadfast and faithful—in looking at Him. This is what the ten virgins were to be doing. They were waiting for the Bridegroom to soon call them. They were looking and waiting for the New Jerusalem, for Jerusalem the Golden, the City Fair and High. They were looking and waiting for the Dear, Dear Country, for Night was Flying, and the hour of being awake was close at hand. Therefore, their eyes were to be upon the Bridegroom Whose voice rang out at Midnight to enter into the Wedding Hall of Heaven.

For He was the One Who fulfilled the Law of God perfectly on our behalf. He was the One Who suffered and died in our place on the tree of the holy cross to redeem us, that is, buy us back, from sin, death, and the power of the devil. He was the One Who rose again from the dead and opened up both our graves and the gates of Heaven. He is the One Who ascended to sit on the right hand of God the Father, and will come again to judge both the quick and the dead on the Last Day. In Him alone is life and salvation. In Him alone will we find entrance into the eternal Wedding Feast of the Church and the Lamb.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us fix our eyes on the Lord + Jesus, let us remain steadfast and faithful to Him and the gifts that He offers us in this life, for He exhorts us to “Watch.” Let us watch by clinging to Him in faith, and forsaking all earthly treasures. For the treasures of this life are transient and will pass away, but the joys of Heaven are eternal and forever. And on the Last Day, when the Bridegroom comes to call us all into the Wedding Hall of Heaven, the shout will go out, “Behold, the Bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet Him!” and we will enter in with the sheep, and with the wise virgins, and the wedding guests clothed in perfect wedding garments, and we will live with all the other saints forever and ever, joining our voices to the host of angels surrounding the throne of the Lamb of God, and we will sing eternally of all that our Lord + Jesus has done for us. This, my friends, is something truly worth watching and waiting for. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the 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 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!*