

The Last Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 25:1-13
November 24th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

They That Were Ready Went In

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us.’ But he answered and said, ‘Verily I say unto you, “I know you not.”’ 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, the last three Sundays of the Church’s year all focus on being prepared. They prepare us for the Last Day, the Day of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ’s return to take all those who cling to Him in faith into our eternal home in Heaven. The Third-Last Sunday of the Church’s Year, Trinity 25, prepared us for the Last Day by warning us to mark and avoid false teachers and their false doctrine. This is why we have Creeds and Confessions, the *Symbolum* that we believe, teach, and confess. These expound and explain the holy Scriptures, the sole source and norm of our doctrines. They show us what has been taught by the Apostles, Church Fathers, and our Lutheran ancestors. We can see from them that what we teach has always been taught this way, and therefore, we know we are teaching the truth of the Word of the Lord God. This is why we prepare for the Last Day by marking and avoiding false teachers and false doctrine, especially when it rears its ugly head in the Christian Church.

The Second-Last Sunday of the Church’s Year, Trinity 26, last Sunday, prepared us for the Last Day by teaching us to not place our trust in our works and merits. Rather, we are taught to cling in faith to the works and merits of the Christ. His works and merits are perfect. Ours are far from perfect. They are not even worthy of being mentioned. Of course, this does not mean that we stop doing good works. That we are saved by grace through faith in the works of the Lord + Jesus does not give us a license to live a debauched life. We do not prove our love and faith to the Lord God by living a scandalous and sinful life. No, we strive to live a life worthy of repentance; a life worthy of the forgiveness and mercy that we have been shown, by exhibiting that forgiveness and mercy to our fellowman. Howbeit, we do not place our trust in our works, or boast about our works, but rather we cling to the perfect works of our Lord + Jesus, Who perfectly fulfilled the Law of God on our behalf, and also paid the penalty of all our transgressions by suffering and dying on the tree of the holy cross. This is why we prepare for the

Last Day by clinging in faith to Him and His works.

Today, the Last Sunday of the Church's Year, the Twenty-Seventh Sunday after Trinity Sunday, we are taught by our Lord + Jesus in a parable to prepare for the Last Day, the Day of His return, by not being foolish virgins. The foolish virgins are the ones within the Christian Church who are really only members in name only. They go through the motions of being a Christian: they go to church, they give the illusion of being faithful to the Church, but their hearts are really bound to this world and this life. The parable of the sheep and goats from last Sunday is similar in theme to today's parable of the ten virgins, five wise and five foolish. Both the goats and the foolish virgins think they are doing the right thing. One thinks that the way to Heaven is by doing good works. The foolish virgins think they will go to Heaven simply because they claim the name of "Christian." That is why today's parable from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew is directed at us. Last week's parable was directed at the world in general. Today, our Lord warns us within the Church.

On the last Sunday of the Church's year, we prepare for the Last Day by examining our own life within the Church. Our Lord + Jesus says in the parable that the ten virgins all had lamps, but the five wise virgins took extra oil in their lamps with them. The five foolish virgins did not. The five foolish virgins thought it enough just to be named members of the Church. They did not, however, live their lives in the Church, but rather in the world. Church was just something they did, not something that defined them as a person. This is why the wise virgins mock them when the call that the Bridegroom was coming sounds by telling them to go to the ones who sell. In other words, they tell them to go find oil for their lamps from the world which they so prized during their lives. They received no true oil from the world before they fell asleep, they will receive none from the world on the Last Day, either.

This is what makes the wise virgins so wise. For they live their lives in this world, before they fall asleep into the sleep of death by living their lives within the Church. The Church was not just some activity for them to do. It was not just something to make them appear to be a good person, or done out of obligation, or because of family ties. They were a part of the Christian Church because they truly believed and confessed the doctrines that were taught within the Christian Church. It was their very lifeblood. It was the very oil of their lamps. They prayed to the Lord God daily, confessing their sins and transgressions, seeking from Him alone redemption and grace. They sang the hymns of the Church, and listened to the words and internalized them. The words of the hymns could move them to tears because they knew that those words were talking about them.

The same was true of the Word of the Lord God, the holy Scriptures. They did not, like the foolish virgins, only hear or read those words when they came to this holy house for worship. But they daily sought to hear, read, mark, learn, and trust in those words every day of their earthly lives. For in them they found the way into Heaven. They found in them the preaching about their Lord and Savior, Who took upon Himself their flesh, and dwelt among them all so that He might fulfill the Law on their behalf, and pay the penalty of their sins with His own flesh and blood.

The Blessed Sacraments for the wise virgins were not just an activity that they did. But they truly believe, as we truly teach, that Holy Baptism, the Holy Absolution, and the Lord's Supper, actually imparted that which they promise to give: forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. They believed that when they made the sign of the holy cross that they were remembering that the Lord's Name was placed upon them, and in those waters of Holy Baptism they were washed clean and pure from sins. They had been gifted with the white robe of the Lord's righteousness. They are clothed with the wedding garment of the Lord's works and merits, His righteousness and holiness.

The wise virgins daily lived in their Holy Baptisms by daily contrition and repentance. Daily confessing their sins to the Lord God, and when they needed to hear those words of forgiveness directly into their ears, they confessed their sins to the pastor, firmly believing and not doubting that their sins

were forgiven by the Lord God Himself. They daily confessed and knew that they were poor, miserable sinners, but also daily rejoiced that by the work of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace, by the work of the Holy Ghost through the remembrance of their Holy Baptism, that they were indeed a new creation, one worthy and holy in the Lord God's eyes. He had made them who were conceived and born blind and dead in sin alive again in Christ + Jesus.

Being alive in the Lord + Jesus, they also gladly and willingly came to this holy altar as often as it was offered to receive the Lord's Body and Blood in bread and wine. There at the altar they received the renewal and strengthening of their faith to firmly believe that by this simple bread and wine they received the Lord's Body and Blood, and also received what He gives to all those who come to this wedding feast: forgiveness of their sins, and the promise of eternal life, and salvation. This is how the wise virgins prepared for the Last Day. This is how the wise virgins took extra oil in their lamps. They did not just receive the name of "Christian," but by the way they lived their life no one could every mistake them for anything other than a Christian. They made the Church, and all the things that the Church grants to her children, the reason for their existence. This is why when the Bridegroom came on the Last Day they were ready to go into the eternal wedding hall and celebrate the eternal feast of the Lamb forever.

This is why my dear wise virgins we continue to come to this holy place. We come to hear the Word of the Lord God, we come to sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving. We come to receive His gifts of forgiveness and life; His gifts of mercy and grace. For by these things, we continue to bring extra oil along with us for our lamps, so that when we slumber and sleep the sleep of death, we may be awoken to the call of the Bridegroom to come into the wedding hall and live with Him and all the saints and angels forever and ever.

Therefore, let us not prepare for that Last Day of the return of our Lord + Jesus by being like the foolish virgins which lived their lives consumed with the things of this life and world, but rather, let us look forward with hope to those golden shores upon which we will stand on that Last Day, and see Golden Jerusalem, that city fair and high. We will see that golden city and live forever in that dear, dear country of the Lamb's Kingdom. The Bridegroom soon will call us to wake, awake from our slumber and sleep and go into the wedding hall and join all the other wise virgins, all the sheep of the Lord God. There we will rejoice and sing for all eternity. May we ever prepare and be ready for that great Day. 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 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!