

The Last Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 25:1-13
November 23rd, 2025
St. Titus Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Athens, GA
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald P. Dulas

The Wise Took Oil in Their Vessels

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.”

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 people of Israel on their last night in the land of Egypt were told by the Lord God, through the Prophet Moses, to prepare a Passover lamb by killing it at twilight, and spreading its blood on the doorposts and lintels as a sign to the avenging angel to passover their house. While they waited in the night, the Lord tells them to eat this meal with their sandals on, and their staffs in their hands. They were to be ready to go out from the land of Egypt, as soon as Pharaoh relented and let them go. They were to be ready at a moment's notice. So, they were fully clothed, had their shoes on, and their staffs in their hands to go as soon as it was time to go. They did not know when the departure would take place. They did not know the hour. It would come at any moment. They were not to sleep, or take a nap, but be ready to go when the Lord called them out of Egypt.

They were in essence told to “Watch!”; to be on guard, and expecting the call of the Lord God to come at any moment. As we come to the end of another Church's year, we also are reminded by our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, in the parable for today from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew, to “Watch!” We are to be on guard, always looking for His coming. Therefore, our Lord + Jesus presents to us the parable of the ten virgins. Five of whom were wise and five which were foolish.

These ten virgins represent the entire Church on earth. For, the Church is filled with both wise and foolish. It is filled with wheat and tares. It is filled with good fruit and bad fruit. It is filled with good fish, and bad fish. There are in the Church both the truly faithful, and hypocrites. They are all called virgins, because virgins are a symbol of purity. Virgins do not commit fornication. They are betrothed only to one husband. In a spiritual sense, this means that they do not commit idolatry. They have for their God, the One, True Triune God. It is Him who they worship. It is to Him alone which they give their

devotion and worship. But of the ten, five are wise and five are foolish. If they are virgins, if they have as their God the True God, and have no false worship, how are some considered foolish? This again comes down to how our Lord + Jesus concludes the parable. He tells His Apostles, who are gathered with Him on the Mount of Olives, in the days just before His crucifixion and death, to “Watch!” Like the Israelites in Egypt who did not know when the Lord would call them out of Egypt. So too does the Church not know when the Bridegroom will call her into the Promised Land of Heaven.

The wise and foolish virgins may both be in the Church, but their hearts are in different places. The wise virgins focus solely on the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. They cling to His works and merits. They cling in faith to His perfect obedience as a fulfillment of the Law which they cannot keep. They cling in faith to His suffering and death as a payment for their transgressions. They cling in faith constantly to the atonement won by the Lord + Jesus. It is their constant focus and goal. They are always thinking about Heaven and entering into Heaven. They view this world as not an end goal, but as a land to be passed through in order to get to the Promised Land of Heaven. Like the Israelites were in the wilderness for forty years, we also are in this wilderness of life for a generation, until we enter into the eternal heavenly realms.

The wise virgins also cling daily to the Word and the Sacraments. They cling to the means through which the Holy Ghost creates and sustains faith in them. By the Word of the Lord God, they are continually replenishing the oil in their lamps. By the daily use of the Word and Sacraments—the means of grace—they are continually bringing extra oil with them for their lamps. For they are not concerned with the things of this world, but are always looking for the life of the world to come. Like the Israelites on the night of the first Passover, they wise virgins are those who remain fully clothed in the righteousness of the Christ, who have their feet shod, and their staffs in their hands. They are ready at a moments notice for the cry of the Bridegroom.

This is not so with the foolish virgins, however. The foolish virgins, being hypocrites, say one thing with their lips, but another thing consumes the place of their hearts. The foolish virgins while being members of the Church, who come to the Church, and participate in the Church, have hearts that cling not to the Christ, but to the things of this world. They do not look to the works and merits of the Christ, but they look to the praise of men. Their focus, like the goats from last Sunday, is on their own good works. This is why they have no extra oil when they are awakened from their slumber at midnight by the cry to come meet the Bridegroom. They spend their lives trying to please mankind; to please themselves by the accumulation of their own good works. Like the goats who loved the praise of man, so too do the foolish virgins.

Christianity is for the foolish virgins just one more way by which the world praises them for how they live their lives in this world. Being labeled a Christian is one more way by which they applaud themselves and pat themselves upon the back. In other words, Christianity for the foolish virgins is not about what the Christ has done for them, but what they can do for themselves. They are filled with the sin of pride. This pride looks for the praise of men, for the good feeling they can give themselves by being a good person in this life and society. One thing that rarely, if ever, comes into their observation is that they are poor, miserable sinners.

We say those words at the beginning of every Divine Service. There is a great temptation to gloss over those words, to not actually think about what they mean. Or worse, there is the temptation to not actually apply those words to themselves. They just say the words, and do not take them to heart. In essence, they do not actually confess their sins, but only mouth the words. This is why in the absolution; the minister makes clear that the forgiveness that he offers from the Lord God is not for those who do not hunger and thirst after righteousness. His forgiveness is not for those who do not humbly confess that they are poor, miserable sinners. His forgiveness is not for those who would rely upon their own works and merits for salvation, and put the Christ on the back burner far from their

thoughts. They do not receive forgiveness, because they do not look to the One Who can actually forgive their sins. They do not look to the Lord + Jesus, the Christ, as the One Who has won forgiveness for them upon the tree of the holy cross. The foolish virgins may speak of the cross and the Lord + Jesus, but their hearts reveal that they love the praise that they get from their own good works, then from the saving works of the Lord + Jesus.

This is why they are at a loss when the cry comes at midnight to come and meet the Bridegroom. They spent their lives looking for the praise of men for their own good works. They even continue this pattern at the end, by looking to glean from the works of the wise virgins. But no one is going to be able to use another person's works on the Last Day. We must all give our own account of the works we have done in this life. Those who spend their lives trusting in their own good works, will find their works insufficient to enter into the marriage hall.

The wise virgins, on the other hand, have as their works, the works of the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. It is His works to which they have spent their lives clinging to in faith. It is on the Last Day, that they will continue to cling in faith to the works of the Lord + Jesus. The oil of their lamps will be sufficient, for it is the Lord God which supplies their oil, and they are not like the foolish virgins who are trying to supply it to themselves by purchasing it from non-existent merchants. The wise virgins have spent their lives diligently waiting and watching for the coming of the Bridegroom. They have been on guard and watched for His coming. They will enter into the marriage hall.

The foolish virgins have not watched for the coming of the Lord + Jesus, the Bridegroom. They have not spent their lives with their cloak on, and their shoes adorned, nor their staffs in their hands. They have eaten the Passover meal in vain, for they trust not in the One come to deliver them from their sins by His works, but have spent their lives looking to please the Lord God, and man, by their own works.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us repent of our pride and hypocrisy, and let us in contrition and faith cling solely to the works and merits of the Christ. Let us not be consumed with the things of this life, but look always for the life of the world to come. For the Lord has commanded us to "Watch," to be on guard for His coming. He has even given us a meal, which is a foretaste of the wedding feast to come. This meal strengthens our faith in Him. He has instituted it for the special comfort and strengthening of our faith, that we may in humbleness of heart daily confess our sins, and look for salvation from our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, alone, and forsake the trusting in of our own good works. For in coming to this altar to receive our Lord's Body and Blood in bread and wine, we not only join with one another here in this place, but we unite ourselves to all those who have been called to come and meet the Bridegroom, and have been invited to join Him in the eternal marriage hall.

Let us come and meet our Lord at this altar, and continually look for His coming on the Last Day. For this life will pass away, but the life of the world to come will last forever. We will be with our Lord and Savior, and all the saints and angels, in the Promised Land of Heaven forever and ever. May we end this Church's year with this ever on our minds, so that as we begin a new Church's year, we may focus solely on what our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, has done for us to win salvation for us all. 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!